



## Promoting excellence in higher education: Some reflections

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### ***Abstract:***

*Higher education provides overall development of all the human resources of any nation. Promoting excellence in different educational services is the responsibility of the people and policy makers. In this context, the establishment of world class universities helps a lot to fulfill the national and global goals. The performance of the institutions depends upon several parameters. For promoting excellence in higher education, quality standards and measurement are to be followed. Some institutes and individuals are striving hard to improve the quality of standards and services. Several intermediary agencies are established to coordinate the quality assurance and standards. The Government of India has been taking several measures for quality improvement. Some committees were constituted to suggest measures for quality improvement. National Knowledge Commission of India has advised setting up of 1,500 universities to raise Gross Enrolment Ratio of the nation. National Science Technology and Innovation Policy (NSTIP – 13) has been announced to improve quality and standards by 2020. Collaborations with top institutions are highly essential for faculty exchange, knowledge sharing. The appropriate governments have to retain talent ear mark funds for developing the infrastructure and institutional development. The Universities should have interaction with industry for consultancy, executive education and training programmes as they play an important role in enhancing skills and competencies. The managements of different companies have to create some chairs, donate liberally to help the institutions. This kind of corporate gesturing should be possible especially in light of the revised / statutory stipulations on corporate social responsibilities.*

***Keywords:*** Higher Education, Excellence, Quality Standards, Measurement, Collaborations

### **Introduction:**

Higher education provides overall development of all the human resources of any nation. Promoting excellence in different educational services is the responsibility of the people and policy makers. In this context, the establishment of world class universities helps a lot to fulfill the national and global goals. The performance of the institutions depends upon several parameters. Some studies have been

conducted on measures of standards and quality in higher education. Some of them by Orivel (2004), Neelakentan (2007), Niland (2000), Miller (2007), Levin (2006), Seawartz (2007) have given their experiences on the subject from different dimensions. Jobbins (2000), Brooks (2000), Brooke et. al. (2005) have studied on how to measure university quality to a global level. Published information from various sources and



some experiences are presented in this paper.

#### **Quality Standards and Measurement:**

For promoting excellence in higher education, quality standards and measurement are to be followed. Some institutes and individuals are striving hard to improve the quality of standards and services. Several intermediary agencies are established to coordinate the quality assurance and standards. Faculty publications, citations, faculty awards and grants are included in the measurement and standards. Faculty management involves a sequence of procedures to document and report, and, consideration of less tangible aspects of higher education. The levels of accreditation is followed by higher educational institutions in United States. Regional membership associations have to certify the performance of colleges and university based on the consumers review, self-study reports or reports completed by external evaluations. A website has been set up by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) and the Association of Public and Land Grant Universities (APLU) to compare US Schools. Other countries follow different assessments. In Germany, Centre for Higher Education publishes the data for rankings. OECD initiation of Assessment of Higher Education Learning Outcome ((AHELO) follows the skill based assessment. In India, the University Grants Commission has been assessing the institutions and giving grades.

The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), OECD, ISO, other international organizations have been internationalizing quality assurance. International recognition is required for

institutions in the globalised environment. The International Network for Quality Assessment Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) brings together national agencies and members of regional organizations for accreditation and assessment. The international ranking of various institutions is obtained and presented.

The international performance indicators are grouped into the following areas:

- Teaching: the learning, environment (30 per cent)
- Research: Volume, income reputation (30 per cent)
- Citations: research influence (30 per cent)
- Industry income: innovation (2.5 per cent)
- International outlook: staff, students and research (7.5 per cent)

The Government of India has been taking several measures for quality improvement. Some committees were constituted to suggest measures for quality improvement. The Report of the Education Commission - 1964-65, National Policy on Education 1986, the Programme of Action 1995, Vision 2005 are some of the initiatives. University Grants Commission (UGC), All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) at national level, State Councils for Higher Education at state level have been taking several measures for quality. The UGC's National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) and AICTE's National Board of Accreditation (NBA) have prepared some guidelines for quality standards and measurement.



In addition to the AICTE, the UGC, several other bodies like Bar Council of India (BCI), Medical Council of India (MCI), Indian Nursing Council (INC), Pharmacy Council of India (PCI), Dentists Council of India (DCI), Central Council for Indian Medicine (CCIM), Veterinary Council of India (VCI), Distance Education Council of IGNOU (DEC – IGNOU), Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI), have also been established for various purposes. The programmes like Special Assistance Programme (SAP), College Science Improvement (COSIP), College Humanities and Social Sciences Improvement Programme (COH SSIP), some other schemes were initiated by the UGC for quality improvement.

As per NAAC, the criteria for assessment and the points for various institutions are given in the following table.

Criteria	Unit of Assessment		
	Universities (a)	Affiliated Constituent Colleges (b)	Autonomous Colleges (c)
Curricular Aspects	15	10	15
Teaching, Learning Evaluation	25	40	30
Research Consultancy and Extension	15	05	10
Infrastructure & Learning Resources	15	15	15
Student Support and Progression	10	10	10
Organisation and Management	10	10	10
Healthy Practices	10	10	10
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

National Knowledge Commission of India has advised setting up of 1,500 universities to raise Gross Enrolment Ratio of the nation. National Science Technology and Innovation Policy (NSTIP – 13) has been announced to improve quality and standards by 2020. All several fellowships have been initiated for young researchers under Swarnajayanti Fellowships and Welcome

Trust Fellowships. The experience of a University is given briefly. Andhra University was established in 1926 as a residential, multi-disciplinary institution. Completed 88 years of legacy, with excellent leadership, faculty, staff, infrastructure and collaborations and considered to be one of the best institutions. The University has the distinctions of bagging several awards



like Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Awards, Padmavibhushan Awards, Padmasri Awards, Sahitya Academy Awards, University Grants Commission and All India Council of Technical Education Awards like Career Awards, Research Awards, Best Teacher Awards, Indian Council of Social Science Research Awards and several international and national fellowships and awards. In addition, the institution maintains high degree of values and ethical standards.

The Government of Andhra Pradesh on promoting excellence in higher education by establishing world class institutions like Indian Institutes of Management, Indian Institutes of Technology, Petro Chemical University, Agricultural Universities, Tribal Universities and the other institutes of repute. Hope the number of institutions would certainly be increased in the years to come in promoting excellence in higher education.

Some experts and administrators have appreciated Andhra University in different ways. Sir C.R. Reddy former Vice Chancellor of the University had pointed out as the University is located in the 'City of Destiny', Visakhapatnam. The former Prime Minister of India, Dr. Manmohan Singh stated as the magnificent university when he visited the campus to inaugurate Indian Science Congress. The National Assessment and Accreditation Council of India has reaccredited the institution at "A" grade with a CGPA of 3.65 on a four point scale in 2008. It is ISO 9001 – 2008 certified institution with the international standards. Some of the faculty have been certified by International Standards Organization located in USA. It shows the high image of the University with excellent value system and top

management commitment. In recent world ranking, Andhra University, Visakhapatnam is ranked 19<sup>th</sup> position among the top institutions in Asian region.

The Universities have been given ranking based on international parameters by the global agencies. The geographical distribution of world class universities reveals that United States of America has ranked top position in 2008 with 20 institutions out of top 50 followed by United Kingdom (8), Australia (6), Western Europe (5), Japan (3), Canada (3), other Asia (5) (Figure 1). Most of the universities have been effectively functioning in the United States and Europe. The high quality is observed in higher education system. Each one has its own model and it is a learning experience for all.

#### **Characteristics of World-Class University:**

International reputation for its research and teaching; Number of research stars and world leaders in their fields; Recognized not only by other world-class universities but also outside the world of higher education; Number of world-class departments; Identifies and builds on its research strengths; Generates innovative ideas and produces basic and applied research in abundance; Produces groundbreaking research output recognized by peers and prizes awarded (Internationally – Nobel Prize); Attracts the most able students and produces the best graduates; Attract and retain the best talented human resources; Attracting a high proportion of postgraduate students and scholars; Attracting students from overseas; Operating within a global market and is international in many activities; Very sound financial base; Receiving large



endowment capital and income; Diversified sources of income (for example, government, private companies sector, research income, and overseas student fees); Providing a high-quality and supportive research and educational environment; First-class management team with strategic vision and implementation plans; Producing graduates who end up in positions of influence and / or power; Long history of superior achievement; Big contribution to society; Continually benchmarks with top universities and departments worldwide; The confidence to set its own agenda and Innovations and knowledge management for human excellence.

**The features of Successful Research Universities:**

- Public institutions (except Japan, USA);
- Differentiated academic system;
- No competition from non-university research institutes;
- More funding required for various expenses;
- Have adequate and sustained budgets;
- Have potential for significant income generations;
- Adequate physical facilities commensurate with mission and vision;
- Requirements are manifold – physical, human, academic work teaching, research, service and standards.

As per Times Higher Education Supplement (THES) and Shanghai Jiao Tong University (SJTU) top 20 rank

universities in the world are shown in Table – 1. As per the ranking USA has 14 and 18 institutions followed by Europe – 4 and 1 and Asia 1 and 1 institutions. It gives quality and standards of higher education institutions in different continent. The top 25 universities in the World during 2014 – 15 shows 19 Universities from United States, followed by Europe (4) and Asia (2) (Table – 2). It gives a sustained standards and quality in United States of America and Europe. Even in Asia the University of Tokyo, Japan and National University of Singapore (NUS), Singapore are in the list of top 25 universities with sustainability. The available data gives several other dimensions. The World Class institutions have been generating more funds and developing the national resources. The human capital development is also another positive factor in the regions. The governments of the USA, Germany, France, Sweden, Denmark, Canada, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan, India, China have been spending the substantial amounts for building world class universities during the last few years. With the main aim of the nations is to establish the best universities in the World. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of USA enacted in 2009 to encourage research and development in the nation with innovative and creative activities. A huge amount of funds has been spent for establishing and developing the world class universities in different countries with objective of enjoying the fruits of Research and Development. In India, some world class institutions have been established by the Government of India and some successful CEOs of corporate leaders, IITs. IISc, IIMs, ISB, Central and State Universities and some other institutions of higher learning have been



functioning and maintaining high quality at national and international levels. In some Asian countries like Singapore, Japan, Korea, India, Philippines some other institutions have been considered to be of high quality. In India IIMs, IISc, IITs, JNU, BITS, Andhra University, Amity University, Punjab University, XLRI and some other institutions are ranked high along with some other higher educational institutions abroad.

**Strategies and Challenges:**

The global experience reveals that the following are the strategies to establish world class universities by appropriate governments. Upgrading existing small universities that have the potential of excellence. Encouraging some exiting institutions to merge and transform into a new university and creating new institutions. In private sector, the individual institutions have to transform themselves into world class institutions though continuous innovations and collaborations. In the UK, higher education has been experiencing a significant financial pressure. International competitors have been attracting the top talented faculty in offering excellence research chairs. As a result, some research teams have been accepting to join. The UK universities need funding to innovate and change the system and university teaching. The Russell Group universities have been making their efforts to be competitive. The group has a commitment to sustaining the status of world class universities. It is essential to recognize the vital role of the universities in the global knowledge economy. New technologies, new products and new services will transform the human development. National Knowledge Network (NKN) is to be created

connecting with all research and development institutions, laboratories, universities and other institutions in the nation.

**Conclusion:**

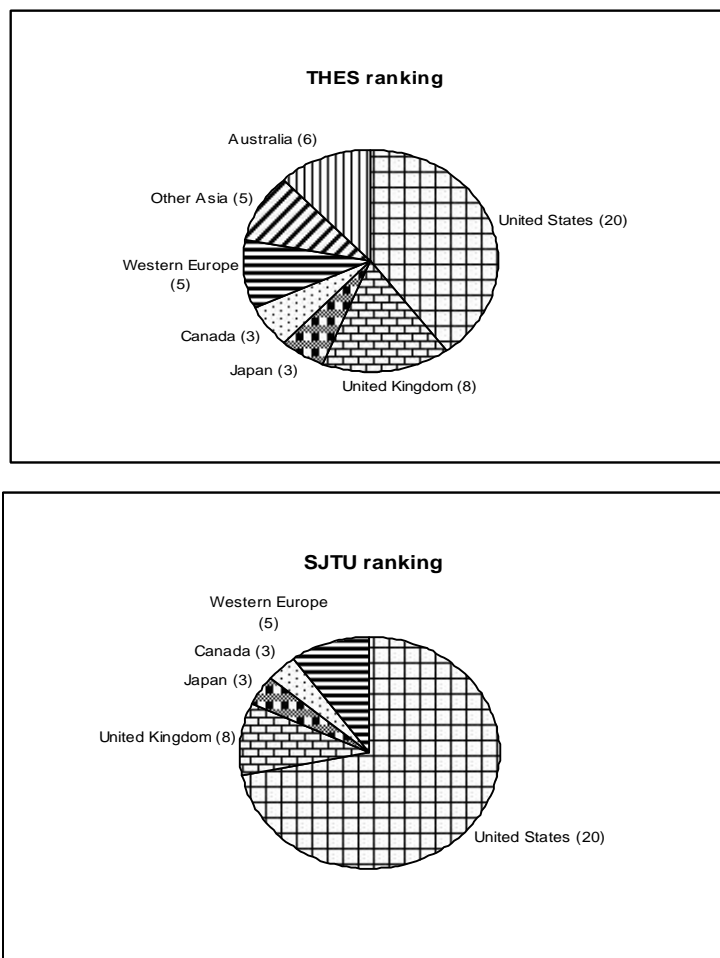
Collaborations with top institutions are highly essential for faculty exchange, knowledge sharing. The appropriate governments have to retain talent ear mark funds for developing the infrastructure and institutional development. The Universities should have interaction with industry for consultancy, executive education and training programmes as they play an important role in enhancing skills and competencies. The managements of different companies have to create some chairs, donate liberally to help the institutions. This kind of corporate gesturing should be possible especially in light of the revised / statutory stipulations on corporate social responsibilities.

In crafting socially responsible behavior, educational institutions ought to lead by example. They owe to the society a duty by paying heed to its needs and aspirations. They can do so by actively participating in social development through actionable programmes. The government has initiated the Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana to setup model villages having improved facilities, smooth access to rights and entitlements and wider social mobilization. The President of India called upon Central Higher Level Institutions to adopt five villages each to transform them into model villages. Let us work together on these lines, and improve the quality of living of people in the global village.



Lastly, as mentioned by Professor Arvind Panagaria, Vice Chairman, NITI Aayog recently in the 11<sup>th</sup> edition of Higher Education Summit 2015, organized by FICCI with the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India that an imperative need to link academia, industry and research with the higher education institutes to upgrade the quality of Indian higher education and become competitive in the world market.

**Figure – 1: Geographical Distribution of World-Class Universities**  
*(Top 50 in 2008)*



Source: Times Higher Education Supplement (THES) 2008; Shanghai Jiao Tong University (SJTU) 2008.



**Table – 1: World Rankings of Top 20 Universities in THES and SJTU, 2008**

<b>Ran k</b>	<b>THES</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>SJTU</b>
1	Harvard University	1	Harvard University
2	Yale University	2	Stanford University
3	University of Cambridge	3	University of California, Berkeley
4	University of Oxford	4	University of Cambridge
5	California Institute of Technology	5	Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)
6	Imperial College London	6	California Institute of Technology
7	University College London	7	Columbia University
8	University of Chicago	8	Princeton University
9	Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)	9	University of Chicago
10	Columbia University	10	University of Oxford
11	University of Pennsylvania	11	Yale University
12	Princeton University	12	Cornell University
13	Duke University	13	University of California, Los Angeles
14	Johns Hopkins University	14	University of California, San Diego
15	Cornell University	15	University of Pennsylvania
16	Australian National University	16	University of Washington, Seattle
17	Stanford University	17	University of Wisconsin, Madison
18	University of Michigan	18	University of California, San Francisco
19	University of Tokyo	19	University of Tokyo
20	McGill University	20	Johns Hopkins University

Source: Times Higher Education Supplement (THES) 2008; Shanghai Jiao Tong University (SJTU) 2008.





**Table – 2: The Top 25 Universities in the World during 2014 – 15**

Rank	Institution	Location	Overall score change criteria
1	California Institute of Technology	US	94.3
2	Harvard University	US	93.3
3	University of Oxford	UK	93.2
4	Stanford University	US	92.9
5	University of Cambridge	UK	92.0
6	Massachusetts Institute of Tech	US	91.9
7	Princeton University	US	90.9
8	University of California, Berkeley	US	89.5
9	Imperial College London	UK	87.5
9	Yale University	US	87.5
11	University of Chicago	US	87.1
12	University of California, Los Angeles	US	85.5
13	Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zürich	Switzerland	84.6
14	Columbia University	US	84.4
15	Johns Hopkins University	US	83.0
16	University of Pennsylvania	US	81.0
17	University of Michigan	US	80.9
18	Duke University	US	79.9
19	Cornell University	US	79.4
20	University of Toronto	Canada	79.3
21	Northwestern University	US	79.2
22	University College London (UCL)	UK	78.7
23	The University of Tokyo	Japan	76.1
24	Carnegie Mellon University	US	74.3
25	National University of Singapore (NUS)	Singapore	73.3

Source: Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2014-2015



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