



A STUDY ON THE EFFECT OF NIRF RANKING ON TLR IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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ABSTRACT:

Indian institutions are evaluated by the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) based on several criteria, including teaching-learning and resource availability, research and professional practice, graduation rates, outreach and inclusion, and perception. The purpose of the undertaken study is to examine the effect of the ranking framework on teaching, learning and resource usage within higher education institutions in India. A sample of 83 respondents was selected using purposive sampling from among higher education institutions of Coimbatore. Primary data was collected using a structured questionnaire. Analytical tools such as simple percentages, descriptive analysis, correlation, and ANOVA were employed for analysing the primary data. Research and development have received increased emphasis since the NIRF was put into place. Institutions are more driven to invest in research since it is a part of the TLR assessment in NIRF. Overall, it may be said that the ranking methodology has helped educational institutions put a much-needed emphasis on recruiting quality teachers, fostering Doctoral applicants, and boosting research.

KEYWORDS: *NIRF, Teaching-learning, resource allocation, Higher education, educational research, ranking framework*

1.0 INTRODUCTION:

India's higher education system is vast and complicated. India has the world's third biggest higher education system, behind China and the United States, with 795 universities, 39,671 associated colleges, 10,15,696 teaching staff, and 2,37,64,960 students, including 29,34,989 post-graduate students and 2,00,730 research researchers. Enrolment was 238 lakhs in 2013-14, up from a meagre 2 lakhs in 1947. Colleges, which are connected with 194 universities, make up the majority of India's higher education system, accounting for about 86.48 percent of total

enrollment (Department of Higher Education (MHRD-GOI), 2015).

The fact that roughly 90,000 Indian students attend higher education abroad each year is evidence of India's failure. They are well aware that after the IITs, IIMs, National Institutes of Technology, and Indian Institutes of Information Technology, there are just a few colleges connected to major universities and a few older, struggling private institutions that have managed to survive. Establishing a national ranking system would serve the same function as repainting a damaged wall of the many issues that are internally decaying the education sector are not acknowledged. Higher education institutions in India need an injection of quality and clarity about the strategy to develop world-class educational institutions within the Indian culture and setting. New quality standards must be established to assist the entire system in moving along the quality spectrum. Research evaluation and national rating of Indian educational institutions may have a significant impact on academic institutions' performance and quality. Given that universities in India are primarily focused on postgraduate education and research, it was decided to give weightage to Research Productivity, Impact, Intellectual Property Rights, Teaching, Learning, and Resources, Graduation Outcomes, Outreach, and Inclusivity.

To become well-known and flourish in their respective fields, educational institutions submit several applications for accreditation and work to improve their national rankings. Despite the haste to improve one's national rating, the educational system seems to be hampered by institutions' incapacity to meet the minimal standards for a respectable rank. Even the most prominent IITs and IIMs struggle to maintain a respectable reputation as notable educational institutions on a worldwide scale, as shown by this. This scenario can only be improved if educational institutions and their respective faculties are aware of the many elements that increase the likelihood of earning a national rank.

The undertaken study focuses solely on the TLR (Teaching, learning and resources) criteria of the NIRF. It must be noted that TLR is provided with a substantial weightage in the ranking framework and hence there is a need to explore this criterion extensively. The advent of the national ranking system has initiated several changes in the higher education system bringing in several welcome changes. The study endeavours to explore the effect of NIRF on the teaching-learning environment and the way how resources are being allocated and used within higher educational institutions.

2.0 REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Amit Kumar et al., (2021) point out that the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, announced the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) on September 29, 2015, to rate academic and research institutions across the country. On June 11th, 2020, the NIRF E-release of India Ranking 2020 took place. The current study examines the top 100 universities in terms of data visualisation, ranking relationships with parameters, and relationships between these parameters. The current study is a descriptive cross-sectional study in nature, with data being gathered through the NIRF's official website. Following data collection, it was analysed using SPSS-21 and Excel. The study's findings show that all universities'

Teaching, Learning, and Resources (TLR) scores were nearly identical, whereas the Research and Professional Practice (RP) scores varied significantly and played a significant role in ranking, with a positive linear correlation with the total score of $R^2 = 0.746$. The university's Peer Perception (PR) and RP have a tight relationship. The top ten institutions spent an average of 9.45 crore each year on libraries. It was also discovered that library spending has a positive relationship with research productivity and that universities with better research productivity also have higher publication quality in terms of citations.

Streatfeild, (2021) observes that according to a poll performed by a renowned international education organisation, 67 percent of Indian students under the age of 25 feel that the capacity of an institution to provide them with the skills necessary for future success is more essential than rankings. Only around a fifth (19%) believe it is important to attend a highly rated institution, even if it is more costly. Indian students' sentiments are consistent with the global trend, with 72 percent of students globally stating that they are more concerned about degree attainments. Only 17% still place a premium on rankings when selecting a university. The study, performed in August 2021, included over 1,200 Gen Z students from 93 countries and focused on their ambitions and objectives in the aftermath of the COVID-19 epidemic. Among the nations represented were India, China, Nigeria, Kenya, Japan, Australia, and Brazil.

Rao, (2021) states that the inadequate faculty-student ratio in Andhra Pradesh's state institutions is harming their NIRF ranks. The professor-student ratio, with a focus on tenured faculty, is a critical component of the TLR category. For example, 105 professors at Andhra University departed in the previous year alone, reducing the varsity's permanent staff from 356 in 2020 to 241 presently. The current faculty represents around one-fourth of the 900 academic jobs rationalised. As a result, Andhra University's rating has fallen further - from 16 in 2019 to 19 in 2020 to 24 in 2021. This is despite the university's progress in other ranking categories such as perception and outreach.

Khan et al., (2021) state that faculty members play a critical backbone role in elevating an educational institution to a position of prominence. Faculty members provide students with the information and skills essential to meet market demands. Letting go of talented, professional, and motivated faculty personnel may have a significant influence on the reputation and ability of any higher education institution to meet market requirements. The purpose of this study is to examine the many contributing elements and criteria for maintaining teaching personnel in schools and institutions of higher education. These criteria are then compared to the criterion data for "faculty" and "institutional support" at Accreditation Board of Engineering and Technology (ABET) certified institutions to determine their influence. According to the study, only a small percentage of academic members leave a school due to a larger student-to-faculty ratio or denial of tenure. Additionally, the majority of universities focus on giving fewer teaching hours per week to retain faculty members and encourage them to do research within the institution. Only 0.54 percent of the 737 faculty members at the 27 institutes included in this research departed ABET-accredited universities.

Kumar et al., (2020) comprehend that knowledge of a person or culture reveals the order

in which they have progressed, and similarly, good content merits a high ranking. The India Rankings (IR), also known as the National Institutional Rating Framework (NIRF), is India's first and most prominent ranking system, created by the Indian government to compare Indian institutions on a variety of criteria. The study outputs are one of the fundamental/primary factors of this ranking system. The impact of NIRF on research outcomes was the subject of this work. It also assesses the trends in publications by Indian universities. The study investigates the increase in the publication in several subject categories, as well as the influence of growth before and after the NIRF. The sample data is taken from 20 of the top 25 universities in the NIRF rankings during the last three years. The information for this study was gathered during the last six years from the Web of Science (WoS) bibliographic database. Three years before the India Rankings (2016, 2015, 2014) and three years during the NIRF exercise (IR19, IR18, IR17). It has been noticed that NIRF has had a significant influence on universities' research outputs (publication). It has been noted that university publications have risen after the India Rankings exercise. Following the NIRF, faculty members and research scholars have developed a greater awareness of the importance of research publications and increased their number of publications in a variety of subject sectors.

3.0 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The study has been conducted based on the following objectives:

1. To understand the awareness level of HEI faculties towards the TLR assessment under NIRF
2. To assess the perspective of higher education faculty on the impact of NIRF on teaching, learning and resource usage in Higher education institutions.

4.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The research employs a deductive survey methodology. The participants had to be members of the teaching staff at universities in the Coimbatore district, hence a purposeful sampling approach was adopted. A sample size of 100 people was chosen, and a self-created structured questionnaire was sent. Only 83 surveys were found to be full and appropriate for further investigation.

Statistical tools such as simple percentages, descriptive analysis, correlation analysis and ANOVA were employed for the analysis. The analytical results were analysed, and the data were compiled to reach appropriate conclusions.

5.0 ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION:

TABLE 1: DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Variable	Category	No. of Respondents	Percent	Total Percentage
Gender	Male	42	50.6	100.0
	Female	41	49.4	
AGE Group	25 - 30 years	20	24.1	100.0

	30-40 years	25	30.1	
	40 - 50 years	15	18.1	
	> 50 years	23	27.7	
Educational qualification	UG	19	22.9	100.0
	PG	39	47.0	
	Ph.D and above	25	30.1	
Teaching experience	1 - 5 years	22	26.5	100
	6-15 years	32	38.6	
	Above 15 years	29	34.9	
Type of institution	Private	28	33.7	100
	Government aided	26	31.3	
	Government-run	29	34.9	

The above table traces the demographic details of the respondents. Out of the surveyed 83 respondents, 50.6 percent of the respondents are male, and 49.4 percent of the respondents are female. It is to be noted that avoiding gender bias is important and hence the researcher has balanced the respondent genders to the highest extent possible.

With regards to the age group of the respondent, 24.1 per cent of the respondents are in the age group of 25 to 30 years, 30.1 per cent are between 30 to 40 years, 18.1 per cent are in the range of 40 to 50 years and 27.7 per cent are above 50 years of age. It could be seen that most (30.1%) of the respondents belong to the middle age group of 30 to 40 years.

Concerning the educational qualification of the respondents, only 22.9 per cent of the respondents have only a UG degree, 47 per cent have a PG qualification and 30.1 per cent have a doctorate or above qualification. Nearly three-fourths of the sample respondents have a minimum PG qualification. This is an indication of the changing recruitment scenario for teaching faculties as NIRF does not consider faculties without PG for ranking assessment

Based on teaching experience, 26.5 per cent of the respondents have 1-5 years of teaching experience, 38.6 per cent have 6 to 15 years of experience and 34.9 per cent have more than 15 years of experience. Most (34.9%) of the sample respondents have more than 15 years of experience.

Regarding the type of institution in which the respondents are working, 33.7 per cent work in private institutions, 31.3 per cent work in government-aided institutions and 34.9 per cent work in government-run institutions. The researcher has tried to maintain a balanced sample among the 3 types of institutions considered.

TABLE 2: AWARENESS TOWARDS NIRF CRITERIA FOR TLR

AWARENESS TOWARDS NIRF CRITERIA FOR TLR	Mean	Std. Deviation
Teaching, learning and resources (TLR) is one of the highly weighted criteria in NIRF	2.58	1.52

NIRF ranking considers the UG and PG student strength in comparison to the sanctioned intake which represents the preference of students in joining the institution	3.31	1.34
The number of students enrolled in doctoral programs also has an impact	3.12	1.31
Institutions with better faculty-student ratio score higher in the TLR category	3.18	1.29
Only faculty members with PG or Doctorate are considered for TLR assessment	3.13	1.36
A minimum of 1 faculty per 15 students is expected	3.08	1.45
Much emphasis is given towards employing full-time faculty	2.86	1.40
The experience of faculty is also considered for TLR calculations	3.22	1.28
Annual expenditure per student also has weightage in TLR Calculations	2.70	1.42
Completion of syllabus and examinations are also part of the TLR assessment	2.90	1.38

Source:PrimaryData

INTERPRETATION:

Table 2 describes the level of awareness towards the NIRF criteria for teaching, learning and resources (TLR). It could be observed that the opinion “NIRF ranking considers the UG and PG student strength in comparison to the sanctioned intake which represents the preference of students in joining the institution” has received the highest mean value of 3.31 indicating that the respondents are aware that NIRF ranking considers the admissions. The opinion “The experience of faculty is also considered for TLR calculations” has received the second highest mean value of 3.22 indicating that the respondents are aware of the experience criteria in NIRF. Also, this awareness is reflected in the recruitment processes where highly experienced faculty are given much preference. The opinion “Institutions with better faculty-student ratio score higher in the TLR category” has received the third highest mean of 3.18. This indicates the importance of maintaining a healthy faculty-student ratio.

The opinion “Only faculty members with PG or Doctorate are considered for TLR assessment” has received the fourth highest mean of 3.13 indicating the awareness towards well-qualified faculty. The opinion “The number of students enrolled in doctoral programs also has an impact” has received the fifth highest mean value of 3.12. The opinion “Teaching, learning and resources (TLR) is one of the highly weighted criteria in NIRF” has received the least mean value of 2.58. This indicates that the faculties of HEIs are aware of individual components and requirements of NIRF-TLR but are ignorant of the fact that TLR has a high weightage in NIRF ranking.

It could be concluded that awareness towards the weightage of student intake, need for

experienced faculty, a good student-faculty ratio, qualified faculty and presence of doctoral candidates are considerably high but the awareness towards the importance of TLR as a highly weighted criteria is less indicating the need for training resources and programmes towards the NIRF system.

TABLE 3: EFFECT OF NIRF ON TLR OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

EFFECT OF NIRF ON TLR OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS	Mean	Std. Deviation
The rating is useful in assessing institutions based on their teaching and learning accomplishments throughout the previous years.	3.01	1.19
NIRF ranking improves the outlook on the institution and hence increases student admissions.	2.84	1.54
NIRF encourages institutions to increase the number of experienced faculty with doctoral guideship	3.25	1.54
The student-faculty ratio has also improved in institutions trying to secure a NIRF rank	3.19	1.49
Institutions attempting to secure a NIRF ranking also avoid employing under-qualified faculty	2.90	1.54
While employing part-time faculties has been in practice widely, institutions prefer to employ experienced and qualified full-time faculty to improve their prospects in NIRF	2.86	1.42
Teachers are encouraged to engage in innovative teaching methodologies	2.98	1.46
Faculties are encouraged to complete the syllabus, cover additional topics, and provide additional certified courses to students	3.11	1.51
Additional efforts are being taken to improve the passing percentage of students as academic results are also part of the NIRF framework	3.27	1.46
Institutions are forthcoming in spending towards improving the research facilities, encouraging research works and innovations among students	3.16	1.39

Source: Primary Data

INTERPRETATION:

Table 3 describes the perspective towards the impact of NIRF on the TLR of higher educational institutions. The opinion “Additional efforts are being taken to improve the passing percentage of students as academic results are also part of the NIRF framework” has received the highest mean of 3.27 indicating that NIRF has encouraged institutions to improve their pass percentage. The opinion “NIRF encourages institutions to increase the number of experienced faculty with doctoral guideship” has received the second highest mean of 3.25 indicating that the focus is shifting towards research and development. The opinion “The student-faculty ratio has also improved in institutions trying to secure a NIRF rank” has received the third highest mean

of 3.19 indicating that institutions are hiring more experienced and qualified faculty to meet the demands of their students as the student-faculty ratio has a high weightage in NIRF-TLR assessment.

The opinion “Institutions are forthcoming in spending towards improving the research facilities, encouraging research works and innovations among students” has received the fourth highest mean of 3.16 reinforcing the opinion that the focus is shifting towards research because of NIRF. The opinion “Faculties are encouraged to complete the syllabus, cover additional topics, and provide additional certified courses to students” has received the fifth highest mean of 3.11 indicating that institutions have started paying more attention towards the teaching-learning process.

The opinion “NIRF ranking improves the outlook on the institution and hence increases student admissions” has received the least mean value of 2.84. Though institutions with NIRF ranking indeed attract good admissions, the opinion stems from the perspective that institutions must not aim for NIRF ranking just to boost their admissions but rather focus on improving the overall quality of the institution.

Table 4: Awareness towards NIRF criteria for TLR and effect of NIRF on TLR of Educational Institutions

Null Hypothesis (H₀): There is no significant correlation between the awareness towards NIRF criteria for TLR and effect of NIRF on TLR of educational institutions

Correlations			
		Awareness towards NIRF criteria for TLR	Effect of NIRF on TLR of educational institutions
Awareness towards NIRF criteria for TLR	Pearson Correlation	1	0.107
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.022
	N	83	83
Effect of NIRF on TLR of educational institutions	Pearson Correlation	0.107	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.022	
	N	83	83

INFERENCE:

The above table 4 shows that the Pearson Correlation(r) value between the awareness towards NIRF criteria for TLR and effect of NIRF on TLR of educational institutions is 0.107 and the significant p-value is 0.022 which resulted in a less than 0.05 significant level. Hence the result concluded that the awareness towards NIRF criteria for TLR and effect of NIRF on TLR of educational institutions significantly correlate with one another.

It could be concluded that awareness towards NIRF-TLR criteria equips the faculty with

the knowledge of what requires to be done to improve their standing in the national ranking list. This improves their efficiency and hence has an effect on the performance of educational institutions.

Table 5: Relationship between Age Group and Awareness, Effect of NIRF Ranking on TLR in Higher Education Institutions

Null Hypothesis (H_0): There is no significant correlation between the Age Group and Awareness, Effect of NIRF Ranking on TLR in Higher Education Institutions

ANOVA							
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Remarks
Awareness towards NIRF criteria for TLR	Between Groups	79.899	3	26.633	1.219	.308	Not Significant
	Within Groups	1726.511	79	21.855			
	Total	1806.410	82				
Effect of NIRF on TLR of educational institutions	Between Groups	521.091	3	173.697	7.826	.000	Significant
	Within Groups	1753.294	79	22.194			
	Total	2274.386	82				

INFERENCE:

The above table 5 indicates that the p-value between the Age Group and Awareness towards NIRF criteria for TLR is greater than 0.05, at the 5% level of significance. Hence the null hypothesis got accepted and concluded that there is no significant association between the Age Group and Awareness towards NIRF criteria for TLR.

Similarly, the p-value between the Age Group and Effect of NIRF on TLR of educational institutions is less than 0.05, at the 5% level of significance. Hence the null hypothesis got rejected and concluded that there is a significant association between the Age Group and Effect of NIRF on TLR of educational institutions.

Table 6: Relationship between Teaching Experience and Awareness, Effect of NIRF Ranking on TLR in Higher Education Institutions

Null Hypothesis (H_0): There is no significant correlation between the Teaching Experience and Awareness, Effect of NIRF Ranking on TLR in Higher Education Institutions

ANOVA						
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Awareness towards	Between Groups	18.128	2	9.064	.405	.668
	Within Groups	1788.282	80	22.354		

NIRF criteria for TLR	Total	1806.410	82			
Effect of NIRF on TLR of educational institutions	Between Groups	201.876	2	100.938	3.896	.024
	Within Groups	2072.510	80	25.906		
	Total	2274.386	82			

INFERENCE:

The above table 5 indicates that the p-value between the teaching experience and Awareness towards NIRF criteria for TLR is greater than 0.05, at the 5% level of significance. Hence the null hypothesis got accepted and concluded that there is no significant association between the teaching experience and Awareness towards NIRF criteria for TLR.

Similarly, the p-value between the teaching experience and Effect of NIRF on TLR of educational institutions is less than 0.05, at the 5% level of significance. Hence the null hypothesis got rejected and concluded that there is a significant association between the teaching experience and Effect of NIRF on TLR of educational institutions.

6.0 FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS:

The demographic variables of the respondents reveal the presence of a few faculties with UG qualifications which may affect TLR assessment. Also, the importance provided to highly experienced faculty is noted. It is also seen that faculties are less aware of the overall weightage of the TLR criteria and must be trained regarding the ranking framework. Periodic training programmes towards different NIRF criteria would equip the faculty with knowledge of what is expected from the faculty.

Discussions on the impact of NIRF on the teaching-learning process revealed that more importance is given towards improving the pass percentage of students. Also, higher education institutions have started focusing on hiring more qualified and well-experienced faculty to meet the student-faculty ratio requirements. The focus towards research and development has also increased after NIRF came into effect. Institutions are more willing to spend on research as it is also part of the TLR assessment in NIRF. Also, faculties are encouraged to cover topics from outside of the syllabus and also conduct add-on certification courses for students. It was also found that awareness towards NIRF and the impact of NIRF were correlated as higher awareness leads to better performance as the faculty will be aware of what is expected of them. It was found that there is a significant association between the age, teaching experience and Effect of NIRF on TLR of educational institutions.

7.0 CONCLUSIONS:

Education institutions need to attract students to enroll in their courses. One of the most important considerations while applying for admission to the institution is the NIRF rating.

Higher NIRF Rankings in educational institutions or universities might increase student interest in admission. However, colleges should put more effort into raising the overall quality of the institution rather than focusing on NIRF rankings solely to increase admissions. For faculty to know what is expected of them, it is also vital to train them on the NIRF criteria. Faculty who are more aware of the NIRF assessment would perform better in order to satisfy the ranking criteria. Discussions on how NIRF has affected teaching and learning have shown that raising student passing out rates is given greater priority. To achieve the standards for the student-faculty ratio, higher education institutions have also begun concentrating on employing more competent and experienced professors. Since the implementation of NIRF, attention has also been drawn more to research and development. Because research is a component of the TLR evaluation in NIRF, institutions are more motivated to invest in it. Overall, it could be concluded that the ranking framework has brought about a much-needed focus on employing qualified faculty, encouraging doctoral candidates, and increasing research within educational institutions.

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