

# Admission Policies in Higher Education Institutions in India, South Africa, Singapore, USA, Australia and China and Their Relation to Student Satisfaction at Undergraduate Level

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## Abstract

Student satisfaction has gained importance in the new education environment not only in India but in leading academic institutions in nations across the world. This paper looks into the admission policies framed by respective governments and followed by institutions in multiple nations. The study has also been done to understand the popular models developed by thinkers and contributors in academic domains to improve the quality of students and the impact that they have on the number of admissions each year. When a student decides to move from elementary levels to higher education it is not only the infrastructural and academic facilities that have a positive impact on the decision to choose between colleges but also how his initial queries were handled by the institution's admission cell whether on a personal visit or any other medium. The paper is an effort to identify the best practices and variables that create a clearer picture of the interactions and supporting activities that a student shall experience during the academic journey in the selected institution for higher education.

**Keywords:** admission policies, student satisfaction, higher education, student-institution interaction, research, etc.

In the current times there is a trend in economy that its being is driven by knowledge and information sharing. Therefore, it is essential to devise regulations and laws to govern the sharing sensitive information related to copyrights and patent. The educational institutions have to uphold their stature as places where knowledge is created, researched, evaluated and then shared such that its application becomes easier.

## Review of Literature

### Higher Education

Higher education in literal terms means the next level of qualification to be attained by students who have completed their secondary education and have attained the eligibility to get admissions in institutions offering programs from graduation onwards. This is a combination of all modes of education like physical, correspondence and online delivery of academic content in the larger interest. All the students completing their secondary education may not be accommodated in higher education institutions therefore alternate modes of delivery have to be identified to support the students in attaining a graduate or next level qualification as a basic right.

Higher education is defined as a college or university education that is regarded as one of the most significant instruments for an individual's social and economic growth (U. Mukhtar, S. Anwar, U. Ahmed, and M. A. Baloch, 2015). The major goals of higher education are to create and disseminate knowledge for the advancement of humanity through innovation and creativity, (IM Salinda Weerasinghe, and R. Lalitha, S. Fernando, 2017). Higher education includes all post-secondary education, training, and research advice provided by educational institutions such as universities that have been designated by state authorities as institutions of higher education, (World Conference on Higher Education, 1998.) Higher education institutions contribute to society through promoting research while maintaining the primary goal of providing high-quality education.

### Student Satisfaction

The dictionary definition of satisfaction is a pleased sensation that occurs when something is achieved or when something occurs as anticipated. Satisfaction is a pleasurable satisfaction, which signifies that services were consumed in accordance with their demands and wants, resulting in pleasure (Oliver, 1997). It could be a consumer perception of service consumption based on customer factors such as pleasure versus unhappiness, (Oliver, 1999).

Students' satisfaction can be defined as an outlook arrived at when they compare the outcomes of their experiences in academic delivery and use of facilities and services. This was attained when the students' actual experiences or performances met or exceeded their initial expectations, (K. Elliott and M. Healy, 2002). A major performance indicator for higher education institutions, with many universities implementing rigorous quality assurance processes had been student satisfaction, (J. Bryant and S. Bodfish, 2014). The impact of service quality on student satisfaction in higher education was investigated, and it was discovered that cooperation, kindness of administrative staff, and responsiveness of the educational system all play a significant role in determining student satisfaction, (Malik, M. E., Danish, R. Q. & Usman, A., 2010). It is also suggested that academic advising, curriculum, teaching quality, financial assistance, tuition fee and university facilities have significant impact on students' satisfaction, (Farahmandian, S., Minavand, H. & Afshard, M., 2013).

Students' subjective impressions of how effectively a learning environment supports academic success are referred to as student satisfaction, (Lo, 2010). Strong student satisfaction suggests that sufficiently challenging educational techniques are causing pupils to think and learn. The function of the instructor and the students are likely to be important aspects in student happiness; both elements may be vital to student learning. The current study investigated some of these elements in an attempt to identify those that are most helpful in ensuring students' academic success, (Winberg and Hedman, 2008). Satisfaction has been extensively researched in both academic and non-academic (workplace) settings. Students' satisfaction data in academic settings assists colleges and universities in making their curriculum more responsive to the needs of a changing marketplace, (Eyck, Tews & Ballester, 2009; Witowski, 2008). A curriculum's effectiveness can be assessed using both direct performance measures (such as comprehensive exams, projects, and presentations) and indirect performance measures (such as student satisfaction with the curriculum), (Jamelske, 2009; Witowski, 2008). Several researchers have investigated concerns related to students' satisfaction (e.g., Astin, 1977; Bryant, 2009; DeShields, Kara, & Kaynak, 2005; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005), and the majority of them agree that highly satisfied students are more likely to stay in and eventually graduate from college. The measurement of learning satisfaction is important for higher education institutions because it allows them to identify their strengths and areas for improvement, (Eom et al, 2006; Kember and Ginns, 2012; Marsh, 1982; Zerihun et al, 2012). The review of literature indicates that variables like admission procedure, introductory interactions, syllabi, delivery modules for programs and campus facilities directly affect student satisfaction.

## **Benefits of Student Satisfaction**

A satisfied student indirectly becomes the brand ambassador for the institution and assures a sound impact on colleagues, friends, family and society in which the students lives. Student loyalty and word of mouth are the main outcomes of satisfaction. When student satisfaction rises, he or she becomes psychologically attached to the university and its activities. That represents the level of loyalty he or she possesses. The consequences will be spread by word of mouth among friends, relatives, prospective students, and interested parties on the spot, (Austin, A. J., & Pervaiz, S. 2017). Student loyalty is the combination of a student's willingness to spread positive word about the institution and to recommend the educational institution to family, friends, employers, and organizations whenever the opportunity arises, (Athiyaman, 1997; Mohamad, 2009; Thomas, 2011). Student satisfaction has the strongest direct and total association with student loyalty, with a total effect approximately three times greater than the effect of university image; (Helgesen & Nettet, 2007).

## **Admission Policies around the World-A Glimpse**

**South Africa:** Apartheid lasted decades in South Africa, and the country now faces a skilled labour shortage due to a lack of access to basic and higher education standards. The National Plan for Higher Education puts the vision for the transformation of the higher education system

into action as outlined in (Education White Paper 3 - A Programme for the Transformation of the Higher Education System, DoE: July 1997). It establishes a framework for implementation and identifies the strategic interventions and levers required for the transformation of the higher education system. It represents both an opportunity and a challenge to chart a course that can establish higher education as a reckoning force to mold the social reconstruction and growth of South Africa. In 2002, the Higher Education Quality Committee launched a project to improve teaching and learning in higher education, with a focus on diversity, (Council on Higher Education, 2004).

### **General Admission Requirements for Bachelor Degree Program**

The minimum admission requirement for the Bachelors degree program is a National Senior Certificate (NSC). Certificate of exemption from the matriculation endorsement required as issued by the Matriculation Board on behalf of HESA or a conditional admission certificate issued by a university of technology.

### **General Admission Procedure**

**Step 1:** Fill out and submit an application form online. A valid e-mail address is mandatory so that the Institution can communicate with the student during the application procedure.

**Step 2:** Upload all the necessary supporting documents as part of the online application procedure.

### **Documentation for Undergraduate Degrees, Diplomas and Certificates**

- Certified transcripts of all official academic records stating all subject examinations passed and marks received.
- Copy of your passport or birth certificate or any other valid ID proof.
- Senior Certificate Copy.
- Entrance exam results or certificates.

**Step 3:** Payment of application fee.

**Step 4:** After successful completion of the application procedure, the institution will confirm your admission to your choice programs and inform about the final results that whether you have been accepted or not.

### **Entrance Examination**

**National Benchmark Tests:** The National Benchmark Test (NBTs) is an entrance tests that evaluates a student's ability to cope with the entry-level academic literacy, quantitative literacy and mathematics demands they will face in their university studies.

**Singapore:** Because of its location as a regional gateway for Southeast Asia, it offers educational possibilities to students from Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea, and mainland China. In

response to the demand for critical thinkers in a global economy, it has implemented a number of reforms in its universities, including a more flexible admissions process that includes extracurricular activities in addition to academic accomplishment, (Mok, 2008).

Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong envisioned "Thinking Schools, Learning Nations" in the year 1997 and steered the Singapore Education System to change into an ability-driven system. ICT became an important pillar in education supported by nationalism in education, creative thinking and collaborative learning. Greater autonomy was assigned to schools in terms of curriculum designing and adding diversity to develop niche programs. The Ministry of Education has also stated that "excellence" will not be defined only in terms of academics; "an excellence mountain range - with numerous peaks." According to the Subject-Based Banding plan, pupils will be categorized into G1, G2, and G3 starting in 2021.

### **Bachelor Education as pre-university education**

The Ministry of Education has also stated that "excellence" will not be defined only in terms of academics; "an excellence mountain range - with numerous peaks." JCs accept students based on their GCE "O" Level results; A student must have an L1R5 score of 20 points or fewer in order to be admitted. The Singapore-Cambridge GCE Advanced Level (A level) examination or the International Baccalaureate Diploma are both offered at JCs. All students must participate in at least one CCA (Co-Curricular Activities), as CCA performance is taken into account when applying to universities.

**Vocational Education:** The Institute of Technical Education (ITE) is a vocational school that accepts students based on their GCE "O" or "N" level scores and offers two-year courses that culminate to a nationally recognized "National ITE Certificate." Within six months of graduation, 80 to 90 percent of ITE graduates get hired in their areas, encouraging more students to consider vocational education as a viable alternative to traditional university study.

### **United States of America**

The federal department cannot devise nationally acceptable and applicable guidelines since the education system is decentralized. However, the issue is heated enough that a collection of writings on fairer and better ways to manage the admissions process has been compiled, (Camara and Kimmel, 2005).

The admission process is initiated as early as a student is grade eleven in school when the students meet the guidance counselors to understand the entire system of selecting colleges and it is this when they are encouraged to visit the campuses of prospective colleges they wish to study at. The finalization and submission of application forms is done in the summer before grade twelve to begin the process of an early admission or a regular admission. The students have to appear for SAT / ACT preliminary examinations and the scores are used for further process of

fulfilling the admission criteria. The students also need to compulsorily write college essays wherein they justify their application to a particular college of choice.

**Admission Support at Colleges:** Every educational institution is expected to mandatorily appoint a team that specifically looks into student enrolment and admissions. It has to be headed by dean or vice president. The other team members can be middle-level managers, admission support officials, and active administrative staff with an inclination towards career guidance. Students meet with team members on a regular basis to better grasp the systems and make educated career decisions.

## Australia

State and Tertiary Governments are responsible for basic education and also for admission to higher education from Technical and Further Education Institutions for students from within the country as per federal system. For direct admissions, scores of the Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) are required, as are results on the Special Tertiary Admissions Test (STAT) for vocational and bridging modules.

Australian Universities adopt formal admission policies which have to be made publically available in online repositories that are specific to them. These policies and procedures for selection and admission have to be in compliance with government legislations, codes and standards with respect to domestic and international students with special reference to grievance procedures, equity, privacy and prejudice. In addition to the above English Language Proficiency level and credit transfer arrangement is established. It is mandatory to have suitably qualified staff to look into all procedures for admission and interaction with students.

Many universities also consider the performance of students in secondary level examinations along with other criteria. According to Murphy et al. (2001), “a lower secondary school admission rating than is frequently regarded desirable for university is not a barrier to success,” and “over-reliance on secondary school performance for selection purposes will disqualify many potential applicants who may get selected otherwise.”

## China

The National College Entrance Examination (NCEE); commonly referred to as ‘Gaokao’ which is world’s largest standardized test is a prerequisite for admission into the undergraduate programs in almost all higher education institutions (HEIs) in the country. This examination conducted annually becomes the only channel for students where the competition is fair, open, provides equal opportunity and is the only effective merit based and transparent system for entrance into universities in China. It is a series of subject oriented examinations based on curriculum knowledge. The exam covers common school topics such as Mathematics, Language, History, Science, etc. The institutions that have better tier rating need higher scores for being admitted to their available courses of studies. The NCEE score may also vary in different provinces

depending on the topography, availability of educational resources and quality of education viz. the students from Jiangsu need higher scores than students from less competitive areas such as Tibet.

According to MOE (2013) regulations on examination admission to HEIs, students must meet the following conditions:

- Must have completed senior secondary school or an equivalent qualification;
  - Should be physically healthy;
  - Should obey the constitution and laws of the PRC; and
  - Should hold permanent residence in the province where they will attend the NCEE.
1. The government implemented the National Education Plan to achieve consistency and equality of opportunity for all students in the country. They proposed the following new ideas for category entrance tests for HEIs:
  2. Entrance examinations for 4-year regular university/college shall be organized uniformly across the country;
  3. Entrance examinations for vocational HEIs shall be organized by provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities;
  4. Provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities shall choose their own enrolment methods for regular HEIs.
  5. Senior secondary school graduates who excel in their studies or have demonstrated a well rounded development may be admitted based on the recommendations of their referees;
  6. Qualified candidates who agree to work in industries or trades or areas designated by the government can sign contracts with the HEIs and enroll into the relevant programs in preparation for their future jobs.
  7. Special procedures shall be designed to enroll, as exceptions, those who have made outstanding contributions to practical work or who have special talents or profession.

In addition to above the HEIs may, on the basis of interviews or testing results, admit candidates who have exceptional talent or professional skills and who meet the prerequisites.

**The Unique Tier System:** This is a Chinese-only system that allows students to select from the greatest colleges while also allowing the top schools to select the best talent. The allotment of resources and cash from the government for high tier rating institutions is substantially higher in the tier system.

1. **Above Tier One** is a special category of institutions including military, police, arts, sport and maritime academies that students can be nominated to through the recommendation process, or can list these as a first preference ahead of the regular Tier One institutions.
2. **Tier One institutions** targeting the top 10 per cent of NCEE candidates include all 112 universities and colleges on the Project 211 and Project 985. These universities account for 80 per cent of doctoral students, 66 per cent of all graduate students, own 96 per cent of the key laboratories and receive 70 per cent of scientific research funding.

3. **Tier Two Institutions** target the next 20 per cent of candidates are eligible for admission and make up the bulk of four and three-year universities and colleges which are normally sponsored by local governments across the country.
4. **Tier Three institutions** represent private HEIs, vocational HEIs, and in some provinces, include Sino-foreign joint programs.

## India

Multiple government organizations lay down the policies and procedures for undergraduate admissions in India for different streams of studies available in institutions. The Central Government bodies include UGC, AICTE, NCTE, MCI, PCI etc. with respective State Government bodies that focus on regional or state level examinations for admission to state owned institutions. The admissions are greatly influenced by cognitive abilities of entrants and reservation. The purpose of cognitive ability assessment is to value merit and excellence in higher education and that of reservation is to promote equality and diversity. The regular common entrance examinations are AIEEE, AIPMT, CAT, CLAT, CMAT, GATE, NEET, etc. India having touched the 15 percent GER (Gross Enrolment Ratio) has moved ahead to targeting 30 percent GER post 2020. Contrary to government sponsored and owned higher educational institutions in other countries the Indian higher education is dominated by private sector which held 64 percent share in 2011-2012.

Quality of education has not changed despite the rapid increase in the number of institutions in higher education. The higher education is affected by unplanned expansion and non-adherence to the basic norms and standards set by regulatory bodies. The system of bypassing the regulations is rampant because of lack of funds and a desire to enroll higher number the students through inappropriate channels and methods. This has led to unwarranted pressures on prospective students wanting to get selected in top rated institutions to score high in entrance examinations and fall prey to top rated coaching institutions charging a fortune.

## Principles of the Schwartz Report

1. Transparency- Applicants should be given all of the information they need to make educated decisions.
2. Reliability and validity-assessment methods should be consistent with best practises and research.
3. Merit, potential, and diversity are all factors in the selection process.
4. Obstacles must be removed, especially in the areas of handicap and non-professional qualifications.

## Conclusion

The effective number of enrolments is an important indicator of the popularity and quality of education imparted in an institution of higher education. The quality parameters have to be set by



higher education institutions from the very first instance of students approaching them for admission enquiry. The student satisfaction has to be ensured by a team of qualified and trained admission counselors from the first point of contact. An institution with a dedicated team that looks into admissions and resolution of student queries yields anticipated results in terms of higher intake and good quality of students in academic and co-curricular perspectives.

The following are some of the benefits of having a good admittance policy:

1. The entire admissions procedure has been simplified. The admissions procedure is results-driven and flexible.
2. Once the image has been created, quality intake may be guaranteed.
3. All modules/programs available at the institution are accessible in a fair and equitable manner.
4. Students gain confidence in approaching authorities for clarifications.
5. Students have the freedom to process their applications, giving them the confidence to make judgments.
6. Cost savings from increased people, resources, finances, and time spent on the activity.
7. Legal aspects are effectively managed.
8. Color blindness impact reduction, i.e. bias based on caste, socioeconomic status, social strata, and backgrounds, etc.

When a new admission policy is being created by any higher education institution, a study of effective admission policies used around the world should be reviewed without prejudice. This will undoubtedly provide the institution an advantage in this highly competitive and dynamic market, where students expect to be included, receive excellent academic instruction, and have positive interactions with their classmates and the institution.

The Chinese Tier system of grading the institutions and allocation of resources and resources is an exemplary model wherein it also discourages excessive private participation in higher education and makes government institutions more responsible towards nation building.

A robust, common, less complicated, easily executable and acceptable national framework for conduct of admission examinations to higher education and to improve the quality of education is the need of the hour. The National Education Policy has made significant inroads into this issue but a system that is unique to a diverse nation like India has to be devised to assure equal opportunities to every student who aspires to take up higher education.

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