

**ASSESSING THE RATING OF INNOVATIVE ACTIVITIES OF  
HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS:  
ON THE EXAMPLE OF ISRAEL**

**Raisa LAPUSHIN, Assoc. Prof., PhD**

Trade Co-operative University of Moldova

E-mail: [rlapushina@mail.ru](mailto:rlapushina@mail.ru)

**Milana ISRAELI**

Employee of Research and Development Division Experiments and Initiatives, Ministry of Education, Israel

E-mail: [milanaisraeli@gmail.com](mailto:milanaisraeli@gmail.com)

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**Abstract**

*This article discusses the theoretical and practical aspects of assessing the innovative activities of higher education institutions using ratings on the example of Israel. The higher education system in Israel includes universities and colleges. The status of the university is a matter of prestige, increased state funding for research and educational process, as well as the possibility of awarding doctoral degrees. They are engaged in research and development and represent the scientific community of Israel.*

*The article presents a comparative description of the main world ratings. The focus is on the international ratings of higher educational institutions. The higher education system in Israel is highly regarded in the world. The data of international ratings of the higher education system, in recent years, indicates a number of achievements of Israeli universities. The assessment of the innovative activities of Israeli universities was carried out according to six international ratings.*

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**Keywords:** *higher education institution, innovative activity, ranking, assessment*

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## **1. Introduction**

Against the backdrop of the rapid changes taking place today in all spheres of society, the task of innovative development of the higher education system is extremely important for achieving socially significant positive results. The development of new approaches is required, the main purpose of which is to improve the quality of educational activity, the development of science and technology.

The modern activities of higher education institutions are characterized by such a distinctive feature as the rapid variability of knowledge, along with the growing informatization of society. These changes provide new opportunities for the introduction of innovations in the educational and research activities of universities. The ability to perceive innovation and the choice of the path of innovative development allow higher education institutions to survive and develop amid growing dynamics of social changes and increasingly fierce competition. The university's need for innovative development is associated with the development of a reaction to the evolution trends of society.

International ratings are one of the types of assessment of innovative activity of higher educational institutions. The purpose of this article is to compare various methodologies of international rankings and analyze the innovative activities of Israeli universities based on them.

## **2. The degree of investigation of the problem at the present moment, purpose of research**

Currently, there are various methodologies for assessing innovation. The increasing number of publications examining innovation indicators and success factors reflects the demand for answers to this question [4; 8]. Some scientists describe indicators at various stages of the innovation process [9], while others evaluate effectiveness at each stage of the innovation process [10]. This is due to the fact that innovation in different sectors of the economy has its own specifics and different indicators of assessment.

The Oslo Manual (a joint publication of OECD and Eurostat) defines: “Innovation activities are all scientific, technological, organizational, financial and commercial activities which actually lead to the implementation of innovations or are conceived for this purpose.” The Guide clarifies that “Some types of innovation are innovative in themselves; others do not have this property, but are also necessary for innovation. Innovation activity also includes research and development that is not directly related to the development of any particular innovation” [16].

The Frascati Manual is the internationally recognized methodology for collecting and using R&D statistics. It defines research as follows: “Research and experimental development (R&D) comprise creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of man, culture and society, and the use of this stock of knowledge to devise new applications”. The term R&D covers three activities: basic research, applied research and experimental development [21].

Currently, innovative activity is the most important condition for the development of the education system. Ratings have become a mean of comparing the achievements of higher education in various countries of the world in the field of innovation.

## **3. Materials and methods of research**

The achievement of the objectives was solved by identifying and systematizing trends in the development of innovative activities of Israeli universities. The research methodology is based on an analysis of the world university rankings. The authors used statistical and comparative methods in their research. Statistical processing of data collected from analytical materials of international organizations and specialized agencies was used to identify the characteristics of scientific and research work of higher educational institutions of Israel [1, 17, 18, 20]. Numerous publications and reports served as support for the present research. The comparative method contributed to illustrate the peculiarities of Israeli innovation work in higher education.

#### 4. Obtained results and discussions

The concept of the so-called “third generation university” is gaining popularity in many countries of the world. This concept assumes that the university, in addition to traditional educational and scientific activities, should actively engage in innovations, implement its developments and know-how in life, be a source of entrepreneurial activity, and create new business projects and companies based on an intellectual product [22].

Since innovation is actually a combination of interconnected processes, the authors propose the following definition of innovation: innovation in higher education is a combination of educational, scientific, technological, organizational, managerial, financial and commercial processes that actually lead to innovation.

Higher educational institutions are one of the elements in the innovation system “universities - enterprises - state”. This implies the participation of representatives of industry, business and the state in assessing the university’s innovative activities in the field of commercialization of technologies and developments. High rates in these areas are not yet a sufficient and indispensable condition for success in the field of innovation.

The best universities in the world receive their recognition due to the high quality of graduate training. They train highly qualified specialists who are in great demand in the labor market; conduct research in the most advanced areas of science, publish in the best scientific journals and those that are focused on scientific and technical activities, contribute to technological innovation through patents and licenses. Revenues from research and development, the results of intellectual activity, the number of small innovative enterprises created at the university are important - all these indicators characterize the “innovative component” of universities.

Many scientists are working to build a system of indicators that would give the most complete and reliable picture of the development of innovative activities of higher education institutions. Evaluation of the innovative activities of universities is also needed in general to manage the higher education system and make appropriate managerial decisions. Moreover, since universities play a large public role, in addition to the state, a large number of individuals are interested in evaluating the activities of universities - individuals and organizations, such as international students and teachers, graduate students, academic partners and organizations, politicians, employers, sponsors, and the public.

But to date, there is no single and universal system for assessing the innovative activities of universities. World experience in publicly evaluating the activities of universities shows that various methods are mainly used, which are developed by world rating agencies, various national centers in the field of education or innovation, associations in the field of university technology transfer and others.

There are 10 major world ratings and more than 70 countries have national ratings. Classifications of ratings of higher education institutions are developed in order to provide information that is more consistent with the needs of users [14].

Figure 1 presents types of methodologies for assessing the activities of universities. Rating examples: world (international) university rankings (THE, QS, ARWU and other); national university rankings (CHE in Germany, The Guardian and jointly by The Times and The

Sunday Times in the United Kingdom and other); reports of global associations in the field of knowledge and technology transfer (AUTM).



**Figure 1. Types of methodologies for assessing the activities of universities**

Source: developed by the authors

In general terms, the rating of universities is the arrangement in a certain ranked order of groups of universities. For this, various criteria are used that are comprehensively evaluated by universities. The ratings are characterized by different target audiences (the main consumers of information), assessment methodology and way of presenting the results.

Global ratings are based on internationally comparable information. However, there are large differences in the context, accuracy and reliability of data, as well as in data definitions. Not all rating organizations audit data, and even if they have done, the context remains important.

International university ratings are traditionally perceived as an important component in assessing economic development and comparing the achievements of higher education in different countries of the world. Table 1 provides a comparative description of the four most popular world ratings.

**Table 1. Innovative orientation of international university assessment ratings**

Criteria	QS	THE	ARWU	Web
1	2	3	4	5
Type of study	Expert analytical research, ranking	Statistical analysis and global expert survey, ranking	Statistical Research Ranking	Analysis of the university's representation in the Internet space

1	2	3	4	5
Research direction (industry)	Science and education	Scientific and teaching activities at the university, scientific productivity and citation	University research work	Research activity
Rating Types	Global ranking; Rating by subjects; Rating by faculty; Rating of the best universities and others	Global ranking of world universities; Rating by subjects; World reputation rating and other	Global ranking; Rating by subject area; Disciplines Rating	Global ranking; Country rating
Study frequency	Annually	Annually	Annually	Twice a year
Organization	Consulting company Quacquarelli Symonds	Times Higher Education; Thomson Reuters	Center for World Class Universities of Shanghai Jiao Tong University	Cybermetrics Lab
Year of foundation	2004 (in conjunction with THE); 2010 year (independently)	2004 (in conjunction with QS), 2010 year (independently)	2003	2004

Source: developed by the authors based on 1, 16, 17, 19

The differences in the considered ratings are confirmed by the difference in the type of research (methodology) used by rating agencies. If we analyze the influence of scientometric data, statistical indicators and expert judgment, the weight of these groups will differ in these ratings. So, THE rating is 33% dependent on subjective expert assessments [18]. The QS rating is subject to the influence of subjective ratings by 50% and by 30% depending on the citation index [17]. UK THE and QS ratings are more correlated with each other than with Shanghai ARWU. ARWU rating virtually eliminates the subjective factor: 60% of the rating is formed by citation indexes of authors and 30% depends on awards and bonuses [1]. Ranking Web of Universities (Webometrics) presents the result of ranking universities in terms of content and content updates, as well as the relevance and popularity of websites [20].

If we start from the main tasks of the university, we can distinguish two key vectors - educational and scientific activities. Accordingly, the composite indicators of the rating can be rearranged depending on which of the vectors they characterize - research or educational.

Table 2 presents indicators for evaluating the research activities of higher education institutions. All ratings use different methodologies. Some compare universities in different

countries, regardless of their profile, others (THE) publish only ratings in subject areas, while others (ARWU, QS) issue both industry and subject ratings. The methodology for calculating indicators is based on a survey of various respondents (teachers, students, employers, etc.). Each university rating has a different number of metrics. The proportion of research activities (“research results” in Table 2) in each of the ratings is different: THE - 37.5%, QS - 20%, ARWU - 40%, Web - 25%. Basically, these indicators are determined by the number of researchers citing in the databases of well-known scientific journals. In addition to this indicator, indicators of research results can be the number of published articles, the number of award-winning scientists, the most cited researchers from the universities listed and their contribution to the scientific community (ARWU), the volume and reputation of research at universities (THE), the reputation of universities (QS), the number of search results on the university website (Web), etc.

**Table 2. Ranking criteria for university ratings**

Rating	Indicator	Weight, %
Research results		
ARWU	Number of articles published in the journals Nature and Science	20
	Number of articles indexed in the Science Citation Index Expanded and Social Sciences Citation Index (Thomson Reuters) databases	20
THE	The average number of citations per article	30
	Scope and reputation of research	30
	Research Income	2,5
QS	The average number of citations per academic staffing unit (according to Scopus, Elsevier)	20
Web	The number of search results on the university website by the scientific search engine Google Scholar and the number of citations of documents found	12,5
	The number of “valuable” files on the site (the number of files with the results of studies of four formats: PDF, PS, DOC and PPT)	12,5
Teacher’s level		
ARWU	Total number of university employees receiving a Nobel Prize or Fields Medal	20
	Number of frequently cited researchers in 21 subject areas (250 * top scientists using the Web of Knowledge database)	20
Web	The number of unique external links to the pages of the university’s site found through search engines Yahoo Search, Live Search and Exalead	50
Academic performance		
ARWU	The indicator, defined as the ratio of the total number of points for all indicators to the number of full-time academic staff	10
Dimensions		
Web	The number of pages on a site resulting from searches by Google, Yahoo, Live Search, Exalead	20

Source: developed by the authors based on 1, 16, 17, 19

The massive use of ratings in assessing the activities of educational institutions is criticized in the academic environment [12, 15, 19]. It is the criticism and practice of application that helps the development of ratings, the improvement of methodology, the emergence of new ratings or alternative rating systems, for example, U-Multirank.

According to the authors, THE does not take into account such essential qualities of scientific work as the novelty and value of a scientific result and observance of ethical standards in scientific work in order to stimulate scientific activity. To do this, the rating may include additional indicators.

Authors believe that it is advisable to apply the existing university ratings both in relation to homogeneous groups of objects, and also when taking into account the interests of a potential user. At the same time, the clients' information content about the goals, advantages and disadvantages, the specificity of the evaluation criteria, methods of data collection and processing increases. Therefore, educational institutions must find new approaches to assessing innovation, taking into account their specificity and capabilities.

The orientation of educational institutions to higher ratings should be associated with certain goals in research work. To achieve the goals, heads of educational institutions need to understand the methodology for calculating indicators that make up the rating; evaluate and stimulate not only "what should be", but also reduce "what needs to be changed"; maximize useful information from all measured and observed indicators.

As a rule, national ratings are oriented to international ones, although many of them were developed before international ones. National ratings (commercial or state) have access to a wider array of data, and also have the ability to control their quality. For example, Germany's main national ranking CHE [6] conducts regular surveys of approximately 130,000 students and 16,000 teachers, covering about 250 higher education institutions. One of the rating components is research rating (CHE - Forschungs Ranking). It provides data differentiated by the university research results indicator, is based on extensive data material and focuses exclusively on university research, combining the results of various levels. Many countries of the world undertake activities to improve the national rating system, in which the educational function of the university is now presented to a greater extent, while world ratings place the main emphasis on the development of science.

Ideas or innovations are transferred from research laboratories and universities to the business sector through technology transfer. The reports of global associations in the field of university technology transfer contribute to studying the experience of building and developing technology transfer systems in the developed countries. For example, according to a report by members of the Association of University Technology Managers (AUTM), a survey on AUTM licensing activities includes detailed information on research funding, the impact of innovation, patent activity, license revenue, and the number of startups [3].

Practical recommendations on ratings and reporting in higher education are developed by the respective commissions of UNESCO [14]. As main disadvantages of such ratings are recognized: the desire to concentrate on the results of the past activities of universities and the emphasis on quantitative assessment indicators (which presumably characterize quality). Also among the shortcomings of the ratings there is, paradoxically, an excessive emphasis on research indicators.

Ratings should be made for comparable universities, classified in certain categories, taking into account the budgets and resources of universities, size, age, type and focus. This should be done at the national level to take into account the unique indicators of the country and at the international level, both in the framework of classifications and in general, but using key agreed weighted indicators.

Nowadays Israel is one of the leading states in terms of science and education. Its university system was formed based on the American model and is one of the youngest in the world, but at the same time it is one of the most powerful. In 2020, Israel ranks 6th (5th in 2019) out of 105 countries in the Bloomberg Innovation Index of the world's most innovative countries. According to the ranking of the world countries by the INSEAD, WIPO, Cornell University: The Global Innovation Index, in 2019 Israel takes the 10th place among 129 countries. In the ranking of national higher education systems Universitas 21: Ranking of National Higher Education Systems, in 2019, Israel ranks 18th among 50 countries. These ratings emphasize the level of development of innovative activity in the country.

The data of international ratings of the higher education system in recent years indicates a number of achievements of Israeli universities. A total of 10 universities are located throughout the country. Their main difference from other educational institutions is their high research activity. As a rule, universities combine all subjects (humanitarian, technical and scientific), but there are also institutions whose activities focus on certain subjects (for example, the Technion and the Weizmann Institute).

Table 3 shows the positions of Israeli universities in the world ratings of TONE, QS, ARWU, Web and in two ratings of CWTS Leiden Ranking [5] and U.S. News Best Global Universities [12] in 2019.

**Table 3. Positions of Israeli universities in various world rankings in 2019**

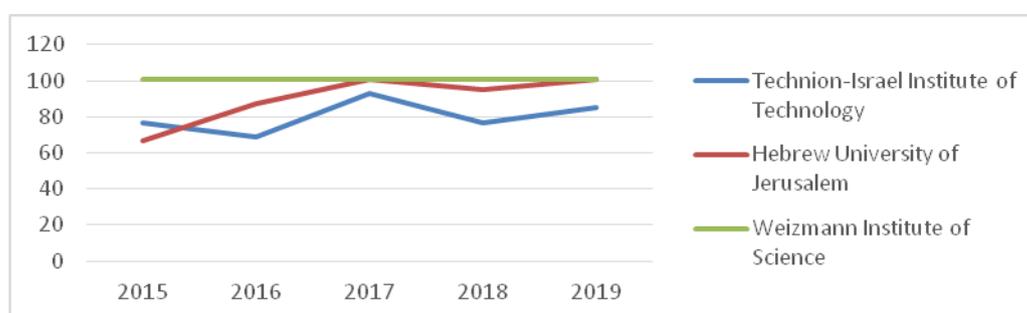
University	THE	QS	ARWU	Web	CWTS	U.S. News Best Global Universities
Tel Aviv University	189	230	151	149	77	183
Hebrew University of Jerusalem	201	154	101	200	187	222
Bar-Ilan University	501	601	401	522	506	618
University of Haifa	501	651	601	575	616	715
Technion-Israel Institute of Technology	401	247	85	282	218	258
Weizmann Institute of Science	-	-	101	293	490	99
Ben-Gurion University of the Negev	-	407	401	408	291	553

Source: developed by the authors on 1, 16, 17, 19

Unconditional leaders in TUE rating are the universities of the USA and Great Britain. This ranking includes 6 universities in Israel. Tel Aviv University occupies the 189th place in the overall ranking (among 1,400 universities in the world under study) in 2019.

In 2019, six Israeli universities were included in the QS World University Rankings, four of which were included in the list of 500 best universities in the world. In 2019 the best indicator among the data of Israeli universities belonged to Hebrew University of Jerusalem (154th place). At the same time, in 2018 ranking it was on the 145 place [17].

American universities took the vast majority of places in the top 100 according to Shanghai ARWU ranking. The United Kingdom is on the second place in terms of the representation of universities in the top 100, being 1.5–5.5 times behind the leader. In 2019, the Technion-Israel Institute of Technology has taken the 85th place. The dynamics of rating changes for 2015–2019 can be traced on the example of three universities: Technion-Israel Institute of Technology, Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Weizmann Institute of Science, shown in Figure 2.



**Figure 2. Dynamics of changes in the ARWU ranking of three Israeli universities for 2015-2019**

Source: developed by the authors based on Academic Ranking of World Universities 2019 [2]

Over the past three years, the Technion-Israel Institute of Technology is among the top 100 best universities in the world according to ARWU rating and has the highest rating among Israeli universities in this rating. Hebrew University of Jerusalem takes the second place.

The final version of the Webometrics ranking includes about 4,000 universities in the world. At the same time, the number of universities analyzed is constantly growing. This rating includes all Israeli universities. Tel Aviv University takes the 149th place, which is higher than the ratings of other universities.

Table 4 shows the places of Israeli universities in the CWTS Leiden Ranking, which is a common, but narrowly targeted rating. It ranks the research activities of leading universities in the world and offers a complex set of bibliometric indicators on scientific impact, collaboration, and publicly available publications. The ratings of Israeli universities in CWTS 2019 (for 2014-2017) are presented in Table 4.

The designation P (top 1%) and PP (top 1%) is the number and percentage of university publications, which, compared to other publications in the same field and in the same year, belong to 1% of the most frequently cited ones. According to CWTS ranking in 2019, Tel Aviv University had the most cited publications.

Rating of U.S. News Best Global Universities differs from its competitors given that 75 percent of its criteria are determined on the basis of the bibliographic database Web of

Science / InCites. Weizmann Institute of Science entered the top 100 universities in the world in this rating.

**Table 4. 1% ranking of Israeli universities in CWTS 2019 (for 2014-2017)**

University	P	P(top 10%)	PP(top 10%)
1 Tel Aviv Univ	8943	747	8.4%
2 Hebrew Univ Jerusalem	5468	578	10.6%
3 Technion - Israel Inst Technol	4916	488	9.9%
4 Ben-Gurion Univ Negev	3983	281	7.1%
5 Weizmann Inst Sci	2548	495	19.4%
6 Bar-Ilan Univ	2471	176	7.1%
7 Univ Haifa	1911	103	5.4%

Source: CWTS Leiden Ranking [7]

The Jerusalem Post informs that the “major contributor” to Israel’s decline in the rankings in recent years is poor performance in citations per paper - the key indicator for research impact. The share of top-scoring research programs in Israel has more than halved in the past five years from 1.2% in 2016 to 0.5% in 2020 [11].

Though Israel is a global leader in terms of research intensity - topping the world in 2019 when nations were ranked based on the proportion of GDP they spent on research and development - a disproportionate amount of that R & D spending is concentrated on the business sector, rather than on Israel’s universities [11].

Only international ratings are not enough to assess the innovative activities of Israeli educational institutions. National ratings and a system of indicators developed by the universities themselves are necessary for evaluating innovation.

Having determined the place of Israeli universities in international ratings, the authors tried to analyze the national ratings. Unfortunately, the authors could not find such information. Academic Ranking of World Universities has a National / Regional Rank indicator, but no data source. The Unipage website provides a complete list of Israeli universities, where universities are ranked internationally and nationally in the first and second columns. Moreover, the national rating is indicated in ascending order. No data source specified. Sites of ministries and universities also do not allow evaluating the rating of innovation.

The authors believe that the Council for Higher Education, together with the Ministry of Science and Technology, the Office of the Chief Scientist, can implement a national ranking of universities in Israel by means of a development project. The project team can include representatives of universities, businesses, ministries who will offer the methodology and quantitative indicators of the rating. The approaches to compiling a national rating should be as flexible as the surrounding reality is rapidly and variably changing under the influence of globalization and the intensification of the knowledge economy. Rating requirements should be constantly refined and improved, taking into account the strengthening of objectivity in reflecting the strengths and weaknesses of each university, increasing attention to applied results and research. The correct work of Israeli universities and the focus of all their units on raising the rating can lead to significant success in science and innovation. For the correct use of ratings the heads of educational institutions need to consider them only as part of the overall assessment system or comparative analysis of innovation.

## 5. Conclusions

Building a reputation in the international and national educational markets is a competitive advantage of a university. Ratings are tools for comparing university educational and research work. A comparative analysis of the methodology of world university rankings and an analysis of the innovative activities of Israeli universities, based on them, were the objectives of the research conducted in this article. At this stage of the research, in this paper, the authors identified the need to develop a national innovation rating of Israeli universities. Scientific work on the evaluation of innovative activities of Israeli universities based on various ratings will be continued.

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#### **Rezumat**

*În acest articol sunt supuse examinării aspectele teoretice și practice ale evaluării activității inovatoare desfășurate de instituțiile de învățământ superior în baza ratingurilor. Teren de cercetare a fost selectat Israelul. Sistemul de învățământ superior din Israel include universități și colegii. Statutul universității este o problemă de prestigiu, de creștere a finanțării de către stat a cercetării și a procesului educațional, precum și posibilitatea acordării titlurilor de doctorat. Universitățile sunt angajate în lucrări de cercetare-dezvoltare și identifică comunitatea științifică din Israel.*

*Articolul conține o descriere comparativă a principalelor evaluări mondiale. Accentul principal este pus pe evaluările internaționale ale instituțiilor de învățământ superior. Sistemul de învățământ superior din Israel este foarte apreciat în lume. Datele privind evaluările internaționale ale sistemului de învățământ superior din ultimii ani indică o serie de realizări ale universităților israeliene. Evaluarea activităților inovatoare ale universităților israeliene a fost realizată în baza a șase ratinguri internaționale.*

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**Cuvinte-cheie:** instituție de învățământ superior, activitate inovatoare, rating, evaluare

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#### **Аннотация**

*В данной статье рассматриваются теоретические и практические аспекты оценки инновационной деятельности высших учебных заведений с помощью рейтингов на примере Израиля. Система высшего образования в Израиле включает в себя университеты и колледжи. Статус университета является вопросом престижа, увеличения государственного финансирования исследований и учебного процесса, а также возможностью присвоения докторских степеней. Университеты занимаются научно-исследовательскими разработками и представляют научное сообщество Израиля.*

*В статье представлена сравнительная характеристика основных мировых рейтингов. Основной акцент ставится на международные рейтинги оценки высших учебных заведений. Система высшего образования в Израиле высоко ценится в мире. Данные международных рейтингов системы высшего образования за последние годы указывает на ряд достижений вузов Израиля. Оценка инновационной деятельности университетов Израиля проведена по шести международным рейтингам.*

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**Ключевые слова:** высшее учебное заведение, инновационная деятельность, рейтинг, оценка

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