

versities, Altbach et al. point to three essential ingredients: talent, resources, and favorable governance. These three elements will, of course, be necessary for all the IoE chosen by the government of India. But let us focus on the specific needs of Jio Institute since, in our view, it faces unique opportunities and challenges and seems to be a highly ambitious endeavor. We have mentioned resources already, a daunting challenge, especially since no public funds will be made available to Jio or the other private institutions. Let us focus on talent (faculty and students) and governance.

Faculty are at the heart of any university, affecting every aspect of realizing and implementing the university mission. In the case of rankings ambition, research output is a key metric. So, attracting top research-oriented academic talent will not only require financial resources to pay faculty at global compensation rates, but also providing an attractive quality of life for their families on and off campus. Would Karjat—a city two hours away by car from Mumbai airport—be able to provide an ecosystem of soft and hard infrastructure critical for attracting the best international talent?

Student demand for quality education in India remains strong, and the Reliance brand and an innovative curriculum would make it relatively easy to attract top domestic students. However, the real challenge would be in attracting international students. The international student decision-making process is complex, with many global choices available to the best students. For example, an “institute” does not command as strong a recognition among international students and faculty as a “university.” Can the Reliance, Ambani, or Jio brand impress the global market and influence student choice toward India and the Jio Institute?

A positive element of the IoE program is the high degree of autonomy and freedom from government policy and regulatory constraints. However, Jio (and the others chosen for IoE) need to have creative ideas in terms of organization and governance. For example, to what degree do decision-making processes need to be collaborative, with faculty involvement as compared to top-down mandate? Top universities, after all, are not business enterprises but rather innovative communities of academics. Traditional corporate management styles do not align with the governance expectations of a creative university.

Building world-class universities is a resource-intensive and highly creative endeavor, which truly tests patience and persistence. Indian higher education is in dire need of exemplars of excellence. Realizing the ambition to build world-class universities in India through IoEs will require alignment of resources, talent (faculty and students), and governance. ■

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What about Provincial Institutions in Higher Education Policy in India?

ANAMIKA SRIVASTAVA AND NANDITA KOSHAL

Anamika Srivastava is assistant professor and fellow, and Nandita Koshal is research associate at the International Institute for Higher Education Research and Capacity Building (IIHED) at O. P. Jindal Global University (JGU), Sonapat, India. E-mails: anamika@jgu.edu.in and nkoshal@jgu.edu.in.

Focusing on a few “top” national research universities is now a conscious higher education policy choice of governments in many countries. By doing this, governments aim for a spot in the global university rankings, sometimes at the cost of ignoring the larger higher educational landscape. In the context of India, the latest move of the federal government to develop a few “Institutions of Eminence” (IoEs) is commendable. But in its grand vision to develop IoEs, the government should not lose sight of reforming its provincial educational system.

All Indian universities or university-level institutions (higher educational institutions that have the right to confer or grant degrees), either public or private, are established by the Act of the Indian Parliament/Federal Government Act or by a provincial government act. Most renowned higher education institutions such as the Indian Institutes of Technology, the Indian Institutes of Management, Jawaharlal Nehru University, and the University of Delhi are established and funded by the federal government. However, institutions established by provincial governments are predominant in the Indian higher education landscape. Provincial institutions comprise public universities, their affiliated colleges, and private universities. Almost 96 percent of the total number of higher education institutions in India are “provincial institutions.” Nearly 84 percent of the total enrollment and 92 percent of the total teaching staff in India are in provincial institutions. However, when it comes to performance in the framework of rankings, very few provincial institutions are “well performing.” According to the National Institutional Ranking Framework, meant to rank higher education institutions in India, only 20 provincial institutions featured in the top 100 in 2017. In the recently released QS BRICS ranking 2018, out of 65 Indian higher education institutions featured in the top 300, there are only 29 provincial institutions.

While often ignored or overlooked within the country’s higher education policy discourse, provincial institutions are in dire need of financial resources and governance re-

forms and require the urgent attention of policy makers.

THE NEED FOR FINANCIAL RESOURCES

While federal level institutions are funded by the federal government, provincial institutions, which constitute the majority of the higher education landscape in India, are funded by provincial governments, the federal government, and the private sector. According to an estimate, in 2014–2015, while 63.48 percent of the total public expenditure on higher education was incurred by the provincial governments, only 36.52 percent was incurred by the federal government. However, since the bulk of higher education institutions are financially dependent on provincial governments, the annual per capita budgeted expenditure of the provincial governments is very low compared to that of the federal government. While variations in higher education expenditure between the provinces can be correlated to the fiscal capacity and political ambitions of the provincial governments, this impacts on the quality of higher education. On the other hand, provincial institutions receive little support from the federal government. In 2016–2017, the federal government—through the department of higher education—transferred only 6 percent of its total budget on higher education to the provincial governments.

Institutions established by provincial governments are predominant in the Indian higher education landscape.

In 2013, the National Higher Education Mission (also known as *Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan* in Hindi, or RUSA), a scheme cofunded by the federal and provincial governments, was launched to fund provincial institutions. According to data on the RUSA website, as of January 2017, only 12.39 percent of the central funds committed in the XII plan period (2012–2017) have been released to the provinces. One of the main reasons behind this is the incapacity of provinces to provide their financial share and the inability of provincial institutions to justify their financial requirements.

EXTERNAL GOVERNANCE REFORM

Apart from financial reforms, provincial higher education is in need of external governance reforms. It is noteworthy that the tasks of maintenance and coordination of quality in higher education are the responsibility of the federal government. This means that higher education regulatory

bodies at the provincial level are left with the administrative role of implementing orders from federal-level regulatory bodies such as the University Grants Commission, the All India Council for Technical Education, the Bar Council of India, etc. There is little scope for creativity and innovation at the province level due to the approval procedure, where adherence to federal rules and regulation acts is an overarching constraint, inhibiting the ability of institutions to find solutions to their everyday problems.

INTERNAL GOVERNANCE REFORM

With respect to the internal governance structure of the universities, the importance of affiliation reforms needs to be pointed out. In India, colleges are required to be formally attached (affiliated) to a university, which is responsible for disbursing funding and providing information, manpower, and central directives to the affiliated college. The college, in turn, draws its recognition from that university. Universities are charged with communicating policies, reforms, and schemes to the colleges, in addition to managing exams and the publication of results, as well as the admission process. Colleges, on the other side, are responsible for implementing office orders sent by the affiliating university, collecting proof of implementation of these orders, and communicating with the university. In India, an affiliating university is tied to 143 colleges on average—while Chhatrapati Sahuji Maharaj Kanpur University, a provincial university in Uttar Pradesh, affiliates 896 colleges — and these figures indicate the extent to which both universities and colleges are burdened with added administrative responsibilities. Indeed, overburdened universities often transfer their administrative burden to their affiliated colleges. This calls for urgent internal governance reforms regarding affiliation, declaring some of the colleges autonomous, and adopting information and communication technology in everyday governance.

“CONTRACTUALIZATION” OF ACADEMIC LABOR

A related issue that urgently needs attention is the rise of “contractualization” and casualization of academic labor. Faculty who are hired on short-term, nonpermanent contracts are known as temporary or ad hoc (“make do”) teachers. Ad hoc faculty cause less financial burden, shoulder more administrative responsibilities in addition to their teaching load, can easily be “hired and fired,” and therefore have become a preferred option for the institutions. The “contractualization” of labor is higher at provincial institutions compared to federally funded institutions. According to a report of the All India Survey on Higher Education of the ministry of human resource development, between 2011 and 2016, there has been an increase of 71 percent in

the total number of temporary teachers employed at provincial institutions, compared to an increase of 52 percent at federally funded institutions.

CONCLUSION

Provincial institutions in India require urgent policy attention—and more than piecemeal efforts—from both the federal and the provincial governments. In particular, it is unfair to judge their performance according to parameters meant for assessing global research universities. Provincial public institutions must primarily address the needs of the young population in terms of affordable degrees. While India embarks on the journey of developing a few world-class research institutions, it should not ignore the need for quality but affordable teaching in its provincial institutions. ■

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Teaching in Indian Higher Education: Six Principles for Improvement

SAYANTAN MANDAL

Sayantana Mandal is assistant professor, National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA), New Delhi, India. E-mail: s.mandal@niepa.org.

Effective teaching in higher education plays an important role in promoting the development of learners, societies, and countries. Surprisingly, until recently there had been no large-scale empirical study in India on how to improve teaching in higher education institutions (HEIs). For the first time, the Centre for Policy Research in Higher Education (CPRHE) has completed a major study, titled “Teaching and Learning in Indian Higher Education,” which collected empirical data from both undergraduate and master’s level programs and across major disciplines. The study shows that there are considerable differences between teaching at the undergraduate and at the master’s levels, with an acute disconnect between teachers, students, and administration. This indicates why instruction in India’s higher education sector is largely ineffective in promoting learning. Our analysis proposes six key principles to improve teaching in Indian HEIs.

TEACHING AT THE UNDERGRADUATE AND MASTER’S LEVELS

As a common practice, instructors of Indian HEIs rush to complete their syllabi and tend to use suggestive teaching (focusing on end-term examinations), while analytical teaching takes a back seat. In the majority of undergraduate courses, teaching is therefore noninteractive, unidirectional, and monotonous. Digital information and communication technologies (ICTs) such as computers and projectors have merely replaced traditional blackboards and are rarely used beyond providing textual information. Regional languages are mostly used during lectures for the ease of understanding, although most study materials are available in English.

Another step toward inclusivity is feedback from students.

At the master’s level, teaching takes place through a combination of information-oriented and interactive lecturing. Teachers often encourage discussions in the classroom and are more willing to incorporate and integrate students’ prior knowledge. Although many continue teaching in traditional ways, some teachers modify their style according to the students’ requirements. Unlike in undergraduate classes, English is used as the main medium of instruction, alongside regional languages. However, the use of ICTs remains largely similar to the undergraduate level.

THE DISCONNECT

Interestingly, teachers who teach both undergraduate and master’s level courses change their teaching style from information-oriented, unidirectional teaching for lower degree classes, to a more interactive style at the graduate level. Students of both levels, however, want interactive teaching. To be precise, they all prefer knowledgeable, interactive, motivating, friendly, and open-minded teachers—the top-five preferred characteristics of an effective teacher by students across case-study HEIs.

Institutional administrators place blame on teacher shortages and large-size classes (with sometimes 150 or more students in a single classroom) as two major reasons for ineffective teaching. Instructors, on the other hand, blame the cumbersome syllabi, excessive administrative workload, and lack of student English language proficiency. These factors often force them to rush and practice prescriptive and routine teaching using regional language(s).