

Monthly Newsletter

July 2023



Dear Reader,

It gives us great pleasure to bring to you this R M Consulting Newsletter that has Education as its theme.

This Newsletter contains our views on how the proposed National Research Foundation (NRF) could emerge as a major catalyst in significantly improving the quality of life of India's 1.4 billion citizens, some of the changes that we would like to see in the arena of management education, and the need for our educators to step up for realising the common aspiration of a self-reliant India.

We would look forward to your comments and feedback on the Newsletter.

Best wishes,

Team R M Consulting

For National Research Foundation to be effective, its research grants must not go to a few institutions only



Synopsis

The NRF choosing to make its funds available to a limited set of educational and research institutions could come in the way of the development of newer ideas and approaches which are essential to address some of the biggest challenges faced by India today, ranging from climate change on the one hand to creating more, new, and better-quality jobs for its ever-increasing workforce on the other.

Sumali Moitra

The Union Cabinet's recent approval for introducing a Bill in Parliament regarding the National Research Foundation (NRF) – about which mentions had been made in the National Education Policy 2020, and the 2021 Budget speech of Finance Minister Mrs Nirmala Sitharaman – is a hugely positive development as it sets the ball rolling for the establishment of a vibrant, robust, and sustainable research ecosystem in India.

Leveraged successfully, the NRF – that could promote breakthrough innovations at a scale and magnitude not seen before – could have an enormous impact in fast-tracking, and making more inclusive, the process of growth and development of India that aspires to attain developed nation status in a couple of decades. And, thereby, most significantly, contribute to bettering the quality of life of the country's 1.4 billion citizens.

Given its imprint-leaving potential on signature missions such as 'Make in India', 'Digital India', etc. that have been launched in the past with the goal of ensuring *Sabka Vikas* (development for all), the NRF could also play an important role in taking us closer to becoming *Atmanirbhar Bharat* by strengthening each of the five pillars (economy, infrastructure, technology-

driven systems, demography and demand) on which rests the aspiration of creating a self-reliant India.

To realise the full promise of the National Research Foundation, however, it is important that the organization ensures that its systems and processes are geared in a way that treats each proposal for a research grant on merit and the benefits that could accrue to India through the study, guarantees that the funds go to the most deserving, and that the NRF does not end up favouring a select group of educational and research institutions.

The National Research Foundation could stand to lose much of its effectiveness, and, by extension, the citizens of India deprived of multiple gains, if the NRF chooses to shower the bulk of its grants on a few chosen institutions, including legacy ones. The NRF taking this approach could come in the way of the development of newer ideas and approaches which are essential to address some of the biggest challenges faced by India today, ranging from climate change on the one hand to creating more, new, and better-quality jobs for its ever-increasing workforce on the other.

Many newly formed educational institutions in the private sector and promising researchers (either independent or unattached to the selected cohort of institutions receiving NRF funding) could find it difficult to give full play to their research agendas if the National Research Foundation becomes the go-to funding agency for a handful of institutions. The possibility of brain-drain could also get accentuated if a few institutions garner the bulk of the NRF funds.

While on the issue of brain-drain, it may be relevant to mention at this point that the number of researchers (in full-time equivalent) per million population in India stood at a mere 262 in 2020-21. By way of comparison, the United States has slightly over 4,821 and China (excluding the Special Administrative Regions of Hong Kong and Macao) 1584.9 researchers per million inhabitants respectively.

The National Research Foundation could check out how the US National Science Foundation (NSF) goes about its job given the similarity in the scope of work of the two agencies. The NRF could benefit from the learnings of the NSF since, in an average year, the US federal agency funds nearly 12,000 competitive awards for research, education and training, and supports about 2,000 colleges, universities, and other institutions and nearly 318,000 researchers, entrepreneurs, students and teachers.

An opportunity to make a tangible difference in the lives of nearly 17 percent of the global population (which is what India represents) does not present itself to many organizations. One would hope that the National Research Foundation would see this as its chance to make a name for itself as a harbinger of change.

(The author is an Advisor at R M Consulting.)

NIRF should rank top 200 mgmt. education providers

Synopsis

Given the growing number of business schools in India, the National Institutional Ranking Framework rating the top 200 management education providers in the country will ensure that students can make more informed choices when it comes to selecting the educational institution where they would like to enrol for obtaining a management diploma/degree and not have to take a leap of faith in this regard.

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The growing demand of management graduates in industry and business, and even in the social sector, has led to the establishment of several standalone management schools by the private sector over the past few years, as well as seen many newly formed private universities offer postgraduate and even doctoral programs in management.

While this has enabled students to have more choices when it comes to selecting the private

sector education service provider where they would like to enrol for a management qualification (MBA/PGDM depending on whether the management program is being offered by a university or standalone institution), it has also led to apprehensions being expressed in some quarters about the quality of education being provided by some of these institutions.

In such a scenario, it would be helpful from a student's point of view if, going forward, the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) that rates higher education institutions, including those providing management education, on a range of parameters could rank the top 200 management education providers in India. And not just the top 100 as was done during NIRF 2023, with management education providers falling between 101 to 125 in the ranking being listed alphabetically.

A total of 776 management education providers, including the highly reputed legacy Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs), had submitted their entries for the NIRF 2023.

Ranking the top 200 management education providers would ensure that students can make more informed choices when it comes to selecting the private sector educational service provider where they would like to enrol for obtaining a management diploma/degree and not have to take a leap of faith in this regard. It would also lower the chances of students, particularly those hailing from smaller towns and cities, falling victim to unverifiable claims made by some education service providers to fill seats at their facilities.



Such a move, moreover, could force standalone private sector management schools and private sector-run universities to up their game regarding delivery of consistent, quality education due to the likely fear of losing students to competitors that are ranked higher in the NIRF list.

Sight must not be lost of the fact that a vibrant demography is one of the pillars on which rests the national aspiration of establishing a self-reliant India. It would, thus, only be fitting if all possible steps are taken to ensure that students are empowered to take better decisions when it comes to selecting management institutions for study so that the education they receive could, in time, enable them to better their own futures and, also, place them in a position where they can significantly contribute to the country's growth and development.

For an Atmanirbhar Bharat, educators must step up

Synopsis

Demography has been identified as one of the pillars that need strengthening to realise the ambition of a self-reliant India. It is imperative that our educators display the enthusiasm and readiness to contribute to this national goal.

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Ever since the announcement of the National Education Policy 2020, there has been much talk on the extent to which it could benefit students and be able to move the needle in making India a global force to reckon with in the education arena.

Several educators have been at the forefront in leading the deliberations on these issues, which, it must be said, is welcome considering that the degree to which we are able to leverage our favourable demography could hold the key to realizing the *Atmanirbhar Bharat* (self-reliant India) that we envision.

But even as they engage themselves in such lofty discussions, it could probably be in the fitness of things if educators also introspect on the reasons why students studying in expensive private unaided schools are contributing

to the boom in the tuition/coaching centre economy and to the surge in the popularity of learning apps despite receiving “quality education” at schools.

For is it not unfortunate that students (*and many a time even those at junior grades*) enrolled at such educational institutions across India often supplement what they learn at school with extra classes outside? When the supposedly higher standard of education imparted by these schools due to the apparently better teachers employed should have either removed or at least reduced the need for students to do so.

But why only single out schools?

Teachers at our colleges, universities, etc. should also reflect on whether their own shortcomings have had a role to play in India – with more than 60,000 higher education institutions (*that include colleges, universities, and standalone institutions*) – constantly churning out many unemployable graduates of whom businesses find no use. And, while they are at it, ponder on whether their being more open-minded to change could help Indian universities and specialized higher education institutions feature in the top 100 global rankings and attract the best students in much bigger numbers from overseas in future.

For is it befitting a nation of 1.4 billion people and counting, with such a large higher education framework, to only have a few islands of global excellence in the form of the Indian Institute of Science (IIS), Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs), etc.? Shouldn't those associated with the teaching profession be trying to do something about this?

Ultimately, improving India's education arena requires all stakeholders, including educators, to work unitedly so that things may change for the better. Likely spending endless time critiquing the role of other stakeholders in a seeming attempt to absolve themselves of responsibility for the situation that currently exists in the Indian education scenario may not come across as proper on the part of all those connected with the teaching profession.

R M Consulting in the Media

ict connect
"magazine of ict academy of tamil nadu"



THERE'S NO PLACE FOR RIGIDITY IN MANAGEMENT COURSE CURRICULUM IN A VUCA WORLD!

Modifying the curriculum because the circumstances demand such would work in the best interests of students by raising their employability quotient and ensure that they are not found wanting when it comes to the set of skills that a corporate is on the lookout for among fresh hires in a new business setting.



Sumali Moitra
Advisor,
R M Consulting, Gurgaon

<https://ictconnect.in/Article.aspx?articletitle=There%E2%80%99s-no-place-for-rigidity-in-management-course-curriculum-in-a-VUCA-world>

Contact:

R M Consulting

Regus Level 6, JMD Regent Square, M.G. Road, Gurugram, Haryana 122002

Phone: +91-9810261496; +91-124-4939054

Email: rumkimoitra@rmconsulting.in

Website: <https://rmconsulting.in>