EDITORIAL

Indian Higher Health Education Institutions and World University Ranking: A Viewpoint

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Competitiveness is very important for growth in any field. Equally important is to create a competitive environment and platform that will push the competitors to showcase their excellence. Worldwide, educational universities are also making efforts to excel and make a mark on various ranking platforms. This has a definite impact on imparting high-quality education and raising the standards. Moreover, ranking systems will help the students in choosing appropriate institutions for their future education. By virtue of this process, universities get international students.

The QS World University Rankings[1] and Times Higher Education[2] (THE) World University Rankings are the most widely referred and reputed international ranking agencies. Annually these ranking agencies publish a list of top universities in the world based on the various

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parameters like academic peer review, staff-student ratio, international students and faculty, teaching-learning environment, research, and publications. Among all these parameters, maximum weight has been given to research work and publications. For publication and citation analysis, Times Higher Education relies on Web of Science (WoS) database, which is now maintained by Clarivate Analytics. On the other hand, QS World University ranking uses data from SCOPUS database (a part of Elsevier) for such analysis. Use of such databases is highly justified as they represent the most trusted source of scientometric analysis in comparison with other lesser-known databases.

In India, currently, there is only one centrally recognized ranking system in operation called National Institute Ranking Framework (NIRF), which is approved by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India.[3] In line with the QS and THE world university rankings, NIRF obtains data from SCOPUS and WoS for the publication related analysis. Moreover, other recognition and accreditation central agencies like Union Grant Commission and National Assessment and Accreditation Council also gives paramount importance to WoS and SCOPUS databases for analysis of publication.

The statutory bodies like the Medical Council of India (MCI) and Dental Council of India (DCI) are the regulatory authorities for medical and dental education in India. One of the important parameters considered for faculty promotions in medical and dental institutions is publication. Careful analysis of guidelines given for consideration of publication revealed that both the governing agencies do not consider WoS and SCOPUS indexed papers for the promotion of the faculty members. In MCI guidelines, vague terminologies are used like indexed publications, national publications, etc. for publication consideration criteria for faculty promotions.[4] While in case of DCI, only PUBMED database along with

other vague parameters like 'journals published by Indian/international dental specialty associations approved by Dental Council of India', 'medical/dental journals published by government health universities awarding dental degree', 'journals published by deemed universities / dental institutions/Indian Dental Association', etc., are considered for faculty promotions.[5] Faculty members in Indian medical and dental institutions mainly focuses on journals that fall within the guidelines of MCI and DCI. There are many mediocre or sometimes predatory journals that are not indexed in WoS and SCOPUS but fits within the MCI and DCI guidelines. Faculties prefer these journals for paper publication, as the acceptance rate is significantly higher as compared to journals indexed in WoS and SCOPUS. Because of such practice, the majority of publications (and valuable research data) from Indian health institutions are being credited in these mediocre journals. In terms of worldwide ranking, such practice could seriously impact the global reputation of not only the Indian medical and dental institutions but also of India as a country.

Past cannot be changed and the future is always in our hands. The government of India has dissolved MCI and new regulatory body constitution is underway. Similarly, DCI is on the verge of getting dissolved. We recommend that future regulatory bodies should take cognizance of various international ranking systems for framing the guidelines for publications and awarding academic promotions. For creating uniformity and equality in the guidelines, there is a dire need for cross-talk between the various central governing agencies (UGC, NAAC, NIRF, DCI, and MCI). Indian medical and dental educational institutions have great potential in terms of vast clinical materials and intellectual minds. Just by framing proper guidelines, India will be able to make a mark at the international level in terms of international ranking.

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