Flaws In NIRF Ranking

For Prelims: Bibliometrics, **NIRF Ranking** Criteria

For Mains: NIRF Ranking – Methodology, Flaws, Repercussions and Way Forward

Why in News?

The **National Institution Ranking Framework (NIRF)**, established by the Ministry of Education, recently announced its national rankings for universities which have been found flawed by various experts.

How does the NIRF Rank Institute and What are Issues with the Ranking?

- The NIRF releases rankings across various categories: **'Overall', 'Research Institutions', 'Universities',** and **'Colleges',** and **specific disciplines** like engineering, management, pharmacy, law, etc.
- NIRF ranks institutes by their total score; it uses five indicators to determine this score:
    - Teaching, Learning & Resources (30% weightage)
    - Research and Professional Practice (30%)
    - Graduation Outcomes (20%)
    - Outreach and Inclusivity (10%)
    - Perception (10%)
- **Issues with NIRF Ranking:**
    - Academic communities are worried about how the indicators are made and the methods used. The evaluation **focuses on research and professional practices, with attention to bibliometric measures** sidelining other forms of intellectual contributions, such as books, book chapters, monographs, non-traditional outputs like popular articles, workshop reports, and other forms of grey literature.
        - They have argued that bibliometric indicators don't fully capture the intricacies of scientific performance, and that a more comprehensive evaluation methodology is needed.
    - The allure of bibliometrics as a tool for assessing research output lies in its efficiency and convenience compared to qualitative assessments performed by subject experts, which are more resource-intensive and time consuming.

Note:

- Bibliometrics refers to the measurable aspects of research, such as the number of papers published, the number of times they're cited, the impact factors of journals, etc.

What are the Repercussions of Flawed rankings?

- **Misleading prospective students and parents** about the quality and reputation of institutions.
- Creating **unfair competition** and incentives among institutions to game the system.
- **Undermining the credibility** and usefulness of the ranking framework.
- **Neglecting other aspects of institutional excellence,** such as innovation, diversity, social impact, etc.
- May **negatively affect the perception**, reputation, and competitiveness of **foreign educational institutions** if they set up their campuses in India.

How can NIRF Ranking be Improved?

- **Nurturing faculty research output** by providing adequate resources, incentives, and recognition.
- **Bibliometrics should not be used as the sole criteria** for any evaluative purpose. They should always be combined with other forms of evaluation, such as peer review, to make informed decisions.
- Creating an **institutional repository** to showcase and disseminate the research publications and impact.
- Improving the teaching-learning process by **creating an outcome-based curriculum**, using innovative pedagogies, and ensuring student feedback and satisfaction.
- Enhancing the graduation outcomes by improving the placement, entrepreneurship, and higher education opportunities for students.
- **Promoting outreach and inclusivity** by increasing the diversity of students, faculty, and staff, and engaging with the local and global communities.
- **NIRF Rankings ought to be transparent** about what data they collect, how they collect it, and how that data becomes the basis for the total score.

Source: TH

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