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Pragmatic Research Status and Trends of Indian Higher Education Institutions: Reflection of Degree Colleges in the State of West Bengal

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Abstract
The main aim of this study is to know how many major and minor research projects have been carried out by the different departments of degree colleges' affiliated to the Gour Banga University in West Bengal so far from 2008 to 2020 and to understand their existing pragmatic research landscape. The University of Gour Banga has 25 degree colleges (https://www.ugb.ac.in/general-degree-college.php). This is a comparative study. Data were gathered through information schedules from each college using primary sources and gathered data were examined using mixed methods (thematic analysis, percentage and graphical representation). In the context of minor research projects conducted by various departments, 44 percent of colleges have been worked actively. 66% of colleges, on the other hand, during the past 12 years of academic sessions, have not been carried out a single research project. In addition, both major and minor research initiatives were carried out by eight percent of colleges. Malda College stands top among the colleges in the field of both major and minor research initiatives that have been done.
Key words: Research Culture and Research Projects.

1. Introduction and Rationale

Higher education has always been regarded as platforms for collaboration between teaching and research. They are intimately interconnected. In order to properly teach at higher education, research is highly required (Report of the Committee to Advice on Renovation and Rejuvenation of Higher Education, 2009).

In a globalised society, for its sustainability and progress, the function of research in a higher education institute is important. The hunt for knowledge lies at the heart of research. The quality of research work translates directly into the quality of the education and learning in the classroom, benefiting students, society and the country. The promotion of research in a vast and diversified country like India will allow the country to develop into an international repository of knowledge (Prakash, 2016).

In India, the different research funding departments like Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB), Aeronautics Research and Development Board (ARDB), Research in Nuclear Sciences (BRNS), Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR), Defense Research & Development Organization (DRDO), Department of Atomic Energy (DAE), Department of Biotechnology (DBT), All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), Medical Council of India (MCI), Central Council of Indian Medicine (CCIM) etc. for the field of technical and general sciences and multiple funding institutes namely University Grants Commission (UGC), Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), Indian Council of Philosophical Research (ICPR), Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR), Distance Education Council (DEC), Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI, 1992), National Council for Rural Institutes (NCRI) etc. for the field of social and humanistic sciences

are providing major and minor research projects for working teachers at Indian higher education institutions (https://www.google.com/search?)

The significance of research in the development of high-quality higher education around the world is crucial. However, India's investment in research is a pitiful 0.7 percent of GDP, which is much below worldwide best practices. South Korea, Japan, Switzerland, and the United States, for example, spend 4.1, 3.4, 3.2, and 2.7 percent of their GDP on research, respectively (www.uis.unesco.org).

The following points will clarify why research is an indispensable part in higher education institutions across the globe.

1. The necessity for research-oriented education is urgent because teachers must engage in research with the most recent and original information and facts, rather than relying on what is written in a book. Teachers who are knowledgeable with research-based teaching can also assist students by teaching research results, making research known, demonstrating what it means to be a researcher, assisting with research, offering research experience, and so on.
2. Research-based learning is a current increasing requirement in higher education. Teachers' research-based learning is extremely beneficial to pupils in a variety of ways. Students who participate in research-based learning are more likely to learn more and better than students who do not. Students begin as information consumers and progress to knowledge producers in the following ways. Students explore and evaluate research findings and techniques in the discipline, acquire certain research procedures, and engage in substantial applications of a variety of techniques through lectures and readings dedicated to current research. Furthermore, children learn by experience rather than just what is stated and done.

In general, there are three dimensions to research performance: (i) research projects, (ii) research guidance leading to a Ph.D., and (iii) research publications (in refereed journals and conferences). The first two stated above lead to the third one (e.i. research publications). Higher education institutions nowadays place a greater emphasis on “generating degree holder graduates” than on graduates with a research bent of mind. As a result, faculty are overburdened with teaching duties, and teaching takes up a significant percentage of their time. Higher education and research are complementary, yet research performance has been pushed to the side.

The Indian higher education system is currently confronted with a number of challenges and issues. One of them is the research quality. One of the primary issues now afflicting India's higher education system is a lack of research in most universities and colleges. In this context, the New Education Policy proposes the creation of a National Research Foundation (NRF) to fund great peer-reviewed research and aggressively nurture research in universities and colleges to address this predicament (NPE, 2020). In view of the foregoing, the researcher wishes to learn about the current state of research, trends, and situation of existing degree colleges affiliated to the University of Gour Banga through this study. That’s why this study has been taken with the following objectives.

2. Objectives

1. To determine how many major and minor research projects in the field of arts, science, and commerce streams have been completed by all degree colleges affiliated to the University of Gour Banga from 2008 to 2020.
2. To determine the state of existing research culture in all degree colleges.
3. To make concrete & pragmatic recommendations on how to improve the research culture at degree colleges.

3. Methodology

West Bengal Act XXVI of 2007 established the University of Gour Banga (UGB), which

is located in English Bazar Town, Malda District, West Bengal. The UGB began its academic activities in the academic year 2008, with a territorial jurisdiction that included all of Malda, Uttar Dianjpur, and Dakshin Dinjpur district, in keeping with the idea of reaching and sustaining the greatest standards of academic achievement while also addressing the aspirations of the socio-economically backward parts of society. (https://www.ugb.ac.in/about.php)

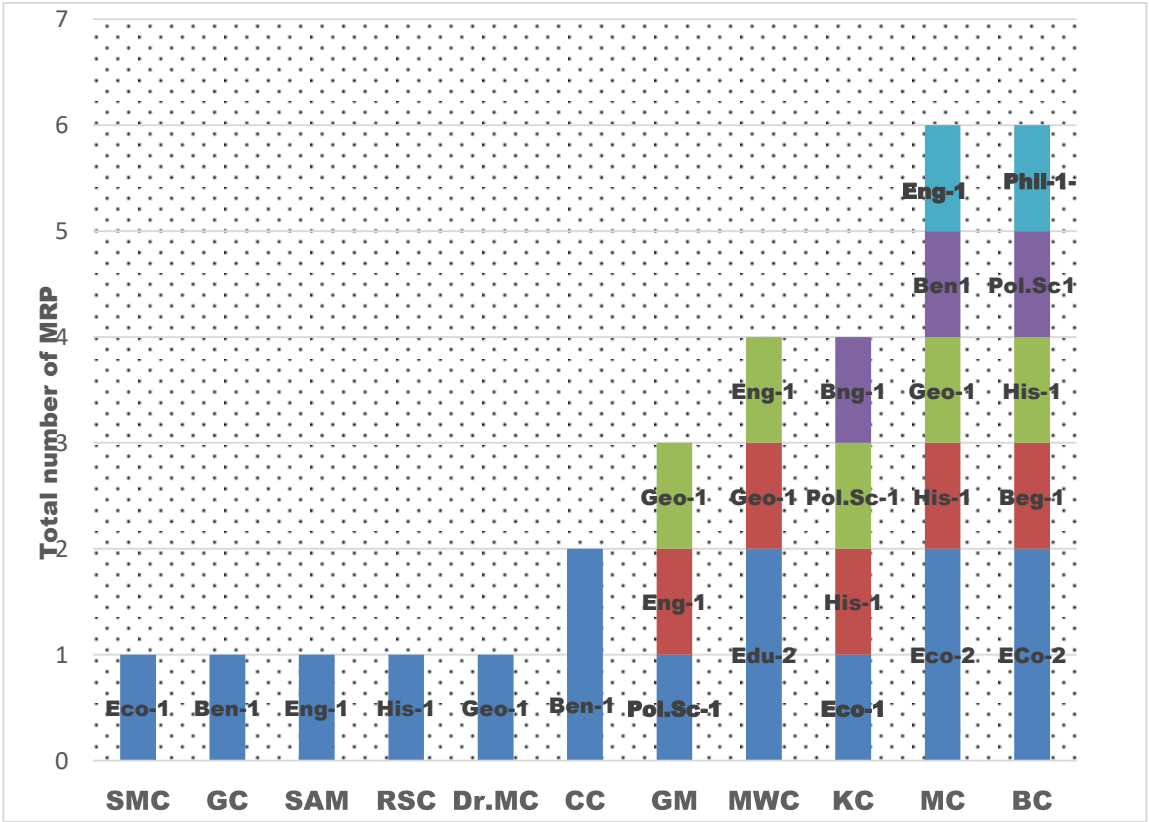
The University of Gour Banga oversees twenty-five degree colleges. These colleges can be divided into four categories: a) colleges with just an Arts stream, b) colleges with both Arts and Commerce streams, c) colleges with Arts and Science streams, and d) colleges with Arts, Commerce, and Science streams.

It falls within the category of comparative survey research in terms of research methodology. This is a descriptive comparative status study based on information acquired from primary and secondary sources. For the purpose of this study's data collection, the researcher went to various degree colleges affiliated to the University of Gour Banga and collected data using an information schedule. Quantitative and qualitative statistical techniques such as thematic analysis, percentages, and graphical displays were used to meet the stated objectives.

4. Data Analysis and Interpretations

The results are analyzed and interpreted in relation to the stated objective number 1, and a graphical depiction is included. Let's take a look at objective number 1 and its analysis.

Fig 1: Total numbers of minor research projects have been completed by degree colleges (Arts & Humanistic Streams) affiliated to University of Gour Banga from 2008 to 2020



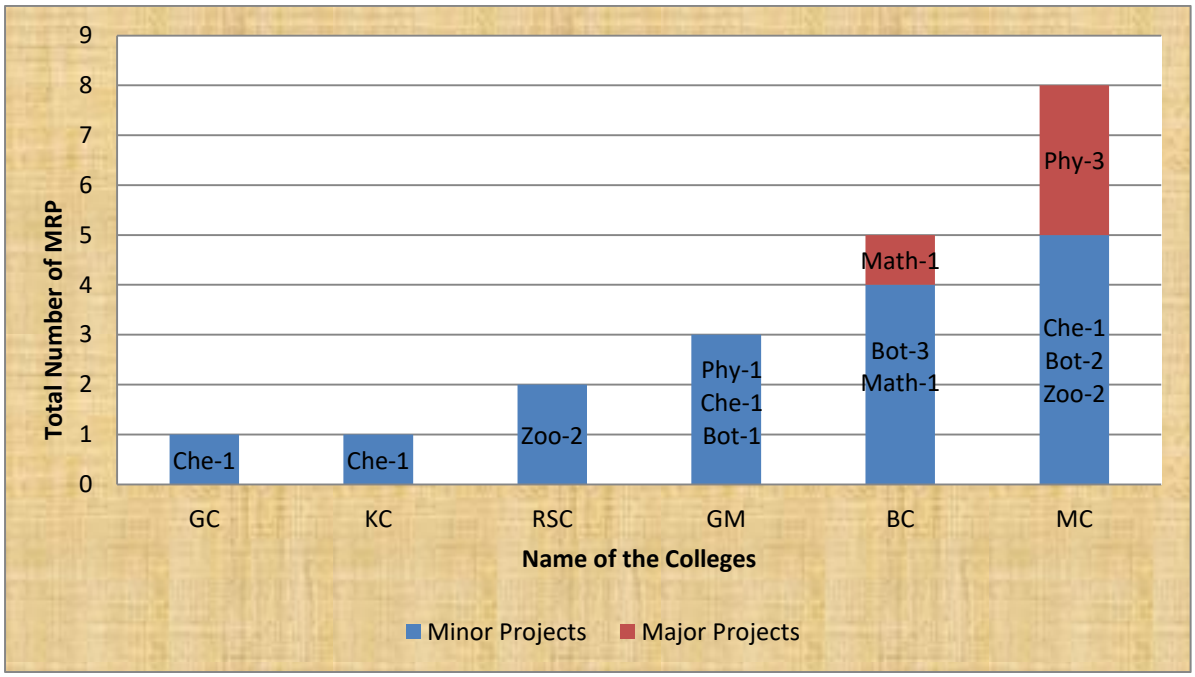
Name of the Colleges

Note: SMC-South Malda College, GC-Gangarampur College, SAM-Shree Agrasen Mahavidyalaya, RSC-Raiganja Surendranath College, Dr.MC-Dr.Meghanad Saha College, CC-Chanchal College, GM-Gour Mahavidyalay, MWC-Malda Women's College, KC-Kaliaganja College, MC-Malda College & BC-

Baluaghat College, MRP-Minor Research Projects, Fig-Figure.

It (see Fig 1) clearly delineates that out of 25-degree colleges; only 11 (44%) colleges have actively been worked in the context of minor research projects sponsored by different funding agencies. On the other hand, 66% of colleges have not been done a single project during last twelve years of academic sessions. Among all the colleges, Malda College and Balurghat College top in position and have been completed six MRPs in total each so far. The four colleges namely SMC, GC, SAM, RSC & Dr.MC have been completed one MRP each. Two colleges such as MWC & KC have been completed 4 MRPs each. But if we analyse the department-wise in terms of results of MRPs, the department of education from MWC, department of Bengali from CC and department of economics from MC and BC have been done two projects each respectively. Most of the departments (Sanskrit, Sociology, Physical education) of all colleges affiliated to University of Gour Banga have been performed zero in terms of MRPs. This situation might have occurred because two colleges namely Malda College and Balurghat College have regular mode of PG programmes in the following subjects like Bengali, History & English in Malda College & Bengali, History & Sanskrit in Balurghat College by which teachers are capable enough to do better in research work as compared to other colleges.

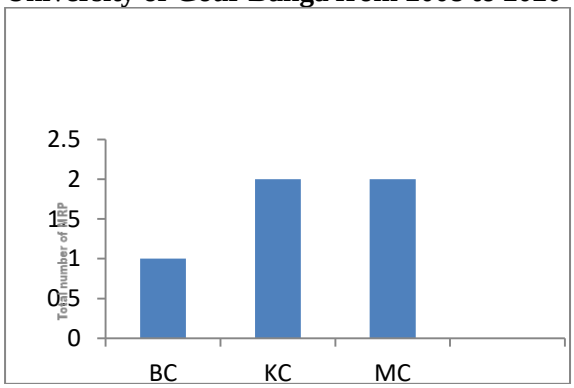
Fig 2: Total numbers of minor & major research projects have been completed by degree colleges (Arts & Humanistic Streams) affiliated to University of Gour Banga from 2008 to 2020



On the one hand, Malda College and Baluarghat colleges have been finished both major and minor research projects, while on the other side; all of the aforementioned colleges have been finished just minor research projects (see Fig 2). In terms of both minor and major research initiatives, MC is in first place among all colleges. The probable reason for such a finding may be due to the fact that teachers from MC and BC may have a higher level of research ability and aptitude, or a more conducive/congenial research climate, or a good inter-personal transaction among faculty members in terms of quality research environment than other college teachers. Furthermore, these two colleges were formed earlier than the rest.

Fig 3: Total numbers of minor research projects have been completed by degree

colleges (Commerce Stream) affiliated to University of Gour Banga from 2008 to 2020



Name of the Colleges

With respect to minor research projects, both two colleges (Malda College and Kaliaganj College) have been exhibited equal level of performance. Baluaghat College, on the other hand, has been completed one minor research project. However, in the recent 12 years, none of the other colleges have been conducted any minor research projects.

The results are analysed and interpreted in relation to the stated objective number 2. Let's take a look at objective number 2 and its analysis.

The study's analysis (relating to the objective number 2) reveals that many colleges do not have a conducive and welcoming research culture. In terms of both quality and quantity, the current state of research is not promising. Day by day, the present research trends are dwindling. Effective teaching and reflective research are two facets of higher education, as we all know. A teacher may not be successful in teaching in this current situation without active and aggressive involvement in the research field. As a result, each higher education institution must cultivate a "quality research culture." The academic leadership of an institution will play a major role in the formation of such a culture. Leadership must foster an environment that supports and promotes research output. In addition, the Internal Quality Assessment Cell (IQAC) should take the lead in this area.

Finally, we can provide ways to improve the research culture in higher education institution (relating to the objective number 3). Some of the proposals include the following:

- Each higher education institution needs a favorable and welcoming academic environment.
- Using the same amount of space for teaching and research.
- Only scholars who excel in both research and teaching are appointed.
- Strengthening academic and student attitudes toward high-quality research.
- Providing teachers with chances and incentives to improve their ‘research-based' teaching competence and quality.
- Dedicated researchers from elite research institutes should commit and dedicate certain credit hours to helping teachers working at degree colleges grasp the complexities of ethical research and include them in on-going research efforts (Sengupta, 2019).
- As research is one of the most important aspects of any international or national quality assessment monitoring institution such as QS World Ranking, NAAC, or NIRF, research is an important part of the process. As a result, the research field will be given top priority. Furthermore, particularly in the context of Indian higher education, funding in research and innovation will be increased.

5. Major Findings & Conclusion

The data paint a bleak picture in terms of minor and major research projects across the University of Gour Banga's associated degree colleges. Approximately 66% of colleges have not been completed a single project in the recent twelve academic years. Among all the colleges affiliated to the University of Gour Banga, only Malda College ranks first in both major and minor research initiatives.

Quality education and research are the keys to the future higher education institutions. These are unable to function without research. As a result, we have no choice but to adapt and conduct research by teachers at the tertiary level. Teaching cannot be of

high quality without research. As a result, efforts are required in this area.

India has a large demographic dividend that, if properly utilized, may help the country thrive economically. It is past time for present teachers working at the undergraduate level of education to focus on high-quality research.

Each higher education institution must create a Research Consultancy Cell that includes teachers, students, professionals, and industry to work on high-quality research initiatives. The key domain and tool in the interface between the academic and corporate worlds should be research. It must give a theoretical foundation that allows current methods and thinking to be reassessed and refined. It provides the faculty with in-depth knowledge and encourages them to be curious. Furthermore, it enhances the faculty's consulting ability.

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