



Parameters for assessment and accreditation of Indian higher education system: An analysis

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Abstract

Indian higher education structure is one of the biggest in the world in terms of the number of students. It is third after China and the United States in this regard. It is a highly developed system and provides access to almost every field of human knowledge and imagination both for education as well as training purposes. There are various institutions that offer a range of courses in disciplines of engineering, social, natural, medical, mathematical, and agricultural sciences, dentistry, humanities, commerce and management, law, both foreign and Indian languages and culture, linguistics performing arts and music. The Indian higher education system provides higher education at three qualification levels: undergraduate level, postgraduate level, doctoral level. Another qualification level Diploma is also available at both undergraduate and post graduate level.

Now, we must adopt qualitative education, which has the entanglement of morality. Here learning is an acquisition; there is no need to redeem it separately. This consumerist culture has separated us from the 'self', the possibility of dialogue with ourselves has disappeared and the market-guided-controlled-centered system has enveloped most of education. The body of this system of education is high, but the soul has become disfigured. Concrete solutions for the care of this sick soul will have to be found out soon to restore back our command and strength. Understanding the restlessness and irritability of the younger generation, it must be stopped from disorientation. The process of building a perfect personality must be opened by the beautiful coordination of the mind, heart, and soul.

Keywords: Indian higher education system, IHES, human knowledge, qualitative education

Introduction

In the context of changing scenario, to what extent our ethical, quality and personality-building centered education system can maintain its identity intact – is an undeniable challenge. Of course, we do not desist from cursing Macaulay's education system after drinking water, but till date Macaulay's spirit is not leaving us, for which Macaulay does not seem responsible from anywhere. In this era of globalization, we are losing our identity. The educational system that exists all over the world has three components – students, teachers, and parents. Without the co-ordination of these three, the concept of building an educational triangle is meaningless.

One aspect of the truth is that only one out of nine students who go to school makes it to college. "The proportion of our children who register for higher education is one of the lowest in the world at 11%, while in the US it is 83%". India will be required to increase its investment to Rs 2, 26,410 crore to reach the target of 15%,

In terms of numbers, India's higher education system comes third in ranking after America and China, yet there isn't a single university in India that ranks among the top 200 universities in the world in terms of quality.

According to The Times World Universities Ranking (2013), the California Institute of Technology in the US is at the top while the Punjab University of India is ranked 226th in the world.

Now that the new education policy (NEP 2020) ^[5] has arrived, It is reasonable to believe that the quality of education will improve as a result of this. This will allow for the development of

educational resources. There will be new appointments which will improve the student-teacher ratio. Commitment to the protection and promotion of ancient Indian languages Prakrit, Pali and Persian is a new dimension of the policy. The provisions of multiple entry-exit will also strengthen the values of liberty and equality in higher education. At the same time, by studying with subjects of interest, the possibilities of creating a creative and creative environment will be strong. These new experiments will bring about a qualitative change in the quality of education. Under the new education policy, a target has been set to increase the enrollment from 26.3 percent to 50 percent by the year 2030. For which an estimated 3.3 crore seats will have to be increased for higher education. The positive effect of which will be that new employment opportunities will also increase, and development will also make its presence felt along with education in various fields. The decision to establish a higher educational institution in each district will also prove to be a significant contribution towards quality enhancement.

Indian Higher Education Framework

The Indian higher education institutes exist in the following framework:

- Institute of nationwide significance (prestigious public institutions are given the status by an act of parliament)
- Central Universities (established & recognized by an act of parliament)

- State Universities (established & recognised by an act of state legislature)
- Deemed/Deemed-to-be Universities (institutes other than universities accredited as such by the government of India)
- Institutions established by State Legislature
- Autonomous Institutes/Colleges
- Affiliated Colleges

Objectives of the study

The study aims to highlight:

- Historical background of the Indian education system;
- Identify and understand the relevance of measures of assessment and accreditation;
- Measures for restructuring the higher education system.
- To understand the requirements for creating the world class institutions across the country.

Historical Background

1. Ancient Period

Since time immemorial India has been a hub of higher education. With renowned universities like Nalanda, Taxila, Ujjain and Vikramshila and Buddhist monasteries India was a center of higher learning for students from other neighboring states as well of these takshila was a renowned center for medicine and Ujjain for astronomical studies. However, most of them were lost due to foreign invasions or natural calamity.

2. Pre-Independence Era/Colonial Era

Modern Indian education system has its foundation in the colonial era when India was under British rule. It was due to the recommendations of Mountstuart Elphinstone that educational institutes that taught English and European sciences were established for Indian population. The first three universities were set up in the cities of Calcutta (Kolkata), Bombay (Mumbai) and Madras (Chennai) in 1857. Then came up Allahabad University in 1887. All these universities were affiliating universities. Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College was established in 1875 in Aligarh by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan which later gained the status of university by an act of Central Legislative Assembly in 1920 and was named Aligarh Muslim University. The first residential university, Banaras Hindu University was set up in Varanasi in 1914. University of Delhi came up by an act of Central Legislative Assembly in 1922. To promote coordination, dissemination of information and ideas and to encourage universities in the field of education, sports, art and culture Inter-University Board was set up in 1925. This later became Association of Indian Universities. The formation of University Grants Committee (UGC) in 1945 on the recommendation of Sargent Report (1944) can be considered as the first most crucial step in establishing national system of higher education in India. Some other universities set up in this era were: Agra University; Patna University; Punjab University, Chandigarh; Lucknow University; Mysore University; Nagpur University; Osmania University, etc.

It is evident that most of the universities established in this era were set up just before independence and the structure and nature of education was mostly influenced by European education systems. The institutions imparting superior quality technical training, medical education or agricultural education or Indian culture were rare.

3. Post-Independence Era

After independence, Indian education system has witnessed a tremendous growth. Though the government of India, was keen to develop its higher education system which would have required large funds, only 5% of the budget was being spent on education. It is said that India witnessed its fastest growth in the education sector especially higher education sector in the late 1950s and 1960s. "It was also during this era that regulatory bodies like All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE), Medical Council of India (MCI), Bar Council of India (BCI), Pharmacy Council of India (PCI), Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), etc came into existence for technical and professional education". During 1948, Indian Education Commission was the first crucial commission to study the condition of Indian Universities and higher education system in general. It was established under the chairmanship of Dr. Radhakrishnan and recommended to form an agency like University Grants Commission to ensure the extension and development of university and professional education. UGC was later set up in the year 1956.

"The National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) was established in 1961 as an independent agency to advise the federal and state governments on educational policy development". Various agencies like UGC, NCERT, and CSIR etc. were made responsible for fund provisions. The Centre and the State Governments worked in cooperation to execute development strategies for higher education research and training meeting world class standards. Under the chairmanship of Union Education Minister operated a central planning and implementation group.

Post-Independence, the government laid stress on introducing courses which were of due importance in the Indian context. "A National Council for Higher Education in Rural Areas was founded in 1956 on the advice of the Rural Higher Education Committee to advise the government on all subjects relevant to the development of rural higher education". Though study in the arts and social sciences was encouraged during this time, the establishment of institutions that imparted superior technical knowledge and skills was also prioritised. This era was also remarked by constant increase in funds allocated to the education sector (primarily higher education sector) by the government. All this while, the higher education institutes were mostly public and the law of that time stated that if private entities were to set up these institutes, then it should be not-for-profit.

In the late 80s, due to growing middle class population, momentum was laid on expansion of institutes of professional education. "These included Indian Institute of Technology (IITs), All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Indian Institute of Management (IIMs) and other Regional Engineering Colleges". The parliament adopted National education policy in 1986 "which is considered as steppingstone towards equally accessible higher education among different sections of the society and for expansion of distance learning model of education by setting up of Indira Gandhi National Open University". It also suggested that there should be a National Eligibility Test (NET) through which faculty of higher educational institute should be appointed to ensure better quality of faculty.

Around the late 1980s, the government had to rethink of its decision of not opening education sector to turn into profit making business. In 1990s, private universities and institutions

were encouraged to establish as there were lack of public resources for higher education. The growth of public institutions was interrupted and even these universities started offering self-financed courses.

By the year 2000, there was a sudden upsurge in the private universities being granted the status of deemed/deemed-to-be universities and in the open learning institutes/courses. Most of the higher education was now driven by market demand which mainly included professional and technical degree courses.

Today, many higher education institutes like JNU, IITs and IIMs are ranked among the top 200 institutes in the world. "According to the All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2018-19, 47,427 international students enrolled in Indian universities in the academic year 2018-19. The education sector in India comes under the jurisdiction of Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD)". The department of higher education, which is part of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, has as its principal mission to improve the quality of higher education in India and to give equal access to everyone. To fulfil these objectives, it has launched certain schemes- Rashtriya Uchatta Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA), "Scheme of Integrating Persons with Disabilities In the mainstream of technical and vocational education; Scheme of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya National Mission on Teachers and Teaching (PMMMNMTT)".

Different Parameters of Assessment and Accreditation

To improve higher education, MHRD, GOI has set up various parameters and agencies so that the higher educational institutions can be regularly evaluated, and the quality of education can be improved.

1. NAAC

There are some parameters of Assessment Criteria. These include:

- **Curricular Aspects:** This aspect is evaluated by NAAC based on various aspects like "curriculum design and development; curriculum planning and implementation; academic flexibility, curriculum enrichment; and feedback system".
- **Teaching-learning & assessment:** This norm looks at how the teaching and learning process takes place on the regular basis in higher education institutes and what are the strategies and policies undertaken to improve its efficiency.
- **Research, Innovations and Extension:** Under this criterion, NAAC assesses the excellence of the institution in academic research, the provision of environment conducive for innovation and other consultation services by the institution. "The key aspects of these criteria are promotion of research and facilities; resource mobilization for research; innovation ecosystem; research publications and awards; consultancy; extension activities; and collaboration".
- **Infrastructure & Learning Resources:** High Quality of higher education is not possible without adequate infrastructural facilities, proper physical support system and availability of standardised learning resources.
- **Student Support & Progression:** This criterion is used to observe as to how well an institution supports and prepares

its students for future endeavours by providing them with proper guidance and counselling and mentorship.

- **Governance, Leadership and Management:** The direction and the future course of an institution is derived mainly from the vision of the institute. Its management and governance also play a significant influence in determining the institute's policies and strategies.
- **Institutional Values & Best Practices:** This criterion underlines the social and moral responsibility of the institute. All the practices that contribute to the greater good or overall improvement. Recently, the concerned government authorities have decided to give more autonomy (which includes financial autonomy) to the top ranking institutes according to NAAC. This may again lead the top level institutes to charge higher fees.

Objectives of NAAC

- With detailed evaluation and certification, NAAC aims for creating quality in the higher educational institutes of India.
- Through its review process, the institutes can know their weaknesses, strengths and opportunities available to them. With this information, they can choose the best strategy to bring about improvement.
- It aims to promote the use of technology and innovation in the process of learning.
- Its goal is to progress the value of higher education and inculcate global competency among students of India.
- It also gives students credible information so that they may assess the level of education provided by the institute before enrolling.
- It also provides reliable information for funding agencies.
- It also enables inter and intra-institutional networking to promote exchange of best

2. QS Ranking

The main objective of QS World University Ranking is to provide an unbiased comparative analysis of universities around the world. As the number of students interested in studying abroad rises, it's more necessary than ever to provide them with balanced information on foreign universities so that they may make the best decision possible.

Criticism

- QS Ranking uses only faculty-student ratio as an indicator to measure teaching quality which is not only insufficient but can also be misleading.
- Due to a wide range of criteria that may be appropriate in some parts of the world but not in others, it does not use any direct indicator to measure learning outcome, quality of learning environment.
- The rankings for each year are quite similar. They do not account for improvement criteria at all.
- Apart from the QS Ranking of World Universities, QS under its name also publishes a ranking of Latin American and Asian Universities and QS Stars Rating. This QS Stars rating is a rating system in which institutes are rated in detail in different aspects like their program flexibility, course strengthens, infrastructural facilities

3. NIRF Ranking

Background

The (MHRD), Government of India adopted and launched a framework to rank higher education institutions in India on 29 September 2015 known as National Institutional Ranking Framework or NIRF. It includes an overall ranking as well as university-specific rankings as well as discipline-specific rankings in Engineering, Management, Pharmacy, Law, Medical, and Architecture. The execution is carried out by National Board of Accreditation (NBA) along with its Implementation Core Committee and its partner institute INFLIBNET Centre at Gandhinagar. Elsevier and Clarivate Analytics are the industrial partners and UGC and AICTE also provides valuable advice to NIRF for its proper functioning. Its first issue came out in the year 2016 with around 3500 institutions participating in the first round. Only those institute/universities/colleges are considered for the ranking list that have registered in the various categories and have provided data needed by the NIRF.

“According to the 2019 ranking, IIT Madras topped the overall category (and also the engineering category), while IISc in Bengaluru topped the list of Universities, Miranda House topped the list of colleges, IIM Bengaluru topped the list of management, Jamia Hamdard in New Delhi topped the Pharmacy list, National Law School of India University in Bengaluru topped the list of law, AIIMS in New Delhi topped the list of medicine, and AIIMS in New Delhi”.

Objectives

- The main objective of NIRF is to ensure transparent and unbiased ranking criteria based on which different institutions, universities and colleges in India can be compared by the stakeholders.
- NIRF also ensures to account for biases that often occur in international rankings which seem to suggest that Indian universities and institutes perform badly.
- Their focus is on the research aspect of the institutes/universities because most of the Indian universities/ institutes were established for post-graduation studies.
- This ranking is also among the first attempts to acknowledge the gaps between Indian and International standards of higher education and to know as to why the Indian universities/institutes lagging behind in international rankings.

Parameters

NIRF has established five major dimensions that are used to rate India's universities, institutes, and colleges. These are as follows:

- **Teaching, Learning and Resources (TLR):** This parameter takes into account the strength of students in the institutes; the student-teacher ratio (emphasis is given on the number of permanent faculty present); the quality of faculty which is captured by taking into account the number faculty members with PhD or higher teaching experience.
- **Research and Professional Practice (RP):** This contains the weighted number of publications guaranteed by acceptable third-party sources, total citation count over the last three years; the number of patents granted and published

over the last three years; and the total citation count over the last three years.

- **Graduation Outcomes (GO):** It includes the percentage of students passing their respective examinations in the specified time of the programme enrolled and the average number of PhD students graduated over the last three years, as well as the percentage of students passing their respective examinations in the specified time of the programme enrolled.
- **Outreach and Inclusivity (OI):** This comprises of proportion of enrolled students who belong to other states or other countries; proportion of female students, female faculty and female staff; proportion of students who receive full tuition fee waiver and level of facilities provided for physical challenged students.
- **Perception (PR):** This captures the perception, views and judgements of a fairly large number of employers, academicians and professionals reputed in their respective fields regarding graduates of various institutions. This is done by conducting a survey in various fields, regions and sectors.

4. RUSA

Rashtriya Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) is a India's national government has launched a strategy to ensure the country's higher education development. “It was established in 2013 by the Ministry of Human Resource Development of the Government of India to route funds to Indian higher education institutions. The funding is to flow from the central government to the institutions through respective state government/union territories and in turn through the State higher Education Councils”. This funding would be conditional on a state's approach for addressing issues of fairness, access, and excellence in higher education, as outlined in the State Higher Education Plans.

Objectives

- Adopt accreditation as a mandated quality assurance system
- Implement transformative reforms in the state higher education system
- Ensure modifications in the affiliation, academic and examination systems.
- Ensure availability of qualified professors in all higher education institutions,
- To develop a proactive culture in the higher educational institutions for further research and innovations.
- Promote participation of women, minorities, and differently abled people

This is in accordance with the autonomous colleges' regulation 2018 of the University Grants Commission. RUSA would assess and recommend three autonomous colleges for promotion to university status, with funds of up to Rs. 55 crores available for each institution.

▪ **Establishment of Universities by conversion of colleges in a Cluster**

The resources and facilities of three to five existing affiliated government or government aided colleges would be merged to form a single cluster university. Such colleges should have sufficient infrastructural, academic, technical, and physical facilities to form a university. There is a short listing criterion that records the scores on various indicators for a particular college based on which colleges are selected. The indicators for shortlisting include: “NAAC score for lead college (20%), faculty positions filled in regular mode for cluster as a whole (20%), student-teacher ratio for cluster as a whole (20%), functional governance structure for cluster as a whole (20%), and funding priority for cluster as a whole (20%). The average grant allowance for a single cluster university would be Rs. 55 crores”.

▪ **Infrastructure Grants to Universities**

This grant would be exclusively for fulfilling certain infrastructural requirements. Such grant of Rs. 20 crore each will be allocated to 50 public universities. The fund can be used under three headings that are as follows: for installing new facilities, for renovating/upgrading existing facilities and for buying new facilities/ equipment’s.

▪ **Eminence and Quality in select State Universities (New)**

Based on the rating provided by NAAC, universities that scored a CGPA greater than 3.51 will be assisted to enhance their quality of infrastructure, teaching and research. The selected institutes will then have to guide other institutes. There is a short listing criterion that records the scores on various indicators for a particular college based on which top ten colleges are selected.

▪ **New Model Degree Colleges**

This is in accordance with the autonomous colleges regulation 2018 issued by the University Grants Commission. RUSA will evaluate and recommend three autonomous colleges for university status, with each school receiving a grant of up to Rs. 55 crores.. Seventy aspirational districts that are identified by Niti Ayog will be provided funds of Rs. 12 crores (max) for the construction of a MDC which would essentially have classrooms, library, toilets, faculty room, and other advanced facilities. There is a short listing criterion that records the scores on various indicators for a particular district based on which it is selected for the construction of MDC. The indicators for short listing include Aspirational District (50%) and Aspirational Districts with Institutional Density (50%).

▪ **Upliftment of active Degree Colleges to Model Degree Colleges**

Under this aspect, support is provided to the existing colleges to transform them into MDC. Those districts that do not have a single MDC will be given preference. A maximum of Rs. 4 crores would be allocated to each such college and there cannot be more than 75 of such colleges. The indicators for short listing include Aspirational District (25%), NAAC Score College (25%), Faculty Positions filled in regular mode (25%), and Student-Teacher Ratio (25%).

▪ **New Colleges (Professional)**

This feature will provide financial support of Rs. 26 crore each to establish eight professional colleges in those regions or districts that have below national average Institutional Density of Technical and Professional Education. The idea behind this initiative is to increase the Gross Enrolment Ratio in engineering and professional education in regions where they do not exist. The indicators for shortlisting include District Profile (50%), Districts with Institutional Density (50%).

Comparison of Indian Higher Education System to Higher Education Systems Abroad

The system of higher education around the world differs from country to country. They are mostly governed by the market structures, popular political ideologies and societal norms in a nation. However, as the education sector becomes more globalised, the number of students enrolling in programmes provided by universities or colleges in other countries is increasing. Therefore, the norms related to degree recognition and conversion of grades or percentage of marks should be made as uniform and simple as possible to facilitate easier inflow and outflow of students. China and India are among the nations that are home countries to many students who study abroad mostly in western nations. In this situation, a fair comparison of some of the main institutions of higher education around the world with the Indian higher education system is essential.

Summary and Recommendations

The current paper provides a comprehensive overview of India's higher education development and current situation, as well as key government initiatives such as- “the establishment of NCHER, an independent regulatory authority for accreditation and a national database of academic qualifications, as well as an increase in the number of universities, including IITs, IIMs, NITs, and SPAs”. The report also looks at how NEP 2020 is changing, as well as the function of several accreditations in improving the quality of our educational system. We suggest some recommendations in light of the current state of higher education in India in order to better handle the issues.

- Developing digital skills to bridge the gap between skill imparted and skill required to enhance employment rates. (It has also become a need during times of covid epidemic)
- The creation of a good research environment necessitates more worldwide cooperation and exposure.
- HEIs should have a positive attitude and be ready to adopt the New Education Policy's proposals. “Quality assurance institutions such as the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) and the National Board of Accreditation (NBA) must be reinforced”.
- Tax breaks/fiscal incentives for private/corporate/foreign institutions to establish higher education campuses in order to boost the gross enrolment ratio (GER) and exposure to the global market.
- Competitive salaries and perks for faculty so that bright minds are attracted to this field.
- Because hybrid teaching is now a part of the educational system, there is a need for increased internet connectivity across the country to allow for more inclusive learning in rural and urban locations.

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