

Global University Rankings: More Diverse and More Transparent but Old Flaws are Still Alive

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Abstract

The indicators chosen by the most popular global league tables allow covering just above one thousand universities out of the estimated 17,500 -- but policy makers apply ranking results to all higher education. Being concentrated on world's research elite ranking methodologies do not reward for achievements in other important tasks of higher education. With ranking positions becoming the measure of the status of university, universities are tempted to concentrate on performance on the issues measured in rankings and to pay less attention to e.g., regional development, openness for non-traditional students, student's social issues etc. As regards the teaching and learning, there still are no sufficient indicators and distant proxies are being used instead. Two EU supported transparency tools have been produced recently -- U-map profiling tool and U-Multirank using a variety of performance indicators but not preparing league tables. More developments resembling U-map or U-Multirank type have been launched by ranking providers 2010-2012 -- nearly every global ranking now produces classifications or multi-indicator ranking tools. However, there are some things that haven't changed: rankings are still favouring natural sciences and medicine, rankings ignore publications in books and hence ignore arts and humanities, there are no sufficient performance indicators for teaching and learning, the English language bias is still alive, reputation surveys on teaching are still in use although it has been proved that surveys on teaching are much less reliable than ones on research. Some positive changes in transparency of ranking

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methodologies have been noticed recently. It could be at least partly caused by the start of first round of the IREG (International Ranking Expert Group) ranking audit.

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