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ASSESSMENT AND ACCREDITATION STATUS OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN THE STATE OF WEST BENGAL: AN ANALYSIS

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Abstract:

The primary goal of this research is to examine and compare the overall quality of higher education institutions' results. In terms of research methodology, it falls under the category of descriptive comparative status studies. In the state of West Bengal, 218 colleges affiliated with seven universities were purposefully chosen as samples. The data is analysed using qualitative statistical methods such as percentages and graphical representations. It was discovered that 43.26 percent of colleges received a B score. It's also worth noting that 1.08 percent and 3.57 percent of colleges affiliated with Calcutta University and Vidyasagar University, respectively, have earned A++ and A+ accreditation. On the one hand, colleges affiliated with four universities (Burdwan University, North Bengal University, West Bengal State University, and Kalyani University) have received A, B++, B+, B to C grades, while colleges affiliated with two universities (Calcutta University and Vidyasagar University) have received A++, A+, A, B++, B+, B to C grades. As a result of the results, it is possible to infer that many colleges' success levels in terms of quality are not up to par.

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1.0 Introduction:

Without a doubt, quality higher education institutions are regarded as a man making industry dedicated to shaping the nation's future. The standard of higher education institutions and their various roles are directly related to a country's growth. The quality of a country's human capital is determined by the quality of higher education. As a result, we have no choice but to improve the level and quality of higher education institutions when taking into account the local and global context.

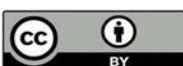
In India, higher education institutions are colleges, universities, national institute of importance, stand-alone institutes etc. These institutions are imparting higher education and providing First Degree, Master's Degree, M.Phil/Ph.D/D.Litt certificates etc.

Various quality evaluation and accreditation bodies in India, such as the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), the National Board of Accreditation (NBA), and the Accreditation Board (AB), are constantly evaluating and accrediting various types of higher education

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institutions. In the current context of an evolving learning society, NAAC's position in quality evaluation and accreditation of higher education institutions is critical.

The NAAC was established in 1994 with the aim of ensuring the quality of higher education in India. The NAAC accredits central, state, private, and deemed universities, as well as affiliated and autonomous colleges and institutes of national significance (NAAC, 2019). Furthermore, on September 29, 2015, the Ministry of Human Resource Development launched the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) with the aim of ranking Indian higher education institutions based on their overall results (MHRD, 2019).

In 1988, the UGC proposed the establishment of a Higher Education Council for state level higher education planning and development. On July 29, 1994, the West Bengal State Council of Higher Education (WBSCHE) was formed based on this recommendation. The council was formed in April of 1995. WBSCHE's first and foremost aim is to guide higher education institutions in the government's desired path and goal (WBSCHE, 2019).

Institutional efficiency is measured using a set of carefully chosen metrics. For the evaluation and accreditation of higher education institutions, NAAC established seven requirements based on international parameters and adapted them to Indian conditions: i) curricula, ii) teaching, learning, and assessment, iii) research, consulting, and extension, iv) infrastructure and learning opportunities, v) student support and progression, vi) organization, and viii) safe practises are all important factors to consider. These seven parameters, each with a different weighting point, are supposed to indicate the level of institutional performance. The institutions' level of success is determined by the points they earn. The seven-point scale applies to the seven classes, each of which corresponds to a particular score range (see Table 1).

Table 1: Institutional Grades and Accreditation Status

Range of Institutional Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA)	Letter Grade	Status
3.51-4.00	A++	Accredited
3.26-3.50	A+	Accredited
3.01-3.25	A	Accredited
2.76-3.00	B++	Accredited
2.51-2.75	B+	Accredited
2.01-2.50	B	Accredited
1.51-2.00	C	Accredited
≤ 1.50	D	Not Accredited

With effect from July 2017 (Source: NAAC, 2017)

In India, the state of West Bengal is the fourth highest state in the field of number of students enrolled at higher education level. In its size and diversity, West Bengal has the ten largest higher education systems in India (Source: All India Survey on Higher Education Report, 2019).

For conceptual clarification and better comprehension, the various aspects of higher education in India and West Bengal are compared and briefly listed below.

Table 2: Total number of higher education institutions in India and West Bengal

Sl. No	State	Universities	Colleges	Stand-alone institutions	Total
1	West Bengal	48	1371	456	1875
2	India	993	39931	10725	51649

Source: Computed from All India Survey on Higher Education Report, 2019

Table 3: Comparison of different types of higher education institutions in West Bengal

Sl. No	Name of the institutions	Number	%
1	Degree colleges affiliating to nine universities	453	90.41
2	State Universities	26	5.18%
3	Private Universities	11	2.19
4	Central university and institute of National Importance	09	1.79
5	Deemed University-private	02	0.39
	Total	501	100

Source: Computed from WBSCHE website, 2019

Table 4: Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in Higher Education (18-23 years) between India and West Bengal

Sl. No	State	All categories			SC			ST		
		Male	Female	Both	Male	Female	Both	Male	Female	Both
1	India	26.3	26.4	26.3	22.7	23.3	23.0	17.9	16.5	16.5
2	West Bengal	20.0	18.7	19.3	14.7	13.6	14.1	11.0	9.6	10.2

Source: Computed from All India Survey on Higher Education Report, 2019

The UNESCO developed 'Gross Enrolment Ratio' (GER) is an education index. The GER is the number of students enrolled in a particular level of education as a proportion of the population's official age group corresponding to that level of education. In higher education, the GER is the number of students enrolled in graduation and postgraduate courses, regardless of age, separated by the total population in the 18-23 years old age group (Mitra, D., and Ghara, T. G., 2019).

The GER in higher education for the age group 18-23 years in West Bengal is 19.3, which is significantly lower than the national average of 26.3 for 201819 (see Table 4). According to the findings, the GER of SC and ST students in higher education in West Bengal is 14.1 and 10.2, respectively, which is significantly lower than the national average. Furthermore, GER differs by gender across social strata. However, India has a higher rate of female participation in GER than West Bengal (see Table 4). However, in West Bengal, male participation in GER is higher than female participation.

Table 5: Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) in Higher Education (18-23 years) between India and West Bengal

Sl. No	State	University and Colleges (Regular mode)
1	India	29
2	West Bengal	38

Source: Computed from All India Survey on Higher Education Report, 2019

The Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) is the total number of pupils per teacher in a given academic year at a particular level of education. It has been discovered that the pupil teacher ratio in West Bengal is higher than in India (see Table 5).

Quality in higher education institution has now become the major concern of education in the 21st century. In today's evolving learning society, there is no field data to substantiate what is happening in the sense of higher education quality in the state of West Bengal and to find out the combined accreditation status of colleges affiliating to seven universities and university wise colleges' accreditation status. In the current global context, this is a developing topic. That is why this research has been carried out.

2.0 Objective:

- To examine and compare the overall quality performance of colleges affiliated with seven universities in the state of West Bengal.

3.0 Data and Methodology:

It falls under the category of comparative survey research in terms of research methodology. This is a comprehensive comparative status analysis based on secondary data gathered from secondary sources. The results of NAAC's evaluation and accreditation report in higher education were gathered for the analysis from these websites (NAAC, 2019). The West Bengal State Council of Higher Education (WBSCHE, 2019) website is accessed for a complete list of affiliating colleges in the state of West Bengal. In the state of West Bengal, 218 colleges affiliated with seven universities (see Table 6) were intentionally chosen as a study. The information gathered is analysed using qualitative statistical methods such as percentage and graphical presentations.

4.0 Results and Discussions:

Table 6: University-wise colleges' accreditation result by NAAC up to Nov, 2018

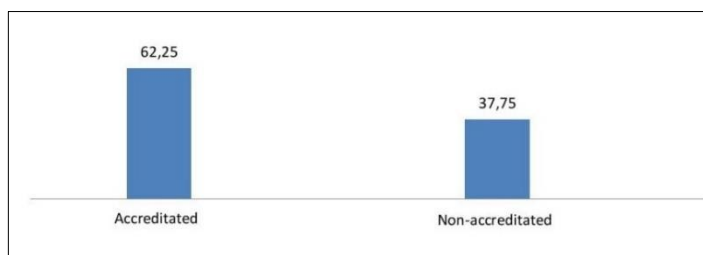
Sl No	Universities	Total No. of Colleges	No. of colleges accredited	No. of colleges Non-accredited	A++	A+	A	B++	B+	B	C
1	CU	125	92 (73.6%)	33 (26.4%)	1 (1.08%)		17 (18.47%)	16(17.39%)	23(25%)	30(32.60%)	5(5.43%)
2	BU	103	68 (66%)	35 (34%)			5 (7.35%)	7(10.29%)	15(22.05%)	37(54.41%)	4(5.88%)
3	NBU	67	23 (34.32%)	44 (65.67%)			3 (13.04%)	5(21.73%)	6(26.08%)	7(30.43%)	2(8.69%)
4	WBSU	47	35 (74.46%)	12 (25.53%)			8(22.85%)	5(14.28%)	5(14.28%)	14(40%)	3(8.57%)
5	VU	44	28 (63.63%)	16 (63.63%)		1 (3.57%)	5 (17.85%)	1(3.57%)	3(10.71%)	16(57.14%)	2(7.14%)
6	KU	44	27 (61.36%)	17 (38.63%)			4(14.81%)	2(7.40%)	5(18.51%)	14(51.85%)	2(7.40%)
7	GBU	23	09 (39.13)	14 (60.86%)				1(11.11%)	5(55.55%)	3(33.33%)	
	Total	453	282 (62.25%)	171 (37.75%)	01 (0.35%)	01 (0.35%)	42(14.89%)	37(13.12%)	61(21.63%)	122(43.26%)	18(6.38%)

Source: computed from WBSCHE, 2019 & NAAC, 2019

Note: CU- Calcutta University, BU-Burdwan University, NBU-North Bengal University, WBSU-West Bengal State University, VU-Vidyasagar University, KU-Kalyani University & GBU-Gour Banga University.

On the one hand, the most colleges affiliated with West Bengal State University (74.46 percent) are accredited by NAAC, while the least number of colleges affiliated with North Bengal University (34.32 percent) are accredited (see Table 6).

Fig. 1: Status of accredited and non-accredited colleges affiliating to seven universities



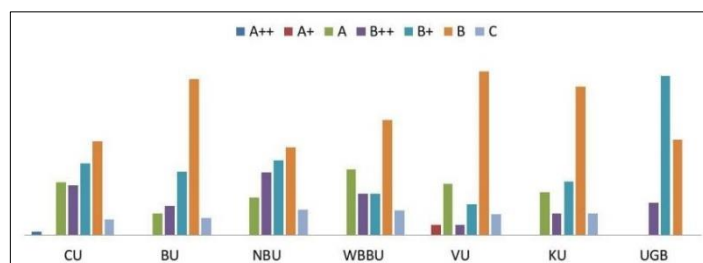
Source: computed from WBSCHE, 2019 & NAAC, 2019

Fig. 2: Combined accreditation status of colleges affiliating to seven universities



Source: computed from WBSCHE, 2019 & NAAC, 2019

Fig. 3: University-wise colleges' accreditation status



Source: computed from WBSCHE, 2019 & NAAC, 2019

In the state of West Bengal, it is estimated that there are 453 colleges affiliated with seven universities (see Fig. 1). Accredited colleges account for 62.25 percent of the total, while non-accredited colleges account for 37.75 percent.

It is obvious that the highest percentage of colleges, 43.26 percent, have been accredited with B grade (see Fig. 2). It's also worth noting that 0.35 percent of colleges have earned A++ and A+ accreditation. If we organise the accreditation status report from lowest to highest percentage, we shall get A++, A+, C, B++, A, B+, and B grade.

A++ and A+ accreditation were given to around 1.08 percent and 3.57 percent of the colleges affiliated with Calcutta University and Vidyasagar University, respectively. Four universities (Burdwan University, North Bengal University, West Bengal State University, and Kalyani University) have been accredited with grades ranging from A, B++, B+, B, and C. However, colleges affiliated with two universities (Calcutta University and Vidyasagar University) have received accreditation ranging from A++, A+, A, B++, B+, B, and C. Colleges affiliated with Gour Banga University, on the other hand, have not been accredited either A or C grade points (see Fig. 3).

5.0 Recommended future plans for higher education institutions:

There are a number of issues involved in strengthening higher education system which need to be addressed immediately. They are as follows.

- In higher education institutions, quality is essential. Four factors, such as quality preparation, quality management, quality execution, and quality monitoring, are needed for a higher education institution's overall quality improvement. To have a long, detailed, universal, and structured education plan that meets the needs of the nation, quality planning is needed. Education must be need-based, primarily tailored to the country's ever-changing demands in various sectors of growth. This must be done professionally and with sound financial inputs. To turn higher education institutes into involved, efficient, responsive, student-centered community centres of high academic standard, quality management should be pursued with devotion and dedication. Merit-based admissions, modern syllabi, efficient and committed instruction, and, ultimately, a proper assessment framework are the benchmarks for quality implementation.
- For each higher education institution, a quality management committee should be created, which will be responsible for monitoring and suggesting corrective steps on a regular basis in order to ensure and guarantee the quality of education provided by the institution.
- There is a need to develop a 'quality culture' in higher education institutions. This will require mental infrastructure more than physical infrastructure, because quality depends upon our sincerity of purpose, our vision and conviction to do our duties. The development of such a culture will depend upon the academic leadership of an institution. A transformative leadership capable of transforming purpose into actions and actions into quality must build an atmosphere that promotes success.
- In higher education institutions, there is a need to create a "research park model." It's collaboration between a university and the private sector. It offers a shared forum for innovation, imagination, technology creation, and product/process growth for both industry and academic staff. It also creates new ideas and jobs, as well as a source of income and employment.
- Using new digital information communication technologies to achieve the dual objectives of increasing access to and enhancing the quality of education by re-vamping instruction, pedagogy, evaluation, and student supports. In this context, the information-savvy, internet-savvy, and technologically-savvy teacher of the digital era is needed.
- Establishment of a research cell to foster a research mindset among teachers employed at the tertiary level.

6.0 Conclusion:

The current accreditation status report in the field of higher education institutions in West Bengal is not nice for the following reasons: a) low learning outcomes; b) strict discipline separation; c) a scarcity of effective teachers; d) a shortage of institutional autonomy to innovate and excel; e) insufficient governance and management; f) a scarcity of research; g) insufficient infrastructure h) Inadequate grading system i) insufficient support services; j) restrictive curricula; m) lack of teamwork and extensional activities; n) insufficient ICT facilities and daily classroom contact, and so on.

India is a rapidly developing country where inclusive, high-quality higher education institutions are critical to the country's long-term success. Since higher education institutions play such an important role in the development of a nation, all types of facilities should be applied to the overall development of academic and administrative issues and concerns, according to NAAC guidelines. Furthermore, the Internal Quality Assessment Cell (IQAC) should take a more constructive approach to quality improvement and sustainability in this area. The quality of higher education

institutes in West Bengal needs to be revisited and renovated in light of the local and global context.

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