

Unethical Practices in Recruitment of Teaching Staff at Universities in India: A Dead End of Ethical Academic & Administrative environment

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Abstract—The higher education system in India has expanded rapidly over the past few decades. However, this growth is increasingly threatened by systemic corruption, cronyism, and arbitrary recruitment practices regarding faculty appointments. This paper examines the dominant forms of unethical recruitment practices across both public and private Indian universities and evaluates their long-term impact on institutional research output and global rankings. A mixed-methods conceptual framework analysing historical policy shifts by regulatory authorities alongside an evaluation of merit-dilution metrics. The findings reveal that favouritism, ideological stackings, regionalism, and the dilution of strict objective criteria (such as minimum PhD benchmarks) have degraded academic rigor. The paper argues that Indian academia has reached a "road end" where immediate, immutable digital oversight and decentralized, objective meritocracies are required to salvage the international credibility of its intellectual capital.

Index Terms—Academic Corruption, Faculty Recruitment, Higher Education in India, Meritocracy, University Governance

I. Introduction

The core of any university's global standing relies heavily on its human capital—specifically, the Caliber of its teaching and research faculty. India boasts one of the largest higher education networks globally, yet its institutions consistently struggle to secure top positions in international rankings (such as QS or Times Higher Education).

While underfunding is frequently cited as the main culprit, a structural issue lies deeper: the lack of a transparent, strictly merit-based framework for faculty appointments (Altbach, 2015). Systemic issues such as cronyism, administrative favouritism, and fluctuating regulatory guidelines have systematically degraded the entry-level quality of university lecturers.

This paper critically explores how these unethical recruitment practices operate, how regulatory loopholes exacerbate them, and why the current paradigm has reached an absolute dead end ("a road end") if India hopes to transition into a global knowledge economy.

II. Literature Review & Conceptual Framework

2.1 The Anatomy of Nepotism and Cronyism

In institutional hiring, nepotism (favouring kin) and cronyism (favouring associates) shift the evaluation from what you know to who you know (Dhiman, 2021). Within Indian universities, selection committees often operate with significant subjectivity. Interview panels are frequently stacked with regional or internal allies to guarantee the selection of pre-determined candidates, ignoring objectively superior external candidates.

2.2 Regulatory Fluctuation and Criteria Dilution

A major structural vulnerability in Indian higher education is the shifting nature of minimum eligibility criteria. Frequent draft modifications by regulatory bodies—such as the University Grants Commission (UGC)—have historically introduced instability into hiring standards (Mehrotra, 2023).

The Compliance Conundrum: Alternating between requiring and waiving the National Eligibility Test (NET) or PhD requirements for Assistant Professor roles creates windows of administrative discretion. This discretion is frequently exploited to push through underqualified candidates (Mehrotra, 2023).

2.3 The Impact on Research Productivity

When faculty are hired via unethical means rather than academic merit, institutional research outputs decline. Academic dishonesty, plagiarism, and a lack of genuine peer-reviewed publications are highly correlated with systems where meritocracy is bypassed during initial recruitment (Bakthavatchalam et al., 2021).

III. Methodology (Proposed Strategy for Your Paper)

To build a strong empirical paper, use the following structural methodology section to guide your field research:

- ¹ Research Design: A mixed-methods approach utilizing qualitative narrative analysis of court cases regarding disputed university appointments alongside quantitative tracking of institutional h-index changes.
- ² Data Collection:
 - Primary Data: Semi-structured interviews or anonymous surveys of ad-hoc and contractual faculty across state, central, and private universities regarding their perceptions of hiring equity.
 - Secondary Data: Analysis of UGC draft regulations, National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) reports, and public litigation records.

IV. Key Discussion Themes: The "Road End" Manifestations

Typology of Unethical Practice	Operational Mechanism	Institutional Consequence
Cronyism & Panel Stacking	Hand-picking compliant external experts for interview selection boards.	Demoralization of qualified ad-hoc staff; entry of incompetent educators.
Criteria Manipulation	Retroactively shifting weightage between academic API scores and personal interview marks.	Legal gridlocks, court stays on recruitment cycles, and vacant positions.

Typology of Unethical Practice	Operational Mechanism	Institutional Consequence
Commercialization (Private Sector)	"Donation" or under-the-table financial transactions for permanent posts.	Inability to retain high-tier researchers; focus shifts to profit over pedagogy.
Ideological & Vague Benchmarks	Over-weighting ambiguous contributions (e.g., non-scholarly traditions) over peer-reviewed indexed metrics.	Drop in international research citations and global university reputation.

The Systemic Gridlock

The phrase "Road End" signifies that the traditional system of localized university autonomy over hiring has fundamentally collapsed under the weight of localized biases. When recruitment integrity is compromised:

- Top-tier domestic talent leaves for international positions (brain drain).
- Institutional funding shrinks due to poor NAAC accreditation or National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) rankings (Mehrotra, 2023).
- The classroom environment deteriorates, lowering student outcome metrics.

V. Policy Recommendations for Reforms

[Traditional Localized Hiring] → Vulnerable to Bias & Influence

▼ (Transform to)

[Decentralized Blind Screening] → Nationalized Standard Testing & Anonymous Review

▼ (Enforced by)

[Blockchain/Immutable Auditing] → Unalterable Verification of API and Selection Scores

1. Automated, Blind Preliminary Screening: Initial screening of Academic Performance Indicator (API) scores should be automated through a central portal, preventing regional panels from discarding high-merit candidates before the interview stage.
2. Mandatory Double-Blind Interview Elements: A portion of the evaluation should involve teaching demonstrations assessed by external, anonymous reviewers unaware of the candidate's background, lineage, or institutional affiliations.
3. Immutable Auditing: All selection committee scoring sheets, audio/video recordings of interviews, and justification logs must be digitized and permanently preserved to ensure transparency during public audits or legal challenges.

VI. Conclusion

Unethical practices in the recruitment of university faculty in India have shifted from sporadic incidents to a deep structural crisis. The current trajectory has reached a dead end; continuing down this path risks completely decoupling Indian higher education from global standards of scholarship. To achieve its goal of becoming a premier international knowledge hub, India must treat faculty recruitment reform not as an administrative adjustment, but as a critical requirement for national academic survival.

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