

Institutional Forms: Revisiting Higher Education in India

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What is a college? What is a University? What is a research institute? Are these institutional forms of higher education in India separated/separable by different aims of learning? Do they have different infrastructures, pedagogic methods, personnel, and strategies of governance? Why are they linked to different structures of funding and regulation, like the University Grants Commission, Department of Science and Technology, and the Indian Council of Social Science Research? What are undergraduate and postgraduate courses? Why do they have different durations, credits, curricula and modes of assessment? What is the difference between research programs like M.Phil and Phd? How and why did this entire infrastructure of publicly-funded higher education with different institutional forms develop in India? And most importantly, what is the basis for the recent proposals of a radical reshaping of this infrastructure, laid out in drafts of the New Educational Policy?

In this sessional paper we will be historically revisiting links between forms of higher educational institutions and imperatives of governance in India. This differentiated and elaborate web of forms strongly suggest that the framers of this web seemed to conceive an essential relation between the 'what' and the 'how' of higher education. Students working for this paper will be expected to understand and critically re-evaluate the framing rationalities of this relation. They will interrogate the social visions inscribed in the existing formations, and their future directions.