NIRF's Ranking of Higher Education Institutions

What is the issue?

The NIRF's ranking of State-run and centrally-funded higher education institutions on a common scale have become problematic.

What is NIRF ranking?

- The NIRF was approved by the MHRD (Ministry of Human Resource Development) and launched in 2015.
- The framework outlines a methodology to rank institutions across the country.
- The ranking framework evaluates institutions on five parameters:
    1. Teaching, Learning & Resources
    2. Research & Professional Practice (RP)
    3. Graduation Outcomes
    4. Outreach & Inclusivity (OI)
    5. Perception (PR)

Key Highlights of India Rankings 2021

- IIT Madras retains 1st Position in overall category as well as in Engineering for the third consecutive year.
- Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru tops the University as well as Research Institution category in India Rankings 2021.
- IIM Ahmedabad tops in Management subject and AIIMS, New Delhi occupies the top slot in Medical for the fourth consecutive year.
- Jamia Hamdard tops the list in Pharmacy subject for the third consecutive year.
- Miranda College retains 1st position amongst colleges for the fifth consecutive year.
- IIT Roorkee takes the top slot for the first time in Architecture subject displacing IIT Kharagpur.
- National Law School of India University, Bangalore retains its first position for in Law for the fourth consecutive years.
- Colleges in Delhi dominate ranking of colleges with five colleges out of first 10 colleges from Delhi.

- Manipal College of Dental Sciences, Manipal, secure 1st position in "Dental" category.

Where State HEIs lag in the ranking?

- The Central government earmarked the sums, Rs. 7,686 crore and Rs. 7,643.26 crore to the IITs and central universities, respectively, in the Union Budget 2021.
- According to an All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2019-20 report, 184 are centrally funded institutions to which the Government of India generously allocates its financial resources.
- In contrast, the total student enrolment, the number of undergraduate students is the largest (13,97,527) in State public universities followed by State open universities (9,22,944).
- In the absence of adequate faculty strength, most State HEIs lag behind in this crucial NIRF parameter for ranking.
- The State HEIs fare miserably in modernisation of laboratories parameter while pitted against central institutions.
- The share of PhD students is the highest in State public universities, i.e. 29.8%, while the funds State HEIs receive are much less when compared to centrally funded institutions.
- The NIRF parameters too offer little opportunity for State HEIs to compete with their better and conveniently placed competitors for ranking.

What are the deficiencies in the focus?

- The salary and pension liabilities are barely managed by State-sponsored HEIs and rating such institutions equally with centrally funded institutions does not make any sense.
- No agency carries out a cost-benefit analysis of State versus centrally funded HEIs on economic indicators compared to the contribution of their students in nation building parameters.
- While students who pass out of elite institutions generally prefer to move abroad in search of higher studies and better career prospects, majority of State HEIs contribute immensely in building the local economy.
- State HEIs are struggling to embrace emerging technologies involving artificial intelligence, machine learning, block chains and other forms of educational software/hardware to remain relevant as per the New Education Policy.
- The NIRF seems to have recognized only the strength of institutions while

completely disregarding the problems they encounter, hence, disallowing a level-playing-field to State universities compared to the centrally funded counterparts.

- Scare resources and the unenthusiastic attitude of States prevent such institutions from competing with centrally sponsored and strategically located HEIs.
- It is time the NIRF plans an appropriate mechanism to rate the output and the performance of institutes in light of their constraints and the resources available to them.

References

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