

EDITORIAL
INDIAN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH QUALITY INDICATORS

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Recent times have witnessed rapid expansion in quantity of educational research. The expansion has been accentuated by the multiple effects of the Internet that have made possible stronger data resources on various areas on which researches are being undertaken. The researcher, to day, without having to travel to many places, has much better access into many aspects of scholarly researches than were made available in earlier times. Research outcomes are brought out in the form of research reports, theoretical discourses, graphical presentations, diagrams etc. and are disseminated by getting them published in the form of articles in journals, chapters in books and books. During last decade, Indian higher education has witnessed a surge in scientific publications. As the University Grants Commission guidelines for promotion and recruitment have given points for publications, there has been rise in interest among various categories of higher education faculty as well as aspirants for jobs in higher education system in getting their manuscripts published. To cope with this demand, there has been also sudden rise in number of journals on Education subject which are getting printed without any type of editing. The authors become happy when the journal in which their articles are printed has ISSN, although ISSN is not an indicator of quality. Statutory bodies having responsibility of improving quality of education have not yet evolved any instrument to check the quality of the journals and the quality of the articles printed therein. Many authors do not hesitate to pay for getting their manuscripts printed. Most of the journals do not go for peer review of the manuscripts. In addition, there has been also rise in publication of books, where the authors even pay for the printing.

Printing of old foreign publications having no copy right are being printed in India as a new publication, at times with a pseudo author. The practice of reprinting of books as revised edition without the knowledge of the authors has vitiated the atmosphere of quality in publication. As participation in conferences termed as 'International' carries more points than participation in conferences termed as 'national', institutions and organisations are going for so called international conferences having only one foreign scholar. A number of participants become happy with the abstract acceptance letters received from the organisers. They become happier when the Conference publication has ISBN, although ISBN is not an indicator of quality. There have been instances, where the individuals pay the delegate fee and demand certificates of participation, even if they had not been present personally or had not presented through video. In addition to efforts by individuals, many international, national level and state level organisations carry out research studies on specific issues. There have been efforts at the international and national level to improve the quality of educational research. Since last decade, the quality of qualitative studies has improved a lot with the availability of software like Atlas.ti, Cassandre, Maxqda, NVivo9, Transana, Weft QDA, and Win Relan etc. for qualitative data analysis. Soft ware can handle data not only texts but also in video and other digital media formats. It also saves time and makes handling of large amount of data easier and also improves the level of transparency. The conventional indicators of the quality of an article published in a journal are (a) peer review status, (b) acceptance/ rejection rate for the journal in which the article has been printed, (c) frequency of citation of article, (d) journal impact factor and (e) usage metrics. These indicators are being brought out by private agencies, mostly based in USA. Doubts have been expressed about the strength of these indicators. There is a feeling that private publishers of the journals might be making undesirable efforts to improve frequency of citation of articles published in their journals. It has been pointed out that these indicators were originally created for research in physical and biological science subjects and were later applied to the social science subjects. Hence, there is a need to have a fresh effort for developing educational research quality indicators for social science subject including Education. The conventional indicators have not covered research publications in languages other than English. They do not tell about the nature of the citation (whether the publication was praised or blamed) and also there is no indicators for assessing quality of books and chapters written by individuals, in books.

In Europe, since April 2008, the European Educational Research Quality Indicators (EERQI) project has been in operation to develop new indicators and methodologies for determining the quality of educational science research. Besides involving researchers in education, the project also involved experts from computer science and informatics, biblio and scientometrics, linguistics, educational information centres and publishing houses.

India is a large country. The reasons, for which the European Educational Research Quality Indicators (EERQI) project was started in Europe, are also the reasons for which, such a project needs to be undertaken in India. As regards language, Indian situation is similar to European situation. The languages other than English covered by the reported EERQI project were Czech, Dutch, Finnish, French, German, Hungarian, Italian, Polish, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish. Similarly, in Indian situation, the Indian Educational Research Quality Indicators (IERQI) project may start with English and Hindi languages and later cover all Sanskrit and Urdu and remaining official languages of the States. The goals of the IERQI project may be to reinforce and enhance the worldwide visibility and competitiveness of Indian educational research. More specifically, the project may aim to

- develop new indicators and methodologies to determine quality of educational research publications,
- propose a prototype framework for establishing such indicators and methodologies,
- make this framework operational on a multilingual basis (starting with English),
- produce a search and query engine for resource harvesting and text analysis,
- test transferability of the IERQI indicators into other fields in social sciences and the humanities,
- develop a sustainability plan for quality assessment of Indian educational research publications.

The project may improve the current standards of research quality indicators for the field of Social Sciences and the Humanities. The project may need to develop new sets of indicators utilizing multiple educational research methodologies catering to multilingual situation in Indian context. IERQI has to be a highly collaborative project and may be based on the participation of various stakeholders. Various agencies may consider taking up this project jointly. The agencies that may consider such an initiative may be ICSSR, All India Association for Educational Research (AIAER), National Informatics Centre(NIC), Central Institute of Indian Languages(CIIL), Mysore ; Kendriya Hindi Sansthan(KHS), Agra, Rastriya Sanskrit Sangathan(RSS), New Delhi and other organisations concerned with quality in educational research.

Efforts May also need to be made to ensure partnership of publishers of educational journals and publishers of books so that they give permission to digitalize their journals and books or supplying digitalised version of their publications exclusively for development and validation of educational Research Quality Indicators as part of this project. The IGNOU and other universities may be approached for making their books and journals available for the project. There have been instances of wrong data and outdated data found not only in publications of private publishers but also in publications of government organisations and academic bodies including universities. Although Internet has been accused of being used for encouraging plagiarism, it has also been used for checking plagiarism. A number of journals of quality subject the manuscripts to such tests. Recently, when the abstracts of a forthcoming conference was placed in the web site, a mail reported to the organizers about plagiarism and the would be participant withdrew the abstract. Similarly, in case of peer review, one reviewer objected to a manuscript as most of the concerned manuscript was found in the Internet. Placing all articles in journals in the Internet is a huge task. Application of IERQI as a pre-publication exercise might lead to more authentic and effective publications. IERQI will have impact not only on research quality and publications, but also on policy issues.

The activities in the project can be divided into three phases. The actions during the first phase may be (a) Developing Phase for Indicators in Education Subject, (b) Listing and building proof of concept specifications; (c) Developing testing methods to the aggregated relevant documents; (d) Evolving the search and query engine; (e) Collecting, converting and storing the electronic content; (f) Reviewing the type and scope of meta data and full text formats available as well as of server requirements; (g) Revisiting

traditional indicators; and (h) Suggesting new indicators. The second phase may be the testing phase and the actions at this stage may be (a) Testing of new indicators and methodologies agreed upon in the first phase on a continuously expanding content base; (b) Specifying work on the search and query engine with integration of multi-lingual thesauri and refining it to accommodate activities in the third phase, such as duplicating the process on a smaller scale and with a limited test bed within other exemplary fields of Social Sciences and Humanities and ensuring that the activities will continuously be accompanied by the verification of indicators and methodologies by the scientific community. At the third phase, the results of the project may be placed before the scientific community as well as before other relevant public, including policy makers on local, national and international levels.

Following suggestions for formulating strategies for operationalising IERQI may be considered. A core group may be created to formulate strategies. The core group may consist of Educational Researchers, Writers / Authors, Editors, Statisticians, Computer software experts, language experts, and documentation experts and also representatives from relevant Govt. like ICSSR, CIIL, KHS, RSS, etc. An initial workshop may be conducted to develop operational strategies covering issues such as (a) Techniques of harvesting data and developing a search and query engine; (b) Bibliometric issues related to relationship among key words, abstracts and full texts; (c) Types of approaches to develop indicators relevant of specific categories of materials; (d) Process of establishing validity and reliability of these indicators and estimating their durability and usability from Indian perspective; (e) Preparing an action plan: schedule of meetings, workshops and conferences to thrash out various techniques and approaches suggested in the meeting; (f) Preparing a budget and (g) preparing an action plan.

Any academic organisation may initiate this project. Organisations like the Central Institute of Indian Languages, Mysore, which is developing national level tests and other organisations may consider taking up such a project. State institutions may be interested in developing State level projects covering the State language.