Ranking Higher Education Institutions
-- A European Perspective

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Abstract

The paper tries to give an overview on the discussion on rankings, in particular international rankings from a European perspective. The two worldwide ranking compiled by Shanghai Jiaotong University and the Times Higher Education Supplement have got high attention and raised discussions about the competitiveness on national higher education systems throughout Europe. Hence it is important to detect the methodological limitations of those rankings. After elaborating some general aspects about ranking methodology the paper presents the CHE ranking approach that is distinct to most rankings with regard to three basic methodological aspects: First it is strictly field based and does not compare whole institutions; second, it is multi-dimensional and does not aggregate indicators measuring different elements of performance into one aggregated composite overall indicator and, last but not least CHE ranking does not follow a league table approach but orders universities into three groups in order to avoid misinterpretation on small differences in the numerical value of indicators in terms of differences in quality.

Keyword: Rankings; League Tables; Performance Indicators; Germany