World university rankings and Indian universities

The ranking of the universities across the globe for the year 2010 has been published and none of the Indian educational institution is within top 100. A best rank of 187 in the Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) ranking has been achieved by IIT Bombay (http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/world-university-rankings/2010-2011/top-200.html; http://www.topuniversities.com/university-rankings/world-university-rankings/2010/results; http://www.arwu.org/ARWU2010.jsp). Naturally a pertinent question appears, why our national elite institutions are not within the top 100, whereas 35 universities from other Asian countries have got better ranks than us. Considering that India is one of the global emerging and knowledge-dependent economies, it is a serious concern in terms of quality of advance education that is being offered by our national universities. However, a section of the academic community does not find any substance in this ranking[1]. The question in this context naturally comes to mind, if ranking or grading system is not useful (though methodology, parameters and their weightage, veracity of data input, lack of organizational management of information system, etc., can be debated), then why in India it is mandatory for our higher educational institutions to be graded from National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) or National Board of Accreditation (NBA)?

Efforts have already been started to recognize and confer the special status 'University of Excellence alias Navaratna University' to some of the central universities, where quality research will be carried out to achieve better international benchmark. The selected universities will get additional funding, more operational autonomy like faculty hiring, setting up campus abroad, competing for international projects and collaboration, etc.[2]. However it is not known whether there was a shortage of funds for pursuing quality research in our top institutions; had enough autonomy not been given to institution like IITs in hiring faculty of their choice and even to the extent of hiring foreign faculty; any restriction on collaborating internationally or competing for international grants, etc. Although these parameters are perhaps already in place, even then institutions like IITs have not managed to achieve a good ranking. On the other hand, top National Business School like IIIM-A, which is minimally dependent on government support[3], has got global rank of 8 in the 'Masters in Management 2010 Program' conducted by *Financial Times* (http://rankings.ft.com/businessschoolrankings/masters-in-management). Therefore, a roadmap leading to financial independency might appear a better mechanism to achieve better excellence rather than increasing government support for ever. This point has also been reflected by inclusion of a similar parameter 'Industry income – innovation' by Times Higher Education (THE) in its ranking procedure and therefore probably most of the American institutions are placed at the top rank. Additionally, employment security and extension of faculty need to be conditional and performance dependent, which is a global practice, to improve quality of research and educational institutions. Another key point is the lack of efficient leadership in nurturing our national universities.

1. *The Times of India*, Bangalore, Friday, 17 September 2010, p. 9.
2. *The Times of India*, Bangalore, Tuesday, 21 September 2010, p. 14.
3. *The Times of India*, Bangalore, Thursday, 14 October 2010, p. 1.

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Citations per paper in physics

In its country feature, *ScienceWatch.com* (http://sciencewatch.com/dr/cou/2010/10novPHY/) has compiled a list of rankings in physics derived from the number of the citations per paper (CPP). The number of CPP represents one of the measures of the innovation capacity of the country. The CPP-data has been derived from the *Essential Science Indicators*SM database, which samples the period of 1 January 2000–30 June 2010, and covers only journal articles indexed by Thomson Reuters. The data is displayed in Figure 1. The global average of CPP stands at 8.87. Considering this number as the standard, a striking gap is found to exist between the two hemispheres. With the exception of Israel and Japan (which is just above the average), almost every other country in Asia scored CPP below the global average! This is a matter of concern for India, a country where the discovery of the Bose–Einstein statistics and the Raman effect was made in the 20th century.

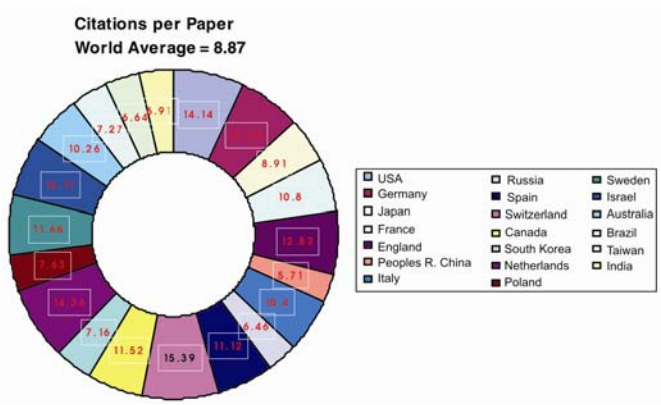

Figure 1. Physics publications during January 2000–June 2010.

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