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**Global Rankings and Accreditation:  
Academic Arm Race for Status**

Unrao Singh Chaudhari\*

In the ancient Indian universities, the academic freedom and professional responsibility were so much intimately integrated that the need to have a separate agency for assessment, accreditation and/or ranking the universities was never felt. Educational administrators and academics did not flinch from evaluating their own performance. Maintenance of standards and preservation of quality were the matters of internal appraisal and supervision. Students were motivated to imbibe the complete and generous higher education that would enable them to perform all the offices of private and public, of peace and war. No publicity was made about the status and achievement of the institutions of higher learning. As a matter of fact, their passing out students themselves were the embodiment of quality and testimony of the high academic and ethical standards of the institutions.

Although, comparison and competition are with us since the dawn of the civilization, their hold on human activities has been heightened with the advent of globalization. Avenues, opportunities and aspiration for the people in general, and youth in particular are growing very fast. An aspirations for having and studying in the 'world class' educational institutions is pushing the individuals and the institutions to attain a competitive edge to match their performance with the students and academics of other countries.

**Struggle for Status**

Higher education has always been concerned with status and we have a strong natural tendency to compete through emulation. There has always been those in the higher education institutions who are primarily concerned with status: their own personal position, the standing of their subject or department, the reputation of their students and the position of their institution. The pre-occupation with status and the amount of attention, time and resources institutions are devoting to improving their position is a deeply troubling phenomenon. This 'struggle for status', for its own sake, rather than seeking a reputation by satisfying the educational needs of the students, is a poor use of resources. This prestige seeking game is largely pointless because this is by definition limited in quality. The really prestigious institutions have a huge lead over the rest "The elite tends to remain elite and success breeds success".

"In higher education", says Brown (2011), "the 'proxy' that is most often used is the standing of the institution concerned." In conventional thinking, it is high quality that leads to a high reputation or prestige. But, the difficulty of identifying quality in higher education, or of finding agreed measures/indicators leads inevitably to high quality being equated, with prestige or institutional standing.

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