

## Classifying Universities to Match Students' Aspirations

“My dream is to work for Apple”; “My life’s goal is to become the CEO of General Electric”; “I would like to work for United Nations” and “I would like to work to receive a Nobel Prize” are some of the ambitions, young minds nurse. To translate such a lofty ambition into reality, a young student will require to develop certain

- **Personal characteristics**, including self-motivation, hard work, perspiration, commitment, patience, persistence, responsibility, honesty, risk taking and tolerance;
- **Professional and cognitive abilities** which include Knowledge and understanding of chosen area of study, critical, analytical, practical, problem solving, creative and innovative, and research skills;
- **Transferable and leadership abilities** which include identifying the need for leading, understanding social, cultural, political, business, economic contexts, identifying people, networking with people, organising teams, communicating with teams, leading teams, risk taking and any such abilities.

Colleges and Universities are the battlegrounds where young minds can develop their personal characteristics, professional and cognitive abilities and transferable and leadership abilities.

Most of the universities do not have the ability or necessary ingredients to provide a mature battleground on their campuses which can effectively support young minds to optimise the development of their capabilities. While on the other hand the aspirations of youngsters are very heterogeneous. While Universities on the other are similarly varied in what they offer. This then makes it necessary to classify Universities in some manner highlighting the unique

offering or specialisation of each type of University. Students are then in a position to assess the different Universities in making a choice on whether or not a particular University is able to meet their particular aspirations.

For example in UK, universities are classified as ancient universities, redbrick universities, plate-glass universities, open universities and new universities but all these are also grouped as research intensive; research and teaching intensive; teaching intensive; and open universities. In each case the universities have well defined programmes and can tell prospective students what they can expect in terms of outcomes are succinctly described and how they can fulfil student expectations. These Universities also provide extreme details such that a student aspiring to become a great physicist would probably choose the physics programme at Cambridge University. If he/she wished to pursue studies in fluid dynamics, then he/she may readily opt to study at “Imperial College London”. These choices are fairly easy because of the pedigree these universities have acquired over the years. Finally if we travel elsewhere in mainland in Europe, we can observe that the European universities are grouped as: research intensive; innovation intensive; a teaching intensive. The grouping of universities in the US is not very much different from these but there are few universities that have and continue to develop great business and technology leaders for the future. For example MIT, Stanford, Harvard are the names that spring to the mind. Grouping or classifying universities help students to choose universities that can deliver against their aspirations as today’s students know fairly clearly the objectives of different universities and the outcomes that they can expect from a stint at the University.

After school most students may spend between 4 and 10 years of their lives in academic pursuits either at a single or a combination of Universities. These are

the crucial years when students invest their time, energy and money for developing **personal characteristics, professional and cognitive abilities, and transferable and leadership abilities**. Universities therefore assume the mantle of a “laboratory or battleground” where students can expect to acquire and develop these characteristics and abilities. The maturity level of this “laboratory or battleground” is what determines how well and the extent to which that university is able to meet the aspirations of students. In this context I want to mention that most of the well-known universities have put in centuries of experience in building the so called “battlegrounds or laboratories” and invested billions of dollars and man-hours of faculty time whose thoughts, philosophies and theories have contributed to the evolution of these Universities. It would be foolish on one’s part to assume that a University can be built in just a few years of existence.

Many of you would have come across Universities that claim to be the NumeroUno University or similar claims of glory. I would like to remind you that the University of Oxford and University of Cambridge are more than 800 years old and even as of date, continue to work so hard to maintain their Numerouno status, despite having produced ground breaking work, theories, best philosophies and several Nobel laureates. Some other universities also claim to be “One Stop University” where they excel in all their Faculties. I would like to submit that there is no **One University** in the world which claim to be excellent in all fields of study or research. This is why student chose a combination of universities to achieve their goals.

In India, Universities are classified on ownership basis – central, state and private universities. Our universities have been probably created to meet multiple objectives resulting in a dilution and lack of focus. It follows, therefore,

that it would be difficult to group our universities as research intensive, innovation intensive or even teaching intensive except of course for a few institutions that were created with specific mandates. While India has a large number of universities, the question is how many of these universities have the required preparing grounds to cater to the varied aspirations of students. Most of the universities are simply examination bodies, and the objectives of most of our private universities are not very much different from the colleges affiliated. Still these Universities are constantly engaged in What, I may call, a “futile exercise” of having become a “high ranking” university. Unless these universities insert in the ingredients required to create the “battlegrounds” for preparing students to attain glory and building a great university their claims ring hollow. A certain maturity and pedigree is a pre-requisite for all universities to seek a Rank!!.

Given this background let me assure you that we at **MSRUAS** are actively engaged in putting in place the right infrastructure, qualified and competent teaching faculty and imparting quality education and relevant, real-life skills to our students. We aspire to be an innovation intensive university that will, in future, create enormous opportunities for students, researchers, industry, business and society at large.

I have expressed all these views pictorially.



*“Without goals, you will end up going nowhere, or you will end up following someone else's map! Develop your map today - set your goals and focus!”*

***Catherine Pulsifer***

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