Improving University Quality through Reflecting Third Mission Activities in Ranking Methodology: A Case Study from Pakistan

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Abstract:
Purpose - Higher Education Institutions have been facing the challenge of broadening their mission spectrum to incorporate the social and civic engagement in the contemporary era. The purpose of this study is to address the importance and reflection of multifarious third mission activities in ranking methodology at the national level.
Methodology- For the purpose of this study, content analysis is performed on the national ranking methodology of Pakistan to analyze the current ranking methodology for the manifestation of enterprising, innovative and social third mission activities.
Findings - The findings revealed that weighted percentage of enterprise third mission in the ranking methodology of HEC is 1.16%, of the innovative third mission there is no explicit criterion present in ranking methodology and of social and civic engagement the weighted percentage is found to be 0.23%.
Practical Implication - The current study has implication for policymakers in order to broaden the scope of HEIs’ performance indicators by incorporating the traditional commercial activities, innovation strengthening and social engagement of higher educational institutions at both local and global perspective.
Keywords - Third Mission Activities; Social and Civic Engagement; National Ranking Methodology

1. INTRODUCTION
University education is facing various challenges so as to deliver quality to society (Green, Hammer & Star, 2009). Among several of those challenges, the dilemma of measuring the quality of all HEIs on some societal aspects needs greater attention (Jacob and Hellstrom, 2000).

Such rankings lead the universities to work on the counts rather than on the practical advancement delivered to society (Shin, Toutkoushian, & Teichler, 2011). There is the emergence of a wide gap between the quality the university is reporting and the quality produced by these universities (Moges, 2015). The major dilemma is that the ranking systems are looking at the end side (quantity and output) only rather from the means to end side (Lau, 2015). So by adopting the shortcut approach, universities are able to win the ranking game by taking advantage of their individual faculty research performance. (Lo, 2014).

Universities tend to focus on increasing their ranking in the national as well as international rankings, resulting in the displacement of goals (Osterloh, & Frey, 2015). There is need to embrace the social integration of universities in the ranking system more expansively (Fitzgerald, Bruns, Sonka, Furco, & Swanson, 2016). In this way, the emphasis would be made on the contribution of universities for the well being of societies by the supply of entrepreneurial youth.

In Pakistan, Higher Education Commission (HEC) acts as a funding, regulatory body for higher education. Moreover, HEC is the authority to perform national ranking across the country. In order to make HEC ranking methodology more reflective of social engagement as well as innovation centered, the study is aimed to analyze HEC ranking for the extent of enterprise, innovation and social and civic third mission activities.

The significance of this study would be to highlight the need for incorporating the enterprise, innovative and civic third mission activities in the ranking methodology. This would be helpful in broadening the scope of ranking criteria. As currently weight is given to such ranking parameters which are thought to be same for all universities regardless of their size (in terms of departments), age (in terms of years of commencement) and the hard skills (in terms of extent of infrastructure development and obtrusive measures), student marketability (
extent of skill-based learning for students and curriculum design as per industry requirement) and the weight being given to accreditation status of all the universities.

The article is organized further as: Section 2 covers the literature related to criticism of ranking and need for university third mission incorporation in HEIs’ activities. Section 3 deals with the methodology used in this paper. In section 4, the results of the content analysis are provided and interpreted accordingly. Section 5, concludes the paper with discussion and implication of results.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of the third mission has been expansively studied by researchers ((Molas-Gallart et al. 2002; Laredo, 2007); Krčmářová, 2011) as well as in policy documents (OECD 2007, 3). Extant of literature is conducted on third mission activities with various perspectives. OECD (2007) laid importance on the economic contribution of HEIs, Molas-Gallart et al.,( 2002) highlighted the commercialization of IP activities of universities. Laredo (2007) associated third mission activities with innovation. Ferrer-Balas, Lozano, Huisinigh, Buckland, Ysern, & Zilahy (2010). however, stressed that HEIs should be engaged more widely with the society so as to contribute toward learned society.

Researchers asserted that university rankings strengthen and enhance universities’ quality and their performance appraisal (Hou, 2012; Taylor & Braddock, 2007). Cheng and Tam (1997) asserted that university quality includes something other than the info, process, and yield of the instructive framework. They contended that university quality additionally includes the administrations that fulfill both internal and external stakeholders. This implies each stakeholder party has its own perspective of measuring the quality according to their respective needs.

According to Šolc, Markulik, & Sütőová (2014), the performance indicators misleadingly measure the quality of universities, so it is necessary to assess the reliability of these parameters. They further emphasized that quality cannot be discussed without proper check and balance, whether objectively or subjectively. One of the quality measurement fallacy identified by Berbegal-Mirabent, and Ribeiro-Soriano (2015) is that greater weight is assigned to end(output) rather than means(input).

The university rankings across the globe based on various quality ranking mechanisms is facing criticism on the basis of wide gap emerging between quantity and quality of HEIs Saisana, Hombres, & Saltelli, 2011). According to Manolopoulos and Katsaros (2017), university rankings are non-scientific and commercial thus leading to an unreliable comparison between HEIs. The rankings can be improved by incorporating societal engagement activities of HEIs (Montesinos, Carot, Martinez & Mora, 2008).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In order to get more deepened and reflective role of HEIs towards society and industry, this study takes into account the Krmov(2011) model of third mission framework depicted in Fig 1. The stated model thus highlights the third mission activities in three dimensions i.e., enterprising, innovative and social third mission activities. Enterprising third mission ensures the commercialization activities of HEIs, the innovative third mission is targeted to the transfer of innovation and technology to the society and social third mission is focussed on the social interaction as well as community development courses at university level designed to work on resolving community issues.
In order to achieve the objective of this study i.e. assessing the national ranking criteria (HEC) for the representation of third mission indicators categorically, content analysis is performed though NVIVO ver. 11 as according to Weber (1990) in order to analyze text beyond counts, content analysis is an effective approach. The content analysis is conducted on the fifth-ranking methodology (2015) of HEC. The results of the analysis are discussed in the next section.

4. ANALYSIS

While referring to the current ranking methodology for HEIs in Pakistan by HEC, it has been found that the third mission activities are partially reflected. The results of content analysis through word frequency analysis are depicted in Table 1 as follows:

Table 1. Word Frequency Analysis performed in NVIVO ver. 11.0.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THIRD MISSION FRAMEWORK (Krmov, 2011)</th>
<th>WORD FREQUENCY ANALYSIS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Enterprising Third Mission</strong></td>
<td>Keyword</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emolument from private sources</td>
<td>Patents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contractual and joint research</td>
<td>ORICs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultancy activities</td>
<td>resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contractual education</td>
<td>Professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial use of facilities intermediary organ and intellectual property management</td>
<td>Office</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **2. Innovative Third Mission**      | Keyword               | Count/Occurrences | Weighted percentage (%) |
| Innovation objective defined         | innovation            | Not found         | --                        |
| Model partnership with               | ORICs                 | Not found         | --                        |
3. Social and Civic Third Mission

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Civic and social engagement support</th>
<th>Stakeholders</th>
<th>Not found</th>
<th>--</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direct service or problem-centered research and education</td>
<td>outreach</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientation on current developing countries problems</td>
<td>internationalization</td>
<td>Not Found</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture and leisure enrichment</td>
<td>festivals</td>
<td>Not Found</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.1 Enterprising Third Mission

The enterprising third mission activities are related to HEIs’ fulfilling of financial shortage through Licenses, patents, Spin-offs/start-ups/incubators/contracts. After analyzing the national ranking methodology for the presence of enterprise third mission activities, it is found that private source emoluments have been given weight in ranking methodology through the Research dimension C1, C2 and C3 in Ranking_Doc(2015) fifth. The contractual and joint research activities conducted by universities are measured through ORIC establishment. Consultancy activities and finances earned through these types of activities are measured through the Finance and facilities dimension D2.

4.2 Innovative Third Mission

The purpose of this dimension of the third mission is to engage HEIs in playing a participatory role in bringing in local as well as global innovation. This would be possible if HEIs are involved in socially-centered innovation that is not only beneficial but also practical for the environment as well. After analyzing HEC ranking methodology (2015), there seems to be no explicit measure associated with bringing the technical and social innovation to the market.

4.3 Social and Civic Third Mission

The purpose of these types of third mission activities is targeted to develop and strengthen the cohesion in society and enhancing the democratic values. By inculcating these activities in HEI’s core activities, there tends to be the emergence of responsible citizenship in the community. After analyzing the HEC ranking methodology (2015), it has been found that HEC has been engaging universities in well being of community through community outreach programs reflected in Social Integration/Community Development dimension in the E1 criterion. This standard measures both the establishment of an intermediary centre for such activities as well as courses designed to achieve the solution of community problems.

5. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

HEC has taken steps to indulge universities in the commercialization of their research activities by establishing ORICs in universities in the year 2010. However, keeping in view the growing importance of bilateral contracts of university and industry, there is still need to cater enterprising third mission activities in more depth by HEIs. There is need to include a greater number of professional development courses for students and IP management efforts to motivate the external parties to participate with university facilities.

There is also need to cater technical as well as social innovation activities so as to bring societal well being in a self-sufficient manner. In order to be beneficial, there is, however, need to engage HEIs in broadening their relationship with stakeholders through facilitation meetings and financial support for stakeholder engagement of HEIs.
In order to gain more in-depth orientation for developing countries problems, there must be enhancing the internationalization priorities undertaken by universities. Although there is due weight given to exchange programs of students and faculty in national ranking methodology if HEC but its nature is academic as mentioned in criterion E2 of fifth ranking methodology (2015), it is however the emerging need to enhance social and civic engagement activities by initiating cultural as well as leisure programs with local as well as global perspective.

As HEC is the funding agency in Pakistan, so in order to ensure transparency, there must be separate evaluation bodies so as to bring relevance and value to society. In order to ensure transparency, the quality evaluation and rankings should be done by independent accreditation bodies as per global standards. This is so because; the relevant accreditation bodies are more knowledgeable of the requirements of the concerned program. The general category of ranking is not practically applicable because certain factors are not considered weights like the size of the HEI, specialized HEIs.

There is dire need to relate theory being researched and taught at university level and its application in social context. For this, there is need to strengthen the HEIs’ activities in light of the third mission activities not given due weight according to the results of this article.

The implication of this study is to set forth a critical base for HEC to broaden the scope of national ranking methodology. The future direction of this study is to quantitatively determine the third mission activities undertaken by HEIs both in local as well as global perspectives.

REFERENCES


