Chapter 6
The World-Class University Discourse: Disentangling the Conflict Between Efficiency and World Class-Ness

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Introduction

Primarily, world-class universities enjoy abundance of funds, have an atmosphere of academic freedom, undertake international collaboration and have talented faculty and students, also from across the border.[1] The nations, round the globe, are recognizing that for economic growth an economy driven by knowledge is needed, which needs research. This is leading to an emphasis on developing research universities which would produce research to enable nations to enter into knowledge economy of the twenty-first century and compete globally (Altbach and Balan 2007, p. 2[2]; Salmi 2009). As a result, every nation wants to have a world-class university. Whereas the phenomenon of establishing world-class universities or fostering the existing universities into world-class universities finds prominence in many nations particularly the West, the world class-ness discourse has taken its formal roots very recently in India. More formally, the UGC came up with a regulation in 2016 titled 'UGC (World Class Institutions Deemed to be Universities) Regulations, 2016' to the effect, which aimed at establishing 20 world-class universities and determined the criteria for the existing universities to be featured as one (GOI 2016b). Of these 20 universities, 10 would be public universities and the remaining 10 would be the private universities. In 2017, there was a change in the nomenclature of regulation and was called as UGC (Institutions of Eminence Deemed to be Universities) Regulations, 2017, with the broad prescriptions remaining the same. The strategy chosen by the state, by and large, is handpicking the winners, that is, the universities which have already achieved pres-

[1] Section "What is a world-class university?" discusses in detail the features of a world-class university.

[2] As cited in Shattock (2017)

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tige in the academics and fostering them further. In case of private universities, however, the proposal of a sponsoring organization to establish new universities would also be considered, if they meet all the criteria. The former could be called as 'picking the winners' model and the latter the 'clean slate' approach (Altbach and Salmi 2011). These universities are expected to be featured in the national ranking and eventually in the global rankings too. All these universities are expected to produce research of an international quality, and thereby, compete globally. Competition in the national as well as global arena would call for particular kind of strategies or practices, if the universities want to (a) achieve the world-class status and (b) after having attained such status retain it. These practices would be governed by the power-knowledge relationships (which will be detailed upon later), under the larger discourse of globalization.

This chapter would try to link these power-knowledge relationships with the competitive practices, underlying which would be the need to achieve efficiency, in the Indian context. It needs to be noticed here that one of the crucial features of a world-class university is academic freedom and quality output. This chapter critically looks at the conflict between the pursuit of these efficiencies and achievement of academic freedom and quality, the two very crucial ingredients for a university to be called world class in true sense.

What Is a World-Class University?

The meaning of a world-class university has been discussed in the literature by many. Broadly there emerge three basic features for a university to be called 'world class': (a) high concentration of talent (faculty and students), (b) abundant resources to offer rich learning environment and to conduct advanced research and (c) favourable governance features that encourage innovation, strategic vision and flexibility and that enable institutions to make decisions and manage resources (Salmi 2009; Altbach and Salmi 2011). Later, Shattock (2017) expanded these features by adding three more to the above list, which were as follows: (d) the age of the institution (the longevity of an institution gives it a space to develop reputation), (e) its physical location (universities which are located in growing centres of economic activity are at an advantageous position) and (f) external political climate facilitating academic freedom.

Academic freedom and an atmosphere of intellectual curiosity along with research performance underpin a world-class university. The faculty and the students in such universities have freedom to pursue knowledge and publish work freely without fearing any external control (Altbach 2015). The strategies, at both the national level and the global level (which would happen eventually, after having been selected as amongst the 20 world-class universities), would revolve majorly around garnering research output. Another extremely crucial requirement, which also supports research and attracts talent to these universities, is the abundance of funds. In sum, the research-related and fund-raising-related strategies, in addition to academic freedom, should broadly guide the very life of such universities, which would have the world-class status (institutes of eminence).

In India, the UGC in 2016 passed a regulation on establishing world-class universities. Some of the select key features which resemble the ones already existing globally, as mentioned in the UGC regulation 2016, are (GOI 2016b):

- Freedom to hire faculty from across the world. A good proportion of foreign or foreign-qualified faculty.
- A reasonably good mix of Indian and foreign students.
- Academic, administrative and financial autonomy.
- High level of funding.
- Ability to leverage alternative funding sources and autonomy to utilize.
- Facilities for cutting-edge scientific research.
- Collaboration with foreign universities.
- Having a corpus fund of rupees 200 crores, with a guarantee of additional rupees 500 crores and a credible plan that additional sources are available on demand and which should not be less than rupees 1000 crores.
- There should be laboratory facilities to undertake cutting-edge scientific research for doing scientific research. In case of humanities, social science and other interdisciplinary areas, the faculty should be engaged in research and field work in frontier areas using the latest methodologies.
- Should strive to achieve social impact by engaging in applied research and innovation in issues of concern to developing societies.
- Should develop teaching and research collaborations with a reasonable number of global universities figuring in the most reputed global rankings.
- A culture that would support publication in peer-reviewed journal.
- Should be considered as one of the top 500 in any of the world-renowned ranking frameworks (such as the Times Higher Education World University Rankings or QS or Shanghai's Jiao Tong University) within the first 10 years of setting up and be in the top 100 eventually over time.
- Would be free to fix fees, for both domestic and foreign students as per its internal policies. The World-Class Institution Deemed to be University shall have complete financial autonomy to spend the resources raised and allocated.
- Shall have complete flexibility in fixing of curriculum and syllabus. The institution shall have the freedom to offer courses within a programme.
- Should recruit the most talented people, no matter where they come from, who are open to new ideas and approaches. May hire personnel from industry, etc. as faculty, who, while being experts in their areas, may not have the requisite higher academic qualifications.

The 2017 regulation further ensured an assistance of up to an amount of rupees 1000 crores or 50–75% of the requirement projected in the perspective and detailed plans submitted by the institution, whichever is less, to each institution in a span of 5 years starting from the financial year of declaration of institute as Institutions of Eminence.

Thus, a university which fulfils the above criteria could apply for the institutes of eminence status. It needs to be noted here that in July 2018, six institutes have been conferred upon with the status of institutes of eminence: Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bombay, IIT Delhi and IISc Bangalore are from amongst the pub-

lic universities category, and Jio Institute by Reliance Foundation, BITS Pilani and Manipal Academy of Higher Education are the three private universities which have been granted the status of Institute of Eminence.[3] On 5th September 2019 some more universities have been declared as institutions of eminence by the Ministry of Human Resource Development.

A world-class university is the one which is held to be the best in the world. With this understanding of the definition of world class comes also a sense of 'position placement' of universities with respect to other universities. Thus, rankings of universities assume a special and an inevitable significance when discussing about the world class-ness of universities. The rankings would be a reference point for universities to assess their performance vis-a-vis other universities globally (Kumar 2015). The push given to rankings of universities signifies that the universities are considered to be key to economic growth and global competitiveness, being driven by knowledge generation. And, these institutions are not just repositories of knowledge creation but also a point of pride and comparison amongst nations (Salmi 2009).

In India, the practice of ranking the universities began in 2016, with the institution of National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF). This can instil competition amongst universities within the country and also a quest to appear in the global rankings. The NIRF document clearly mentions about the need to improve quality of higher education in order to become world class, for which national rankings and research assessment could play a vital role (GOI 2016a). Thus, the discourse of world class-ness and rankings go hand in hand. The next section would specifically look at Indian policy pertaining to establishing institutes of eminence (or universities of world-class repute).

A Brief at Policy

Whereas rankings and competition took its roots in many (Western) countries decades back, the idea of competition amongst higher education institutions increased only gradually in India. The first step, albeit in a more diluted manner, was with the setting up of National Assessment Accreditation Council (NAAC) in 1994, providing a platform for universities to be ranked or compared with each other. However, the competition and hierarchy found a stronger grip on the Indian higher education realm since the beginning of 2013, when there were two major policy recommendations: (1) was the making accreditation by NAAC mandatory and (2) institution of Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA), which also had a provision of providing performance-based funding to the universities. However, the exact import of this competition would not have been felt by all the universities. This can be understood as follows. Whereas NAAC was made mandatory, within each grade, there could be many universities despite a variation in their score. A university with the score 4 would get a grade A++, as a university with the

[3] https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/education/six-universities-granted-institute-of-eminence-status/article24370554.ece

score 3.51.[4] With a focus on grade, there was little reason for universities to worry about their place in the hierarchy. Second, even though RUSA proposed a performance-based funding for universities, the state universities were to be provided with an initial fund, leaving them with no competition (in real sense of the term) being percolated down their daily life. Moreover, with the already limited resources, it is expected they adjust their motivation level downwards. It is doubtful if such a prescription would motivate them to compete and thereby improve their performance under RUSA. Notwithstanding the loopholes of NAAC, a university which continues to get an A grade may not find it remunerative to enhance its performance beyond their comfort zone and possibilities.

With the inception of National Institutional Ranking Framework providing a picture of the relative standing of each university, there was a greater scope of a sense of competition grasping Indian universities (at least some of them). The universities are more closely pitted against each other than before. This would lead to the leaders and academics reorienting their strategies, at least in the short term, which would further entail the universities scouting for funds, students and faculty from abroad, conducting research (in collaboration as well) to portray its world class-ness. With NIRF there is greater visibility of universities relative position, putting a pressure on them to perform in the areas which would render them the status of world-class universities. That the NIRF has global competitiveness as one of its aims could be seen by the following excerpts:

> Naturally many of them are similar to those employed globally dealing with excellence in teaching, learning and research (GOI 2017, p. 1).

> The Expert Committee set-up by the UGC for developing National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) for Higher Education Institutions under the ambit of University Grants Commission, discussed and deliberated upon reputed globally recognized rankings of the world-class universities and performance of Indian educational institutions in these rankings (GOI 2016a; Preface).

In the Indian context, two kinds of models are chosen by the policy in order to confer the status of world class-ness/eminence. First, 10 public universities from the existing universities, preferably based on the rankings, were picked. Second, 10 private universities could either be the existing universities or new universities. It takes time for a university to acquire the status of world-class university (Shattock 2017) (that issue would be taken up later).

Notwithstanding the problems associated with any ranking, like measuring only the data available, bias towards science publication than others and prioritizing research performance over teaching (Shattock 2017), using subjective measures of assessment, not grounded often in realities of higher education and not comprehensive (Marginson 2014), etc., the upcoming sections would take up the following two issues related with ranking and the quest for world-class status: first, the power-

[4] Until 2016, any university which scored between 3.01 and 4 used to get an A grade. Since 2016, this range has been divided into three: A++ for a score between 3.51 and 4, A+ for a score between 3.26 and 3.50 and A for a score between 3.01 and 3.25.

knowledge relationships that are rationale for the competition and hence efficiency to survive and, second, the infusion of competition and the nature of it.

Ranking as a Policy Technology

The ranking and featuring in the world-class universities through performance assessment is one of the tools of the New Public Management (NPM)[5] in public universities. Under the wave of globalization, the New Public Management has been created with the aim to make public sector more efficient and effective. The central planning, under neoliberal school of thought, is considered as (1) inefficient and (2) a threat to the freedom of the individual (Olssen and Peters 2005). The objective is to reduce state spending, retreat of government institutions in favour of market enterprises or incorporation of market/private sector inside state structures and granting institutional autonomy to institutions which would enhance their self-regulating capacity. It constitutes business-oriented approach to government, contract management, emphasis on quality, performance and its evaluation and assessment as well as accountability, emphasis on economic rewards and sanctions. There has been a decentralization of management control from the centre to the individual institutions, i.e. a focus on individualization and atomization process, coupled with new accountability and funding structures (Marshall and Peters 1999; Toonen 2007; Rizvi and Lingard 2010). Thus, there has been a growing emphasis on output in terms of quality of research and teaching. The NPM assumes that institutes can achieve excellence if they are freed from state interference; over-governance can discourage innovation and quick decision-making (Sporn 2007). However, a prerequisite for attaining institutional autonomy is a diversified funding. A diversified funding base is a prerequisite for autonomous and entrepreneurial universities, through which the higher education institutes can attain independence from one sponsor (mostly the state) (Sporn 2007).

Ranking is an accountability mechanism under NPM, whereby the individuals are 'governed at a distance' (Marginson 2007, p. 5). At a deeper level, these practices impact the very behaviour of the individuals, like the faculty, the leaders of the universities or the students, seeking to transform them into amenable subjects of the neoliberal discourse. It is a governmentality technique. Governmentality can be thought of as a composite of the words – government and rationality. Foucault defines government as 'the conduct of conduct' and thus a term which ranges from governing the self to governing others. The practice of government leads to a multitude of techniques, schemes and ideas deliberately mobilizing in attempting to direct or influence the conduct of others (Doherty 2007) (the import of such governmentality would be seen later in this chapter).

[5] New Public Management is a management practice which is premised on marketisation, privatisation, performance based accountability, managerialism and contractual relations.

What Is the Nature of This Competition?

The establishment of institutes of eminence (or world-class universities) has a potential to foster competition in the realm of higher education. The possibility of competition emanates from such universities being primarily oriented towards research, which generates competition between individuals for research grants and publications and also between institutions for research status (Shattock 2017). Such universities have large research-based populations and engage in competition to attract the best researchers, even globally (Shattock 2017, p. 6).

It needs to be noted here that at the same time, a large number of universities, which fail to satisfy the requirements, would remain outside the purview of this competition. This is the story of majority of state universities in India. These 'left out' universities may try to compete and feature in the rankings so that they could also feature as eminent or world class. This is subject to two qualifications however: (1) those universities which will have been selected for world-class university would slip down their world-class status/eminence status and (2) those universities trying to be featured in those 20 universities would only be those which were featured somewhat above the rankings. In the more realistic scenario, these universities would not compete at all, given the environmental constraints they face.

Another problem associated with this kind of enforced self-regulation is that rather than encouraging competition, in true sense, of which the free entry and exit of producers is a major prerequisite, it creates barrier to entry. This is created by imposing financial requirements, infrastructure requirement, staff-related requirement and programme requirement, like accreditation (Jongbloed 2004). The UGC regulation to this effect states that the universities which intent on applying for the status of world-class universities are mandated to pay a processing fee of rupees 1 crore. In addition to this, the amount of funds that these are required to have, as stated above in Section "What is a world-class university?", are bound to create barrier to entry for many state universities, which already suffer from resource crunch. By regulating the market structure in such a manner, many universities would be outside the purview of competition, which is supposedly installed with the objective to improve quality under the neoliberal school of thought (Olssen and Peters 2005).

It would lead to a selection bias or S competition (Glennester 1991), that is, the universities which enjoy high rank or reputation already would attract more funds from various sources as compared to the ones which do not enjoy better reputation. Under this kind of mechanism, the funders would provide funds to more reputed universities, leaving out the low ranked or low in reputation universities, and thus lead to selection bias, rather than providing a level playing field to all. As also argued by Winston (1999), the higher education market is hierarchical than operating on a level playing field. He contends that the universities which are well endowed in terms of funds would attract better quality inputs like students and teacher, helping them to achieve quality output; there arises selectivity and hence excess demand. As one goes down the hierarchy (low-ranked institutions), they would attract relatively lower quality inputs. The quality of output further determines the future fund-

ing to the university. Therefore, there is a very bleak chance of universities which are ranked lower to move up the ladder. Thus, an institution competes generally with 10 schools above them and 10 below them (Winston 2000). In a similar vein, Shattock (2017) conjectures that it does not make sense for the middle-ranking regional universities to compete with the top universities when none of the institutional environment factors have changed. If they did, it would only lead to loss of morale.

Therefore, only the top reputed universities would compete amongst themselves in order to be featured as world class or institutes of eminence. Those universities which do not have sufficient resources or culture amenable to world class-ness would choose to stay out of these competitive practices and thus would not be a credible threat. Thus, competition, which is thought of as improving quality, would remain confined to a few top universities. The neoliberal argument of competition improving the quality of work does not percolate down to a major chunk of universities in the Indian higher education system.

The upcoming few sections would look at how the world-class universities would try to engage in the efficient practices in order to achieve competitiveness. Later on, it would be seen if such a pursuit of efficient practices is in conflict with what is called as world class.

Theoretical Structure for Further Analysis

In order to further analyse the efficient strategies which might be taken up by such universities, a framework is proposed in this section. The study uses the theoretical framework of Foucault's power-knowledge relationship to understand the possible practices or strategies undertaken in the universities in the present neoliberal discourse of ranking. The quest for world class-ness begins with the quest for featuring in the rankings. Ranking could be called as a technology of the state for the universities/faculty to self-regulate. The state steers the behaviour of the individuals, but from a distance (Jongbloed 2004), by creating a market framework for them within which they are supposed to perform. In the context of rankings, this would mean that universities monitor their own performances by keeping a track of what they are doing with respect to a predetermined standard. It is a mechanism under neoliberalism to regulate institutions and individuals. This determines the overall strategies that the universities undertake.

There have to be certain types of practices which are expected of the universities competing for the world-class status and also later for those that will have be part of the 20 world-class universities. These practices are to be found in the power-knowledge nexus, which would be highlighted later.

Power-Knowledge Nexus

Foucault (1980) has discussed about this nexus of power and knowledge. It must be pointed out at the outset that this power is not a repressive power. It does not work against the will of the individuals, but it functions by making those individuals or institutions as the subject of the discourse, in a way that they behave out of their own accord. This goes well with the idea of self-regulation, only that it is an 'enforced self-regulation' (Jongbloed 2004), because it is mandated by the (neoliberal) state.

The underlying discourse in the present quest for achieving the status of world class lies the discourse of ranking and, hence, globalization. It is one of the aims, as postulated in the UGC document, that the universities are envisaged to be featured in the international ranking eventually, failing which the status of world class would be repealed. Thus, the overarching discourse of globalization will also have a role to play in order to understand the kind of practices that would prevail.

The analysis of power-knowledge relationship would be for the universities which would fight for such a world-class status and about the scenario when 20 universities will be selected, and there would still be universities that will try to achieve this status (if there are universities who would slip down the status of world class) and how power-knowledge relation would operate in that scenario.

For this purpose, this chapter would draw on the theory put forth by Foucault (1980). The power understood here refers to the power of the discourse, that is, what all possible practices do the discourse allows to take place. Knowledge refers to the knowledge of these practices which the subject has, about themselves as a part of larger discourse. As a result of power effect/effect of discourse, the subjects (re) constitute themselves. The neoliberal discourse pertaining to world-class universities would render knowledge amongst the individuals that they are but a subject of the power relations. By this is meant they would identify themselves with the rationality of the larger discourse and would mould their behaviour accordingly. The individuals by constantly monitoring their performance in order to be featured as a world-class university would become a 'numbered subject' (Ball 2015). Anything that could be measured would be undertaken at the expense of anything which cannot be directly counted. Their identity getting attached to numbers becomes the truth of the discourse. There would emerge other truths as well; the works within the universities could reorganize by orienting academic to the larger academic discourse, and the students would be treated as customers for being a potential source of raising revenue.

This power-knowledge relationship takes place as a result of the larger discourse, which in the present context is discourse of neoliberalism. The power-knowledge relationship in a particular domain of a discourse takes shape through certain technologies. The world class-ness discourse uses the tool of ranking or relative position of universities in order to bring about a particular kind of power-knowledge relationship.

The power is exercised not as a repression or force but as a productive means to produce certain relationships within the society so as to legitimize the discourse.

Thus, central to analysing power-knowledge relationship is understanding power relations. These are not hierarchical relation but the relationships between individuals whereby they identify themselves as subjects of the discourse. Thus, power could be called as actions that individuals take vis-a-vis each other. However, this is not to undermine the role of institutions. The individuals direct their own conduct within certain institutions, which may constitute of the state or the market or the immediate place of work. These institutions reflect the rules of the game which exist in a particular discourse. The individuals identify themselves vis-a-vis others within these institutions. Thus, understanding power relations would mean understanding the relationship of an individual with the other individual as well as these institutions.

The Kinds of Efficiencies

At this juncture it needs to be mentioned that rankings inevitably mean infusing a sense of competition in the university behaviour. It is believed that competition would enhance the quality of work performed by the universities by making universities perform efficiently. Efficiency would bring in quality and improvement or at least universities maintaining some minimum standards. The efficiency could be of three broad types, as mentioned in Jongbloed (2004): dynamic efficiency, internal efficiency and allocative efficiency. By dynamic efficiency is meant that providers would look for new products that are differentiated from existing ones. This differentiation could be horizontal, which means producing other products or it could be vertical, which means an improvement in quality. It also refers to a long-term investment in innovations. Only when a firm does that can the product be differentiated from the others. Internal efficiency means technical efficiency, that is, production requiring few resources or providers looking for better means of production, producing services at a lower cost. Internal efficiency of an educational institution measures how funds could be best allocated; it is obtaining the greatest educational output for any given level of spending (Lockheed and Hanushek 1994). Producing high-demand output at lower cost would lead the institution to save and thus invest the gain in the less-demanded activity (Massy 2004). The third kind of efficiency, allocative efficiency, is where goods or services are produced in accordance with the needs of consumers. It could lead to lowering the price of the good or service, making it more attractive to more consumers. This allocative efficiency, or responsiveness to demand and supply, also enhances the dynamic efficiency of the institution (Massy 2004).

A common theme that could be inferred from above, for any university trying to be efficient, is that the focus would be on producing output which is concomitant with the demand in the market or needs of consumers and at the same time on reducing costs. It is pursuit of these efficiencies which would determine the practices and the strategies of universities. Thus, it is broadly the market that would presume a crucial space for universities to make strategies. Since the purpose is to compete globally, the market-oriented strategies would span the global space as well.

Now, since all the practices of the universities/faculty would be guided by the larger discourse of competition and thus efficiency, the practices would be disentangled to see how these efficiencies operate in each of the practice. After having understood this, this chapter would look at the implications this would have on freedom and quality/performance improvement, the two basic features of a world-class university. This section would in particular focus on understanding power-knowledge and efficiency relationship and the implications would be dealt with in a later sub-section.

As discussed already, it is the quest for ranking which guides the practices in the universities, and the indicators that would be chosen to understand the ensuing rational practices would emanate from the ranking framework and also the UGC regulation pertaining to the establishing world-class universities.

Ranking would work as power technology leading to certain power-knowledge relationships to emerge in the society. This would be understood at broadly two levels: (1) with respect to institutions, that is, how the institutions lead the exercise of this power, and (2) at the individual level, that is, how the individuals relate to themselves and with each other. The paper would look at this power-knowledge relationship in the pursuit of universities to achieve efficiency through competition.

At this juncture, it is vital to comment on those universities which would not contend to be in this race of world class-ness for they are already featured at lower ranks. These universities which are in the first place are required to perform under RUSA, failing which they would not get funds. Since they do not have enough funds, they would not be able to take appropriate actions to improve their performance, forcing them to remain at a lower rank or out of the purview of NIRF. The policy is focusing on institutional-level development of 20 universities, in the quest of which again, only a handful may revamp their internal dynamics. Since it is not focussed upon a holistic development of entire higher education system, the lower ranked and in shambles state universities would always remain there. Thus, whereas a typical neoliberal argument would be that the policy would instil a competition amongst universities, it needs to be noted that a majority of universities are not well equipped to participate in this competition. And even those may not really be able to attain the status of world class in true sense.

The universities competing with each other for garnering funds in order to invest for achieving the world-class status would have an implication also on the nature of knowledge produced. This could mean that fundamental research could be replaced in favour of applied research, endangering the public tasks on the universities (Jongbloed 2004, p. 109).

Implications for Efficient Practices

As discussed above, the broad objective of this chapter is to understand the impact of this discourse on achieving quality. In the neoliberal discourse, quality is said to be achieved through competition. Another point raised is that WCU essentially

enjoy more freedom. What needs to be noted here is that the possible practices as envisaged above are guided by the idea of competition. In any power relation, there would be an element of competition in order for the universities to become effective. The core of competitive behaviour is to ensure optimal outcome by achieving efficiency and freedom. The next sub-section would aim at locating the market efficiencies as well as the element of freedom (or unfreedom) in these practices.

As required by the UGC regulation, the universities trying to achieve the status of world-class universities should feature in not only the national ranking but also in the international rankings, that is, the Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) rankings, Times Higher Education (THE) world university rankings or Shanghai's Jiao Tong rankings.

In the international rankings, THE world university rankings devote over 60% weightage to research alone and 30% to teaching, which also has components pertaining to PhD awarded. Reputation surveys on teaching and research explicitly mentioned are given 33% weightage. Half the assessment in the QS rankings is based on reputation, with academic reputation constituting 40% and employer reputation constituting 10% of total score. The academic reputation is calculated by taking experts opinion regarding the teaching and research quality at universities. Citations per faculty constitute another 20% of the total score. Thus, research assumes a sizeable weightage in performance assessment under QS rankings. The third international ranking where also the Indian world-class universities/institutes of eminence aim to be featured in is the Shanghai's academic ranking of world universities. This ranking gives almost 100% weightage to research outcomes.[6]

Also, the former two international rankings have component of international outlook or international faculty and students. That the international students would take admission in a university or an international collaboration would take place would in turn depend upon the reputation of the national university.

Therefore, conducting research is a predominant criterion for getting featured in international rankings, which also render reputation to a university. Thus, for Indian universities to be featured in the global space, their practices need to be oriented more towards research and then towards the quality of teaching.

For practices to take place, the individuals as well as institutions transform themselves into the subject of the discourse. They undertake rational practices as per the larger discourse of neoliberalism. As discussed in the section on framework, the power-knowledge relationships would work at two levels: at the level of an individual and at the level of an institution. That is, the relationship would be altered amongst individuals, between individuals and institutions and, thirdly, amongst institutions. These power relations are to be found in the very practices. In the quest for becoming institutes of eminence or achieving the world-class status, this would translate into undertaking certain practices within these power relationships which would be efficient.

[6] While the 90% weightage is given to indicators directly related to research outcomes, the remaining 10% is given to the indicator 'Per Capita Academic Performance', which is calculated by dividing the weighted scores of all other indicators by the number of full-time equivalent academic staff. This indicator also, therefore, depends on the research performance of the university.

Before looking at the rational practices that the universities, particularly the individuals, would undertake, it is crucial to understand that first there would be a change in the relationship between the institutions (the state and the global space) and the individuals. It is this relationship which would further guide the very practices in the universities.

A. University with the State:

The push for world-class university has certainly led to legitimating the significance of ranking. The NIRF ranking is a step, at the national level, in this effect. The ranking is a form of governmentality, that is, the technology used by the government to regulate the behaviour of the individuals within the university. This is done through self-regulation, which was discussed earlier in this chapter. The university monitors its own performance with respect to the expectations setup globally (because the aim, as mentioned in the UGC regulation, is to find a place in the global rankings). Another mechanism used by the state is to instil financial autonomy in such universities by rendering them with the freedom to raise resources and expend those resources. Such a regulation would render the knowledge in the subjects that they are amongst the strong contenders for the world-class status and they would, thus, alter their practices inside the universities, which would be discussed in detail in sub-section C.

Such a distancing of the state is found to be efficient because often the state interference by way of funding is argued by neoliberals to be leading to inefficiencies. The next two power-knowledge relationships would detail upon what kind of efficient practices are expected to undertake in the given neoliberal discourse.

B. University and the International Realm:

In order to be featured in the international rankings and appear world class, the universities would undertake collaboration with universities abroad for projects and also recruit faculty and students from abroad. Another major practice that the universities would try to emulate would be a greater focus on research in order to gain better reputation.

C. Intra-university Practices.

The practices that the university would undertake could be either internal or international. The international would be networking with faculty from abroad, collaborating with the foreign universities and admitting students from abroad, emulating the outcomes to be achieved in international rankings. The internal could be recruiting industry personnel in the university as faculty, raise in student fees and student evaluation.

Let us look at the possible practices which could lead to internal efficiency, on the one hand, and dynamic and allocative efficiency, on the other hand.

Internal Efficiency

The objective of internal efficiency would aim at minimizing the costs so as to reduce wastage. The practices which would emerge as a result are as follows: collaboration with the faculty from other universities majorly online, recruiting foreign

faculty, albeit those who relatively demand less salary or focus on applied research than the basic research, because basic research is costly in terms of money and time and involves risk (this would be detailed later).

Dynamic and Allocative Efficiencies

The way that universities would differentiate from each other would be by producing cutting-edge research and out-compete each other. This would majorly lead to collaborating with industry and producing the much-in-demand research output. Again, as mentioned in the UGC regulation, the focus would be to produce applied research than basic research.

These universities have to be featured in the national rankings as well, which require the data on mean salary of students as well as their placement records. At the same time, the UGC regulation renders enough freedom to the universities to recruit faculty from the industry. This would lead to a change in the curriculum, to that oriented more towards the needs of labour market. This, when coupled with the financial autonomy that these universities are provided with respect to deciding the tuition fees, would call for providing courses which would enhance only the skills needed by the market. The courses pertaining to management or engineering would replace provision of conventional courses, for these universities to justify raising of tuition fees.

The nature of knowledge generated would alter from basic research to applied research. This would be an offshoot of not only internal efficiency, but also due to possible collaboration with industry. The private investors, providing funds to the university, would need a return to its investment and therefore would expect a certainty in output. Basic/fundamental research, on the other hand, is a risky proposition. Another reason is that rankings are undertaken every year, so rational behaviour given the urgency to register output would call for risk reduction and thus the focus would be more on applied research.

Concluding Remarks: Conflict between Efficiency and World Class-Ness in True Sense?

It needs to be noted that infusion of this competitive kind of behaviour would alter the very nature of higher education. The first change would come by way of change in the value function or the mission of the universities. Ideally, the value function of the universities should reflect the interest of the society than the private interests of faculty (Massy 2004). Social interest means pursuing the ‘public good’ nature of knowledge/education. Whereas the UGC regulation states that such universities should pursue the social interest, but in pursuit of efficient practices, the public good nature of education comes under attack.

The attainment of efficiency is in conflict with two basic features which are the pillar of any world-class university: quality and academic freedom, which is discussed as follows:

Quality in Higher Education

It is very difficult to articulate or measure what is quality in higher education. Quality is often value-laden, in that its definition depends on the fitness of purpose. If the higher education meets its stated purpose, it is touted as 'quality education'. Quality is the relative concept; for different stakeholders it may mean different things (Green 1994; Tam 2001). The universities have research and teaching as their primary objective, and in a world-class university, it is research which takes precedence. The quality research would be defined by the neoliberal discourse. However, ideally a university conducts research to meet the societal needs. There is a public good character attached to higher education. By this it means that education creates externality by spilling over the benefits of an individual acquiring the education to others in the society (Marginson 2011). However, the nature of higher education[7] is determined by policy and configuration of funding provided (Marginson 2011).

Allocative Efficiency and Quality

A world-class university thrives on funds, which come from collaboration with industry or other private agencies. When the UGC regulation has provided such universities with complete autonomy, it gives them enough scope to explore private mode of funding The university might strive to achieve allocative efficiency by equating the supply of its services to the market demand. This has following possible impacts:

(a) The world-class universities would undertake applied research at the cost of basic research. Applied research does not lead to as significant breakthrough as basic research does (Nelson 1959). A private entity would undertake any research-related investment in a university with the expectation of certainty of returns to that investment. Often in basic research the direction of research may change, but the results of applied research are often predictable, making it more profitable for industry to fund applied research (Nelson 1959). The basic research would be relegated as also the needs of society which are dynamic in nature.
(b) The market forces make the institutions evaluate what they do and how they do and thus make them cross-subsidize across different activities. It is research which is much in demand because that is what renders them visibility. A major problem associated with rankings for achieving a world-class status is that they are based on research, which reduces the relative importance attached to teaching (Marginson 2014; Shattock 2017). This would take away the focus from teaching quality, which is as important for a university to be called world class in true sense.

[7] The extent of publicness or privateness

(c) Another problem would arise within teaching itself. Teaching has a potential to become a private good. The placement of students and their preparedness for labour market provides reputation to the university.[8] The pursuit of allocative efficiency would reorient the curriculum of the universities as per the labour market needs.

Therefore, the scope of research and teaching would be reduced, getting tilted to the need to be featured in the rankings and become world class. The education activities in a holistic sense would cease to take place.

Internal Efficiency and Quality

The internal efficiency refers to minimizing unit cost of production for a given output. In economics of education, this refers to expenditure incurred per student. Applying such an objective in an educational institution is flawed because a reduction in cost does not guarantee that quality remains the same. There lies, rather, a positive relationship between costs incurred and quality of education provided (Majumdar 1983).

Dynamic Efficiency and Quality

Another point worth noting is that the dynamic efficiency may not really lead to improvement in quality. The 'university status ladders' are conservative as they produce same order from generation to generation (Marginson 2011).

Academic Freedom

Marginson (2007) argues that neoliberal technique like rankings for differentiation (dynamic efficiency) expands the choice making of individuals only within the realm of competitive strategy, whereas other choice making is not; the research is often application based. It limits certain forms of agency and academic freedom.

Under private funding, there is a specification of course content and workload by management, which erodes professional autonomy over work in relation to both teaching and research. Targets and performance criteria are applied from outside the academic role that diminishes the sense in which the academic – their teaching and research – are autonomous. 'The rising importance of "managed research" and the pressures to obtain "funded research" constitute further evidence that academic freedom, at least in terms of the academics determination over research are concerned, are increasingly "compromised", or at least "under pressure"' (Olssen and

[8] There are specific indicators to this effect in NIRF and QS ranking.

Peters 2005, p.326). When education is viewed as a marketable commodity, as under privatization, the independent thinking is subdued by the ideological objectives of the advanced countries, the propagators of commoditization of education. It views higher education as transaction between teachers and students and is driven by the student demand, students being the consumers. This gives justification for private funding of higher education. With increased privatization, the higher education institutions serve the interest of market forces and cease to serve the society at large (Patnaik 2007).

The preceding implication discussed the inclination towards applied research than basic research under the present world-class university discourse. Many academics may not want to undertake applied research but would rather need timelessness and undertake basic research. Academic creativity and quality of work flourish under the state of academic freedom, which can neither be timed nor put under a framework of measurable output. When it is the students who are the potential funders of the university, the course curriculum might get structured as per the needs of the students, giving very less freedom to the faculty to design the course.

The channelization of human agency to the needs of competitive strategies would crowd out the intrinsic motivation of at least some faculty. The quality work in academia thrives on creativity and motivation. When the two major pillars of a world-class university, that is, academic freedom and quality, are out in peril, can the objective of world class-ness, by establishing institutes of eminence, be achieved in true sense under the neoliberal regime?

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