Newspaper Clips

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GRIM PICTURE

No big opportunities for women scientists in India

Charu Sudan Kasturi
charu.kasturi@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: Working late nights in her laboratory at the IIT Delhi, physicist Savita Grewal had to battle more than just sleep to continue probing subatomic particles that could hold the secret to nature's deepest mysteries.

Grewal had just earned admission to the PhD programme at the IIT, but was facing pressure from her family to instead get married and relocate to Hyderabad where her husband worked. She gave in, and gave up on her PhD dream.

India offers the worst opportunities for women like Grewal in science, technology and innovation sectors, a comparative study by the Elsevier Foundation on seven major economies shows.

Researchers compared the US, the European Union (EU), South Korea, India, Brazil, South Africa and Indonesia on women's health, social status, economic

NEW ANALYSIS OF WOMEN'S ACCESS TO SCIENCE AND TECH IN SEVEN LEADING ECONOMIES RANKS INDIA AT THE BOTTOM

status, access to resources, representation in politics, government, industry and trade unions and education. They also compared the economies in science and engineering enrolment, PhDs and participation in the science and technology labour force for women, to compute a comprehensive rating of these economies on gender equality in science and technology.

The EU — despite the wide differences between member nations — ranked highest overall, followed by US. Brazil is third, close on the heels of the US, and is followed by South Africa, Indonesia and South Korea. India ranks last among the seven economies.

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Capital hosts biggest convention of IIT Kanpur Alumni's

Dr D.Subba Rao, Governor RBI; Mahesh Gupta, Chairman, Kent Ro Systems, Prof. M Anandkrishnan, Prof. I. Manna, Director IIT Kanpur, at the Biggest IIT Alumni's convention.

Over 1000 former students of IIT Kanpur of various batches from 60s and 70s gathered at Delhi IIT Campus on Sunday for a special convention cum reunion. The biggest ever reunion cum convention of IIT Kanpur Alumni held at IIT Delhi campus made it true that the best period of any one's life is the time he or she had spent in the college. The event was inaugurated by Dr D. Subba Rao followed by felicitation of Padam Bhushan and Padam Shri awardees from IIT Kanpur Alumni for 2013.

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The overuse of rankings

Global university ordering is limited in what it measures. The exercise provides only an incomplete perspective on higher education

Philip G. Altbach

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh recently chastised Indian universities for having no institutions in the "top 200" of the global higher education rankings. He sees this poor showing as an indication of the low quality of Indian higher education. Indian authorities also said that only overseas universities in the global "top 500" would be permitted to establish a branch campus or joint-degree programme in India. Other countries use the global rankings for internal purposes. Singapore uses them as a benchmark and as an indicator, where scholarship students may be sent. Russia has bemoaned its poor showing, has provided extra funding for selected universities, and is considering major additional resources for a few — in order to ensure that several will be in the top ranks soon. Kazakhstan is committed to having a university in the top tier and looks to rankings as a guideline. At least one American university president has been offered a salary bonus if his university improves its rank. The list goes on.

Anatomy and critique

There are, of course, many rankings. Most are national and some are specialised. The majority are sponsored by magazines and other for-profit organisations. Many, if not most, are worthless, because their methodologies are flawed or there is no methodology at all. Dr. Singh and most of the countries mentioned here refer to the three well-known international rankings. Two of these, the Academic Ranking of World Universities, popularly known as the "Shanghai rankings," and the World University Rankings of *Times Higher Education* are methodologically respectable and can be taken seriously.

But these rankings are quite limited in what they measure and thus provide only an incomplete perspective on higher education and on the universities that are ranked. The Shanghai rankings are quite clear in what is assessed — only research, research impact, and a few variables related to research — such as prizes awarded to professors and numbers of Nobel winners associated with the institution. *Times Higher Education* measures a wider array of variables. Research and its impact is at the top of the list, but reputation is also included as are several other variables — such as teaching quality and internationalisation. But since there is no real way to measure teaching or internationalisation, weak proxies are used. Reputation is perhaps the most controversial element in most of the national and global rankings. Even asking a selected group of academics and university leaders for their opinions about which universities are best yields questionable results. How much will physicists in Bulgaria or university rectors in Germany know about the quality of universities in India or Russia? It is not surprising, therefore, that only the Indian Institutes of Technology are ranked. They are among the few Indian institutions receiving international attention. In general, the more reputation is used as a key variable, the less accurate a ranking is likely to be. Further, respondents filling out reputational surveys for rankings will judge an institution on its research reputation — teaching excellence, national relevance, or university-university linkages are not part of the knowledge base.

NOT TOP 10: *Many outstanding institutions worldwide do not appear in the rankings because they do not fit into the specific criteria measured.* — PHOTO: RAJEEV BHATT

In addition, certain kinds of research receive the greatest attention — the research that appears in recognised international refereed journals. The journals that are chosen for inclusion in the Web of Science, Science Citation Index, Social Sciences Citation Index, and a few others are considered "legitimate." This limitation dramatically privileges publication in English — the language of the vast majority of the internationally recognised journals. Further, research that adheres to the norms and values of editors and peer reviewers, who are mainly in the top Western universities, will tend to get published. The hard sciences receive much more attention than soft fields such as the arts and humanities. Universities that are strong in technology, life sciences, and related fields have significant advantages.

Distortions

Many outstanding institutions worldwide do not appear in the rankings because they do not happen to fit into the specific criteria measured. In general, specialised universities, other than those in technology, do not do well. America's elite liberal arts colleges, by most accounts offering some of the best-quality education in the world, are nowhere to be found. Universities that do not have engineering or medicine are probably undercounted. Most important, perhaps, is the disadvantages faced by developing and emerging economies. Researchers do not have easy access to the top journals, must write in English, and perhaps most important, the topics and the methodologies of the research must be appealing to editors and reviewers in the central academic powers.

Usefulness of rankings

To an extent, the rankings provide a way of benchmarking for the small number of research universities worldwide. By looking carefully at the structures, governance, funding, and academic cultures of the universities that do well in the rankings, lessons can be learned. Even though the budgets of the research superpowers can seldom be matched and the access of these institutions to top international talent will be impossible for most, there are global academic practices that may yield insights.

Guidelines not models

For India, or other developing countries, to obsess about the rankings is a mistake. There may be lessons, but not rules. It is much more important that a balanced and differentiated academic system emerges, and as part of such a system there may be a few universities that can aspire to the middle or even the upper reaches of the ranking in time. To limit academic cooperation to those universities that are listed in the global rankings is also a mistake, since many outstanding institutions do not fit the rankings model but nonetheless may be excellent global partners. When it comes to universities, one size does not fit all. The global rankings measure just one kind of academic excellence, and even here the tools of measurement are far from perfect.

(Philip G. Altbach is Monan University Professor and director of the Center for International Higher Education at Boston College, U.S.)

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Colleges fudge docus to earn top ratings

NAAC Members Say Insiders Behind Fraud

Hemali Chhapia | TNN

Mumbai: Students planning to join a 'prestigious' college based on the rankings given by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council might want to think again. Documents accessed by TOI have revealed that a report submitted by an expert panel grading the excellence of a little-known academic institution has been tampered with, thus putting the institution on a par with some of the best colleges in the country.

A member of the NAAC executive council alleged that a group within the council could be behind the fraud, and maintained that the malpractice could be far more widespread than is currently known. The scam came to light last July when the members of the NAAC expert committee chanced upon the rating for the Udaipur-based Aravali Teacher Training College on the council's website.

The three-member committee, which had visited the campus when the college applied for accreditation, had recommended a Grade B and a cumulative grade point average (CGPA) of 2.835. The website, however, showed a rare A grade and a CGPA of 3.105, which puts the college in the same league as some distinguished institutions such as H R College, Mumbai and St Xavier's College in Kolkata.

A probe was instituted, which revealed that this was not a typographical error—the original confidential grade sheet submitted by the peer review team had been removed from the NAAC dossier and replaced with a doctored one that bore the forged signatures of all panel members. The needle of suspicion points to a syndicate within NAAC itself. A member of the NAAC executive council alleged that this group has been tampering with original reports sent by expert teams for a fat fee. "How many universities and colleges' grades have been altered this way is still unknown," he said. Despite the seriousness of the incident, NAAC is struggling to nail the culprits eight months after the incident came to light. A report from the Karnataka forensic laboratory confirmed the signatures on the report were forged. However, NAAC has not yet registered a police complaint.

BLACK MARKS FOR THE ASSESSOR

WHAT IS NAAC?

The National Assessment and Accreditation Council is an organization that assesses and accredits institutions of higher education in India. It is an autonomous body funded by the University Grants Commission and is headquartered in Bangalore

THE SCAM

Grades of educational institutions, an indicator of their academic excellence, were inflated by tampering with the assessment reports submitted by expert panels. A member of the NAAC executive council has alleged a much bigger commercial racket engineered by a syndicate within NAAC

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In 2100, Earth will be hottest in 11,300 years

After A 5,000-Yr Cooling Off Period, Global Temp Rising Sharply In The Last 100 Yrs: Study

Kounteya Sinha | TNN

London: In another 87 years, Earth will be the warmest ever. For the first time, scientists have reconstructed Earth's temperature history back to the end of the last Ice Age using data from 73 sites across the world. They have found that the planet today is warmer than it has been over the last 11,300 years.

The projection of global temperature for the year 2100 is most alarming. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) shows that temperatures are set to surpass the maximum temperatures in the 11,300-year period known as the Holocene — under all plausible greenhouse gas emission scenarios.

This is of particular interest because the Holocene spans the entire period of human civilization.

According to the researchers, history shows that over the past 5,000 years, the Earth on average cooled about -17°C (1.3°F) — until the past 100 years, when it warmed by -17°C (1.3° F).

The largest changes were in the northern hemisphere, specially Asia. Climate models project that global temperature will rise another -16.7 to -11.3°C (2.0 to 11.5°F) by the end of this century, largely dependent on the magnitude of carbon emissions. "What is troubling is that this warming will be significantly greater than at any time during the past 11,300 years," researchers said. Results of the study, by researchers at Oregon State University and Harvard University, were published in the journal Science.

Lead author Shaun Marcott says previous research on past global temperature change has largely focused on the last 2,000 years. Extending the reconstruction of global temperatures back to the end of the last Ice Age puts today's climate into a larger context.

"We already knew that on a global scale, Earth is warmer today than it was over much of the past 2,000 years. Now we know that it is warmer than most of the past 11,300 years," Marcott said. Peter Clark, co-author said, "When you just look at one part of the world, the temperature history can be affected by regional climate processes like El Nino or monsoon variations. But when you combine the data from sites all around the world, you can average out those regional anomalies and get a clear sense of the Earth's global temperature history."

According to the team, the most important natural factor affecting global temperatures during the last 11,300 years is a gradual change in the distribution of solar insolation linked with Earth's position relative to the sun.

"During the warmest period of the Holocene, the Earth was positioned such that Northern Hemisphere summers warmed more. As the Earth's orientation changed, Northern Hemisphere summers became cooler, and we should now be near the bottom of this long-term cooling trend — but obviously, we're not," they said.

According to Marcott the earth's climate responds tremendously to carbon dioxide and solar insolation.