

Rankings and Implications for Public Policy: Reshaping Higher Education

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23 May 2016



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What are You Trying to Achieve?

- How should you determine the best universities? Are they those which best match the criteria established by the different rankings OR those that help the majority of students earn credentials for sustainable living and employment?
- Is the aim to move towards a mass knowledge society (where progress depends on the “wisdom of the many”) OR towards an elite knowledge society (where progress depends on the cutting-edge knowledge of the chosen few)?
- Should resources be directed to the few universities which perform best against rankings OR should national policy avoid distortions in resource allocation and ensure resources meet the needs of the wider tertiary education sector?
- Should you choose indicators which best align with national social and economic objectives OR adopt indicators chosen by commercial organisations for their own purposes?

Themes

1. Geopolitics of Rankings
2. What the Research Tells Us
3. Some Implications

1. Geopolitics of Rankings



Policy Context

- **Globalisation and knowledge society**
 - Knowledge is key “factor in international competitiveness”
 - Importance of talent – and hence HE – for knowledge-intensive economies;
- **Competition between HEIs for students, faculty, finance, researchers**
 - Internationalisation of higher education
- **Trend towards market-steering governance mechanisms**
 - Increased emphasis on accountability/quality assurance
 - Growing need to (re)regulate market
- **Increasing desire for comparative or benchmarking data**
 - “Consumer” information for students/parents, and government;
 - Dissatisfaction with robustness of traditional collegial mechanisms.

Evolution of Rankings

- 4 phases, each reflecting social and political characteristics of their time;
 - Phase 1 (1900-1950s): educational origins of eminent men in excellent universities, before moving to consider broader questions of institutional excellence;
 - Phase 2 (1959-2000): rise of commercially-driven rankings focused on reputational factors, in response to growing massification, student mobility and “glorification of markets”
 - Phase 3 (2003-): global rankings reflect intensification of globalisation/global competition, and strengthening of international academic/professional labour market
 - Phase 4 (2008-): supra-national rankings reflect growing concerns to regulate and monitor transnational academic and labour markets
- Today, 10 major global rankings and 150+ national/specialist rankings.

Geopolitics Of Rankings (1)

- Globalisation's biggest effect on higher education has been to transform it from a local institution to a one of geopolitical significance.
 - As nations seek a route out of the current economic impasse, global competition is accelerating –
 - HE was victim of the crisis and is key infrastructure for the future;
- Global rankings are inevitable product of internationalised higher education market and world economy.
 - Reflect and structure the world economy and global science.
 - Costs associated with adopting and sustaining a competitive strategy illustrates how indicators of investment have become powerful drivers of international benchmarking, resource-intensive competition and government policy.

Top-100 World Order, 2004-2015

Ranking	Year	North America	Europe (w/ Russia)	Australia & New Z.	Asia (w/ India)	Latin America	Africa	Middle East
QS/THE-QS	2015	34	39	8	19	0	0	0
	2013	34	42	7	17	0	0	0
	2011	35	40	7	18	0	0	0
	2008	42	36	8	13	0	0	1
	2004	38	36	12	13	0	0	1
THE	2015	43	42	6	9	0	0	0
	2013	50	34	5	11	0	0	0
	2011	57	30	4	9	0	0	0
	2010	57	28	5	10	0	0	0
ARWU	2015	55	35	4	4	0	0	2
	2013	56	33	5	3	0	0	3
	2011	57	33	4	6	0	0	0
	2008	58	34	3	5	0	0	0
	2004	55	37	2	5	0	0	1

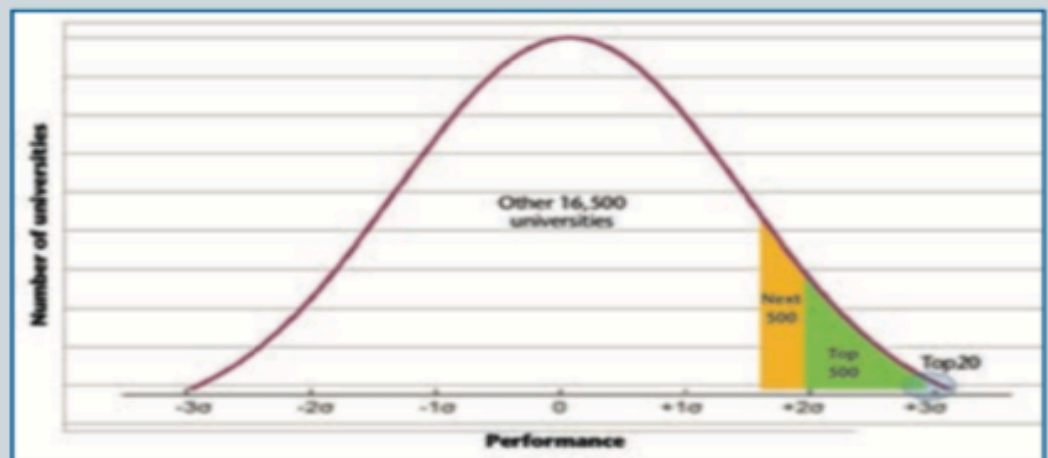
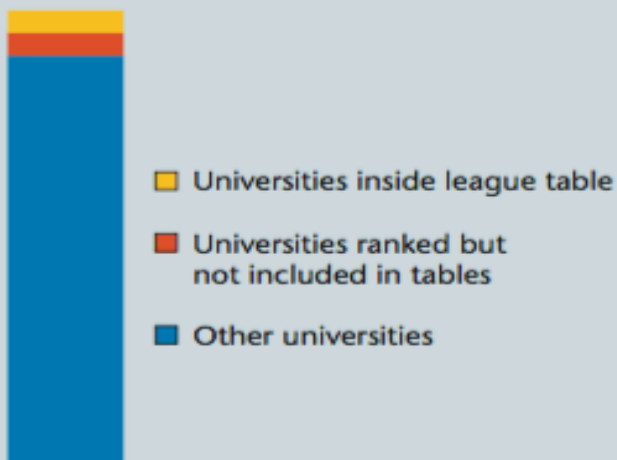
Geopolitics Of Rankings (2)

- Regardless of criticisms, being ranked is important.
 - Developed countries regard global rankings as affirmation of or an outright challenge to (perceived) dominance;
 - Middle-income and developing countries view rankings more benignly.
- Status and position of elite universities within Top-100 unlikely to change soon,
 - But beyond top group, growing multi-polarity of higher education and scientific knowledge becomes apparent.
 - Notable gains have been made by Asian countries, primarily China, due to a combination of targeted government investment strategies and changes in ranking methodology.
- Ability vs. inability to compete at this level is critical and likely to amplify changes in the world order.

Measuring An Elite?

- Top 100 universities = less than 0.5 percent of total of ~18,000 HEIs;
 - = ~0.4 percent of total world population of 196m tertiary students (UIS, 2012).
- As demand for HE grows worldwide, selectivity is accelerating.
 - This is because while overall student numbers are increasing, student numbers amongst top 100 is relatively stable – thus leading to a decreasing overall % of total students.

Proportion of universities considered by existing global rankings vs. the total number of universities in the world



Rankings' Legacy

- As nations struggle to fund all the public services that society requires, debate about the “public good” role of HE has come back onto the table;
- Rankings have succeeded in placing consideration of educational quality, performance and productivity within *wider comparative and international framework*
 - “All the things wrong with the rankings matter considerably less than the plain fact that the rankings matter” (Locke, 2011, 226)
- Greater number of players: supra-national governments, national governments/US states, HE agencies, commercial media, HE organisations;
 - Global intelligence information business with move towards common int’l data set;
 - Matters of global governance – and ensuring better alignment between higher education and national objectives.

2. What the Research Tells Us



What We Have Learned

- Rankings are driver of higher education decision-making at the institutional and national level;
 - Highlights ambition and sets explicit strategic goal;
 - Identifies KPIs used to measure performance and reward success;
 - Rankings help identify under-performers and "reputational" disciplines.
- Students, high achievers and international, use rankings to inform choice;
- Other HEIs use rankings to identify potential partners or membership of international networks;
- Employers and other stakeholders use rankings for recruitment or publicity purposes;
- Governments policy is increasingly influenced by rankings.

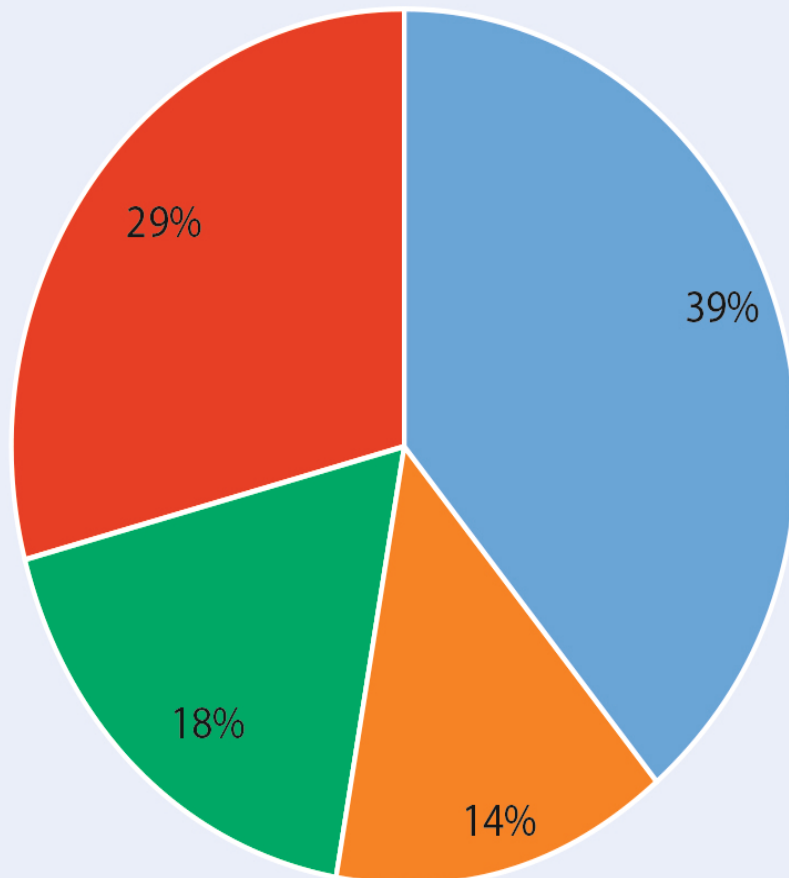
Rankings As Strategic Planning

- 1) Rankings as an explicit goal:
 - Plans make specific references to rankings, with targets often oriented toward gaining or maintaining positions within certain tiers.
- 2) Rankings as an implicit goal:
 - No specific reference to rankings, but desire to be recognised among the world’s best institutions or in the top tier is frequently expressed.
 - ‘World class’ code for global rankings.
- 3) Rankings for target setting:
 - Use rankings as a KPI to measure performance and set specific targets.
- 4) Rankings as a measure of success:
 - Used to validate particular strategies or actions.

Institutional Reaction: Some Findings

- 83% HEIs **unhappy** with their rank compared with 58 percent in 2006;
- 32% HEIs **want to be first nationally** compared with 19 percent in 2006;
- 29% HEIs **want to be in the top 5% internationally** compared with 24 percent in 2006;
- 84% HEIs have a **formal internal mechanism to review** their institution's rank, and 40% - this is led by Vice Chancellor, President or Rector;
- Overwhelming majority HEIs **use rankings to inform strategic decisions**, set targets or shape priorities, and inform decisions about international partnerships;
- 84% HEIs use rankings to **monitor peer institutions** in their own country, and ~77% monitor peers worldwide;

Rankings' Role In Institutional Strategy



- No
- Yes, and our institution formulated a clear target in terms of its position in national rankings.
- Yes, and our institution formulated a clear target in terms of its position in international rankings.
- Yes, and our institution formulated a clear target for both national and international rankings.

N = 171

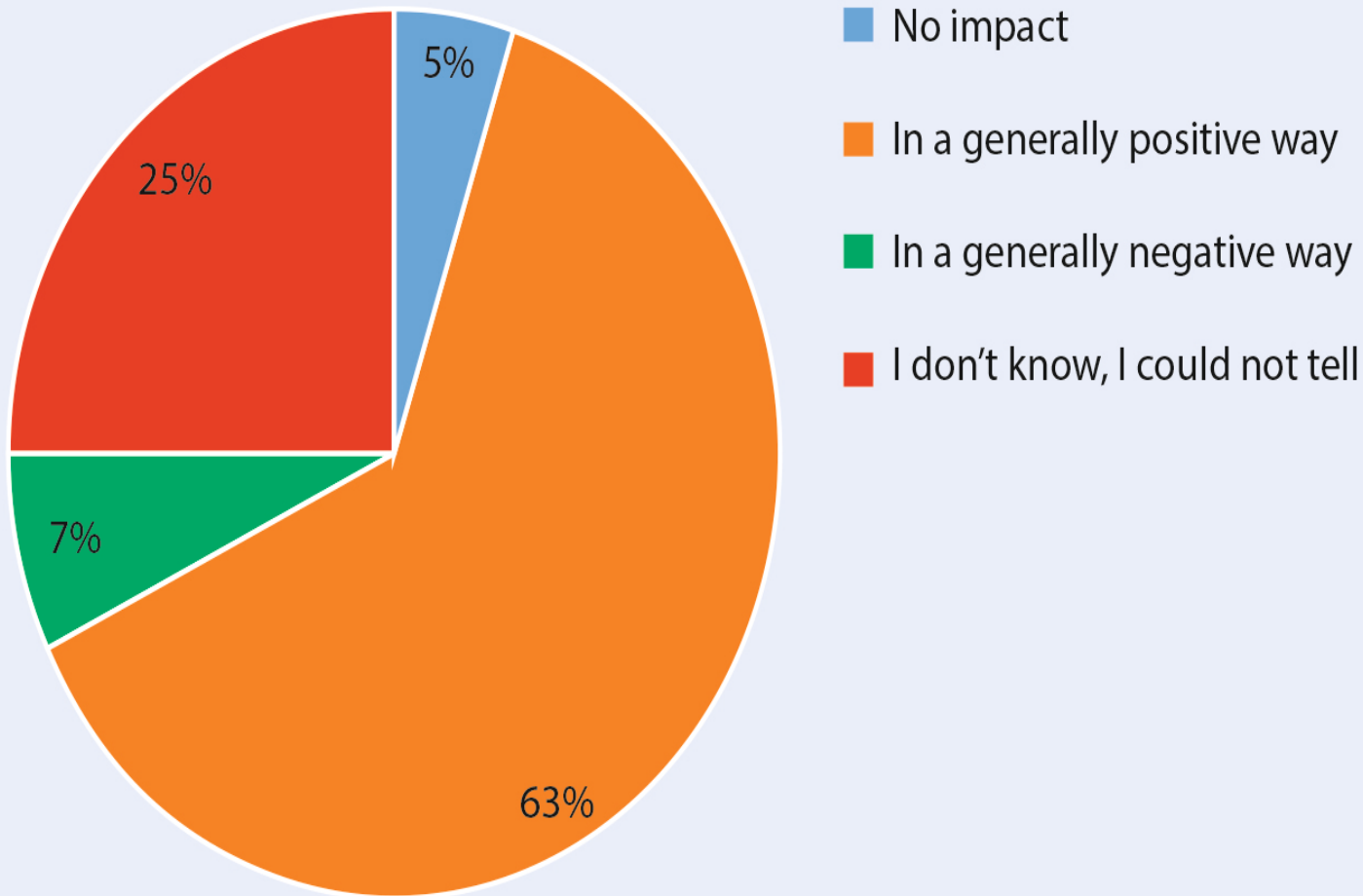
Changes In Institutional Decisions And Academic Behaviour

- Over 50% HEIs (2014) have made strategic, organizational, managerial or academic decisions to improve position in rankings:
 - Revising policy and resource allocation;
 - Prioritising research areas;
 - Changing recruitment and promotional criteria;
 - Creating, closing or merging departments or programmes; and/or merging with another HEI, research institute, etc.
 - Identifying preferential journals in which faculty should seek to be published;
 - Research “stars” rewarded while teaching often seen as a “punishment”.
- Heightened emphasis on research and outputs as performance indicators:
 - Influencing disciplinary practices, such as publishing in English-language and internationally ranked journals.

Source: Hazelkorn (2015) *Rankings and the Reshaping of Higher Education. The Battle for World-class Excellence*. Palgrave MacMillan.

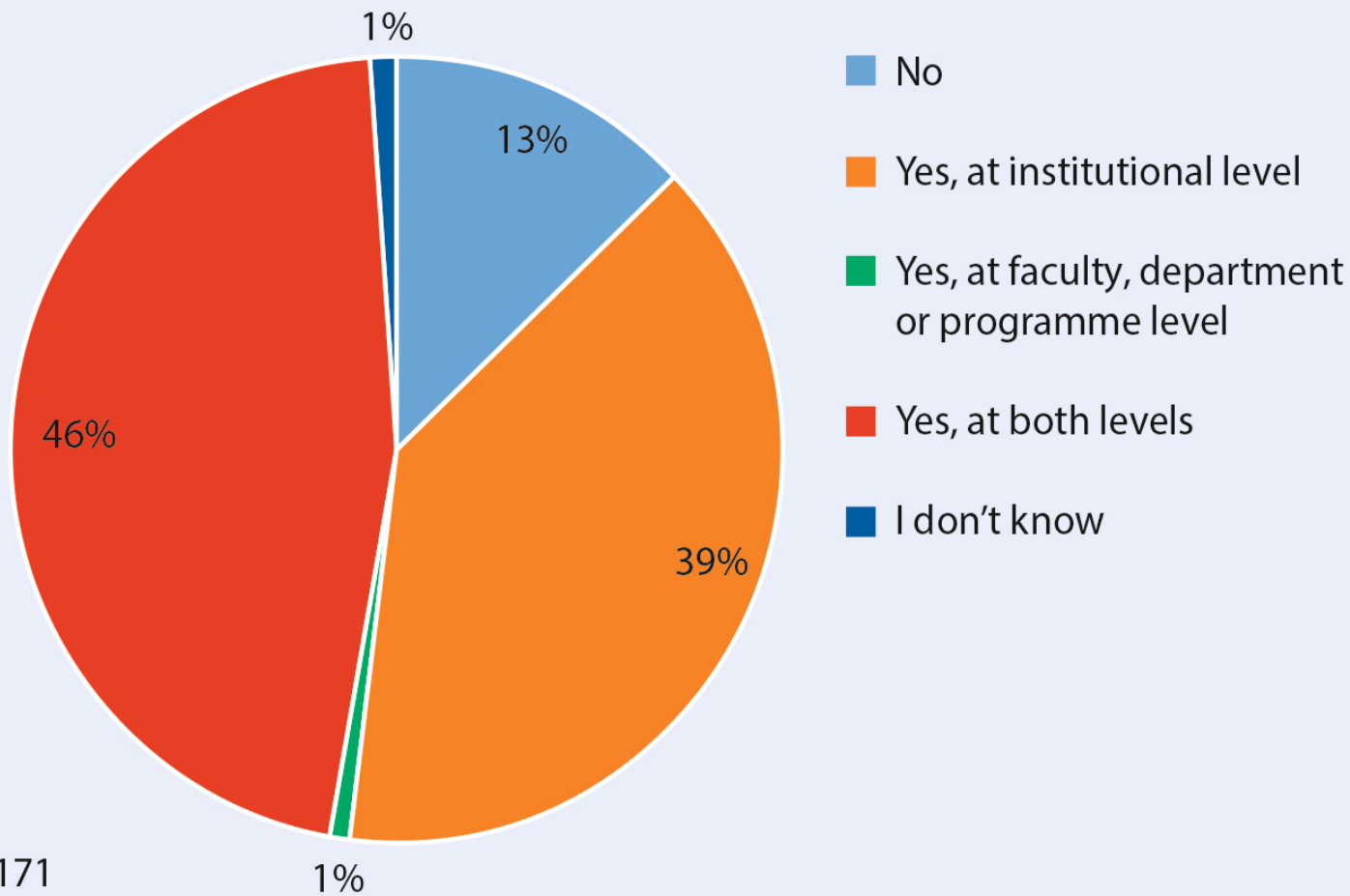
	Examples of HEI Actions Taken	~Weighting (2014)
Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase output, quality and citations Recruit and Reward faculty for publications in highly-cited journals Publish in English-language journals Set individual targets for faculty and departments Increase number/proportion of PhD Students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ARWU = 100% THE-QS = 60% NTU = 100% THE = 93.25% QS = 70%
Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Merge with another institution Develop/expand English-language facilities Establish Institutional Research capability Embed rankings indicators as a performance indicator Form task group to review and report on rankings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ARWU = 10%; Research related indicators as above
Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Target recruitment of high-achieving students, esp. PhD students Offer scholarships and other benefits More international activities and exchange programmes Open International Office and professionalise recruitment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> THE = 9.25 QS = 5%
Faculty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruit/head-hunt international high-achieving/HiCi scholars Create new contract/tenure arrangements Set market-based or performance/merit-based salaries Reward high-achievers & Identify weak performers Enable best researchers to concentrate on research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ARWU = 80% THE-QS = 95% NTU = 100% THE = 97.5% QS = 95%
Public Image/ Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reputational factors Professionalise Admissions, Marketing and Public Relations Ensure common brand used on all publications Expand internationalisation alliances and membership of global networks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ARWU = 50% THE-QS = 40% QS = 50% THE = 33%

How Rankings Affect Reputation?



N = 171

Does Your Institution Monitor Its Position In Rankings?



N = 171

Reasons For Monitoring Other Institutions

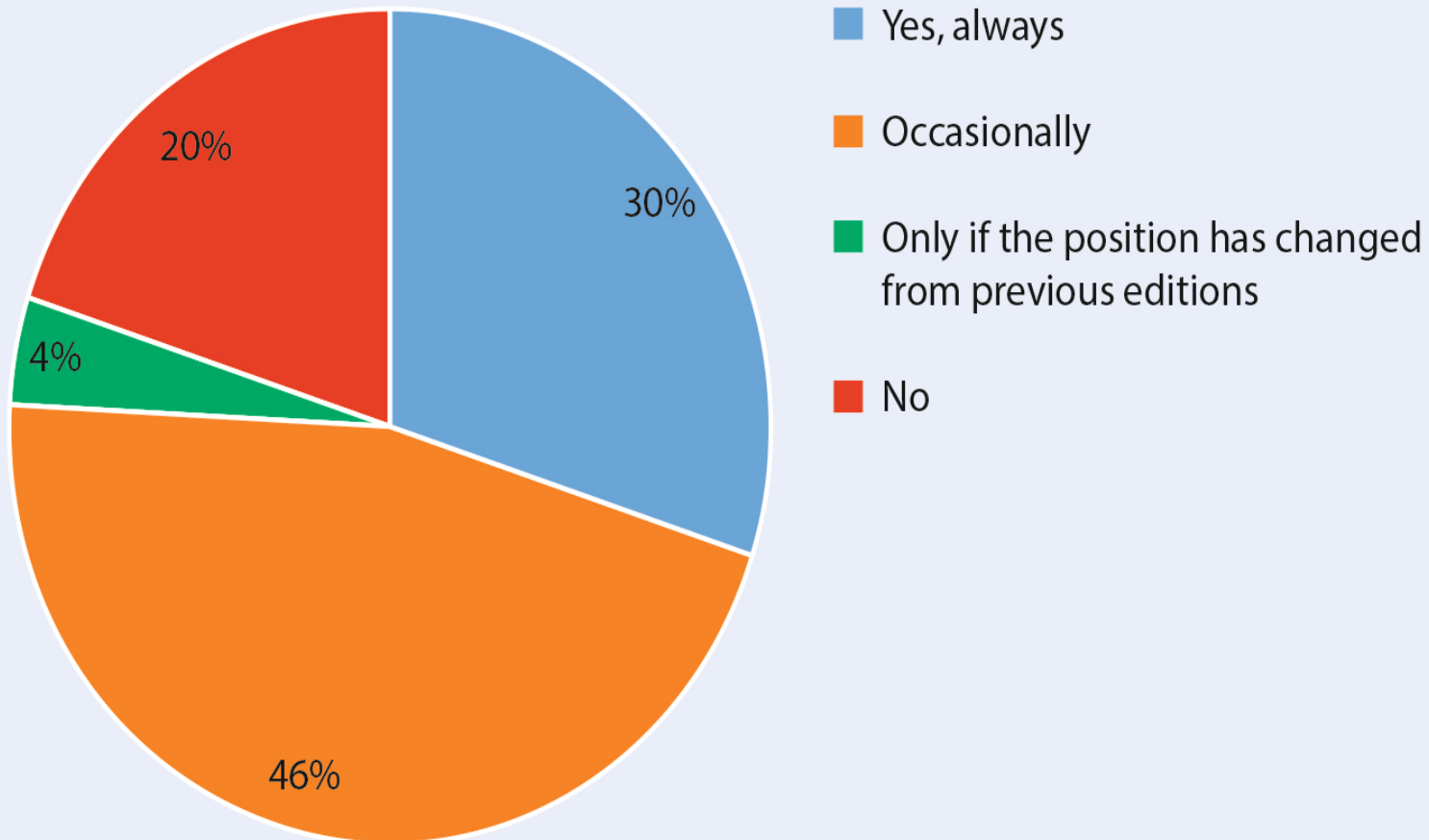
Reason for monitoring other institutions	
Benchmark purposes (compare yourself to other institutions) at national level	84%
Benchmark purposes at international level	75%
Establishing/maintaining national collaborations	23%
Establishing/maintaining international collaborations	56%
Establishing/maintaining staff exchange	28%
Establishing/maintaining student exchange	37%
Other	2%

N = 137. The results do not add up to 100% as respondents to this question could indicate multiple replies.

Process for Monitoring Rankings

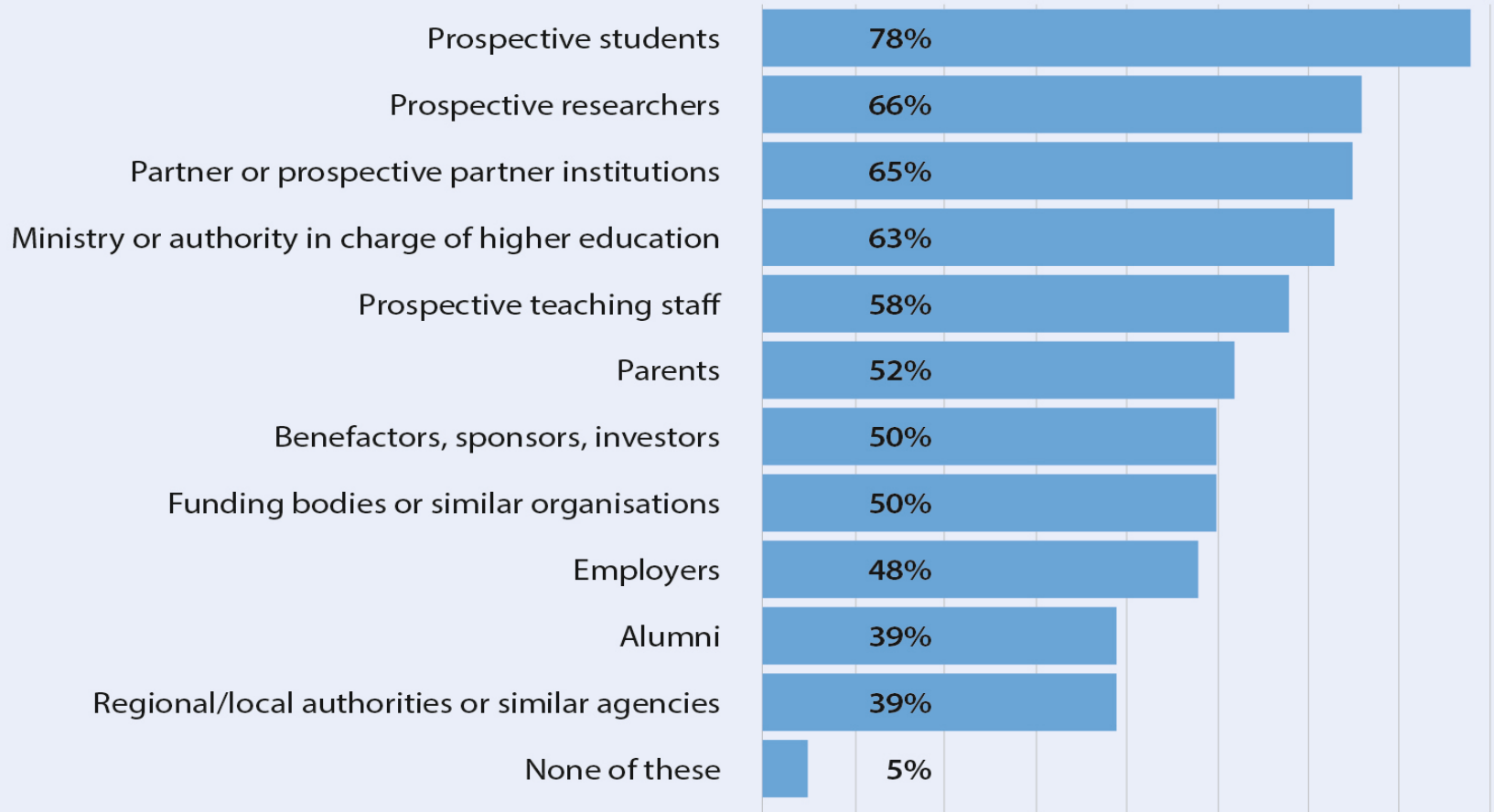
Process for monitoring rankings	
We have a specialist unit/section of the institution which monitors our position in the rankings regularly.	33%
We have one or several persons at institution level who monitor(s) our position in the rankings regularly.	54%
We have one or several persons at study field, department or programme level who monitor(s) our position in the rankings regularly.	12%
We occasionally look into rankings to inform strategic decisions or for precise purposes, but not in a systematic way.	23%
There are discussion platforms (committees, meetings...) organised at institutional level, where the issue of rankings is discussed on a regular basis.	26%
There are discussion platforms (committees, meetings...) organised at faculty, department or programme level, where the issue of rankings is discussed on a regular basis.	12%
Other	5%

Rankings For Marketing Or Publicity



N = 171

Groups Most Influenced By Rankings

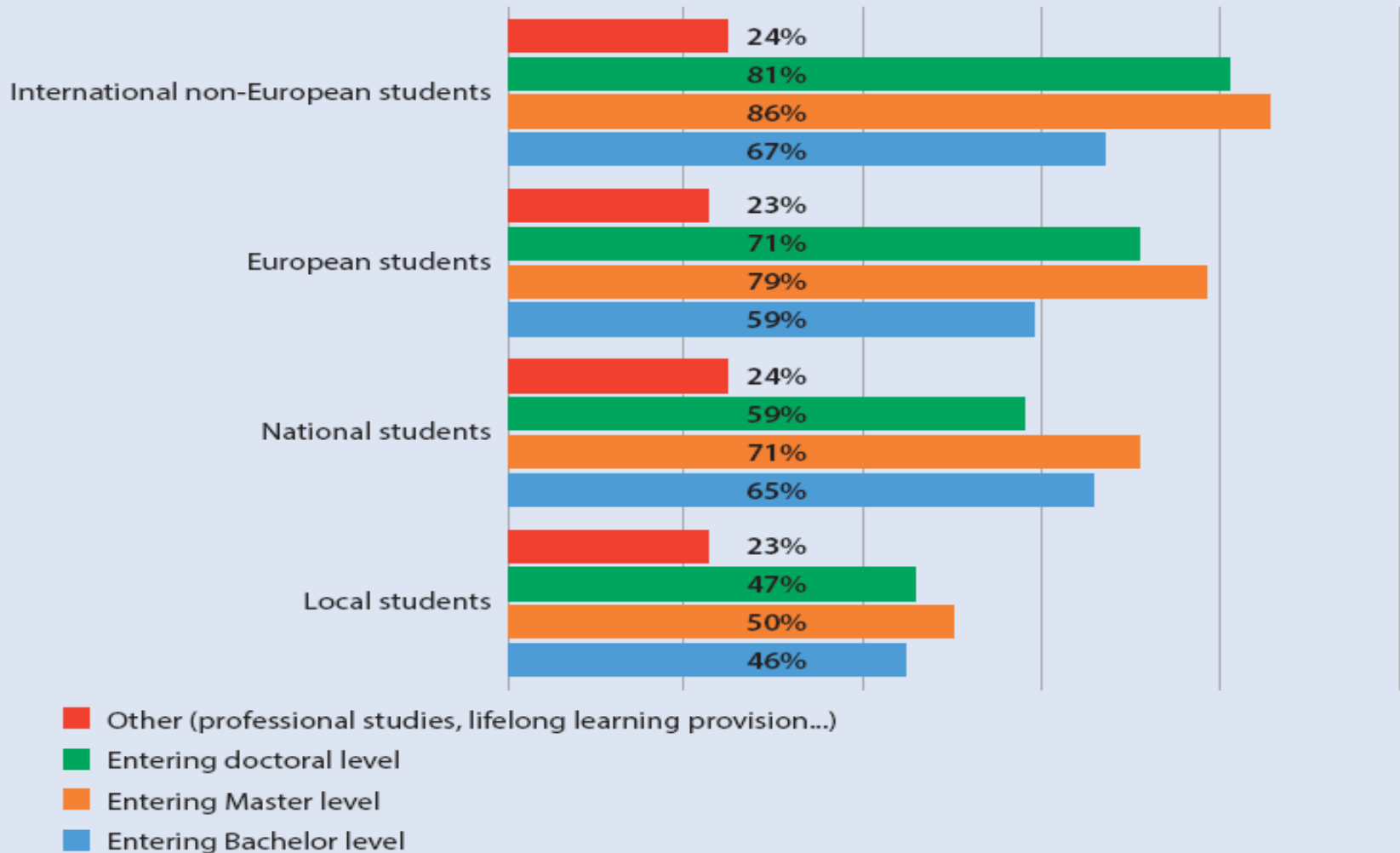


N = 171. The results do not add up to 100% as respondents to this question could indicate multiple replies.

Student Reaction: Some Findings

- **80% undergraduate and postgraduate** (taught and research) students **have a high interest in rankings**, with no real difference between undergraduate and postgraduate students (i-graduate, 2014);
- **High achieving and high socio-economic students** are most likely to make choices based on non-financial factors, e.g. reputation and rankings;
- **International students continue to rate reputation and position** in rankings as key determinants in their choice of institution, programme and country;
- **Strong correlation between rankings, perceptions of quality, institutional reputation and choice of destination**, at the national and institutional level;

Students Most Influenced By Rankings



N = 133. The results do not add up to 100% as respondents to this question could indicate multiple replies.

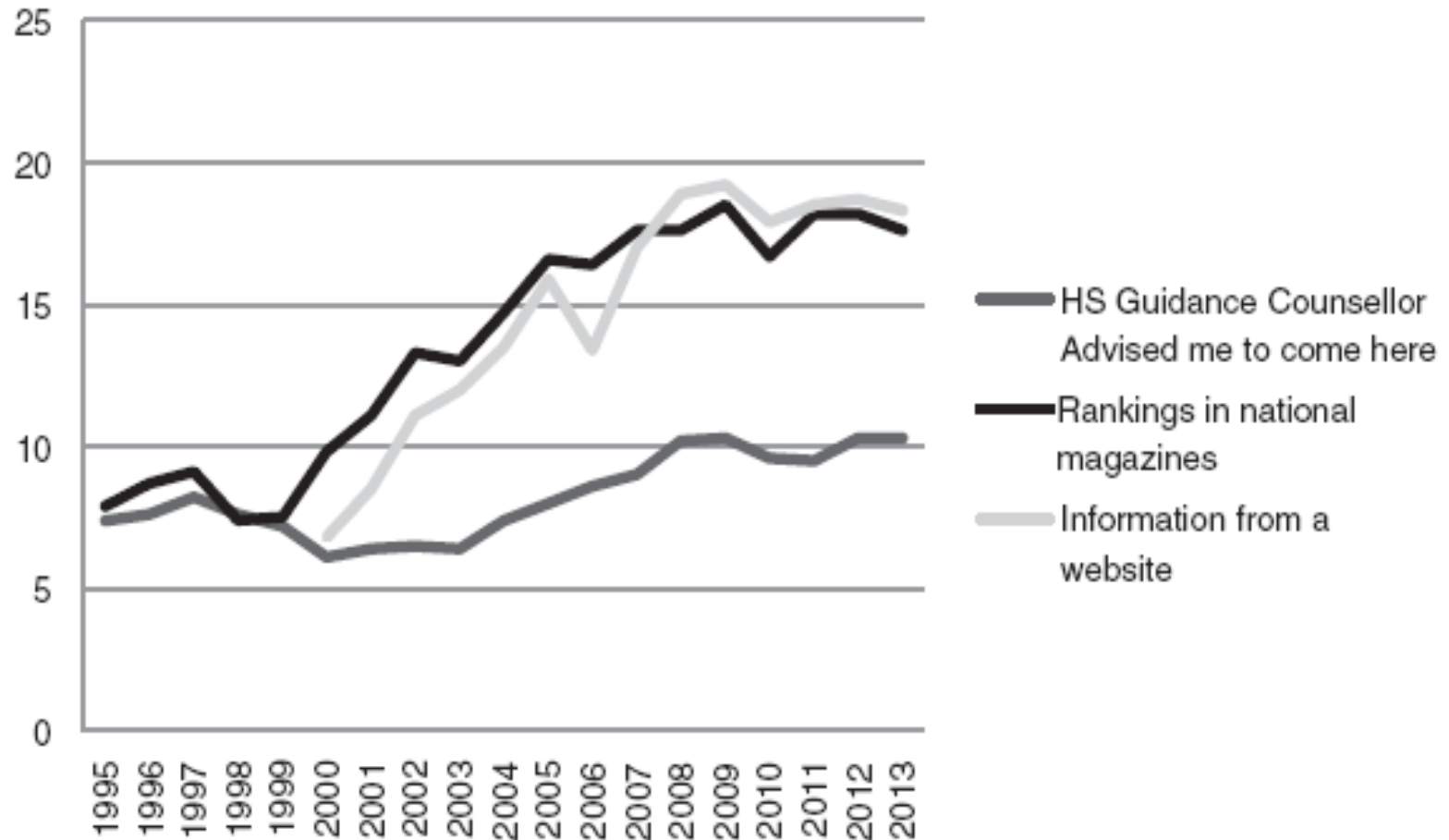
Top 10 Factors Influencing Student Choice, 2010 and 2014

Priority – 2014	Priority – 2010	Factor	Mean Score – 2010	Mean Score – 2014
1	2	Reputation (value in my career) of a qualification from this university	3.49	3.74
2	3	Reputation of this Institution	3.48	3.44
3	4	Quality of research	3.4	3.42
4	n/a	Reputation of the education system in this country	3.38	n/a
5	6	Personal safety and security	3.28	3.24
6	7	Cost of education (tuition fees)	3.25	3.21
7	10	Specific programme title	3.25	3.09
8	n/a	Cost of living	3.2	n/a
9	n/a	Earning potential of my chosen degree from this Institution	3.17	n/a
10	9	Position in ranking/league tables	3.14	3.09

Source: © International Graduate Insight Group Ltd. (i-graduate), 2014

NB. For 2010 figures, “n/a” means the “Factor” listed for 2014 did not feature in the top ten most important factors in 2010.

Sources of Information Influencing US Student Choice, 1995-2013



Source: CIRP, 1995-2013.

Policy Impact Beyond HE

- Serbia, Albania, Romania, Jordan, Czech Republic use rankings to classify universities;
- Russia, Brazil, Chile, Singapore, Saudi Arabia, Kazakhstan, Mongolia and Qatar restrict state scholarships to students admitted to high-ranked universities;
- India, Russia, Singapore use rankings as criteria for collaboration;
- Dutch (2008) and Danish (2011) immigration laws target foreigners from top universities (150, and 20 respectively);
- Macedonia: Law on HE (2008) automatically recognises top 500 Times QS, SJT or USN&WR, and uses rankings to evaluate university performance.
- US states benchmark salaries (Florida and Arizona) or 'fold' rankings into performance measurement system (Minnesota, Indiana and Texas).

3. Some Implications



Policy Responses

- Considerable evidence of system reshaping going on. Many changes are inevitable responses to
 - Recognition of key infrastructural role of HE in knowledge-intensive societies;
 - Broader forces of globalisation, massification, and labour market changes;
 - Ensure the HE/post-secondary system is able to meet the needs of society.
- BUT - rankings interpreted as proxy for capacity/capability to be globally competitive in world dominated by new knowledge generated by talent;
 - *Excellence Initiatives* used to restructure HE/research systems and institutions to create “world-class” or flagship universities
 - ~33 excellence initiatives, most found in Asia, Europe and the Middle East, with less activity in Africa and Latin America (Salmi quoted in Siwinska, 2013).

Rankings-led Strategy

- Restructuring of national systems;
- Reshaping of national priorities;
- Refocusing of institutional priorities;
- Reorganising the HEI, institutional departments and hierarchy of disciplines;
- Emphasis on research vs. teaching; postgraduate vs. undergraduate – with implications for the academic profession;
- Changes in research practice: language, publication, orientation, basic/ applied, etc.
- Influence on stakeholders – students, governments, business/employers, investors, public, etc.

World Class University Model: Hierarchical/Reputational Differentiation

	Field 1	Field 2	Field 3	Field ...
PhDs and research intensive	Institution A1			
Masters and some research	Institution B1			
	Institution B2			
Baccalaureates and scholarship	Institution C1			
	Institution C2			
	Institution C3			
	Institution C4			
Diplomas and extension services	Institution D1			
	Institution D2			
	Institution D3			
	Institution D4			
	Institution D5			

World Class System Model: Horizontal/Field or Mission Specialisation

	Field 1	Field 2	Field 3	Field 4	Field 5	Field 6	Field 7	Field 8	Field 9	Field 10
PhDs and research intensive	Institution 1	Institution 2	Institution 3	Institution 4	Institution 5	Institution 6	Institution 7	Institution 8	Institution 9	Institution 10
Masters and some research										
Baccalaureates and scholarship										
Diplomas and extension services										

World-class System vs World-class University Model

POLICY CHOICE	IDEOLOGICAL DIRECTION	SYSTEM CHARACTERISTICS	KNOWLEDGE CHARACTERISTICS	INSTITUTIONAL CHARACTERISTICS
World-Class University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neo-liberal: • A: jettison traditional equity values; • B: reassert traditional status and hierarchical values <p>...in order to underpin elite knowledge creation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster vertical or reputation differentiation between global research-intensive universities and locally-focused mass teaching HEIs; • Concentrate performance in select few elite universities; • Drive excellence through competition, marketization and performance-based funding; • Emphasis on success of the WCU 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intensification of knowledge production; • Focus on Mode 1/basic research practices; • Measure research excellence via bibliometric and citation practices; • Achieves accountability via peer-review process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weak relationship between teaching and research; • Emphasis on global recognition and partnerships; • Emphasis on selective entry • Recruits talent internationally
World-Class System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social-democratic: • Supporting excellence wherever it is found <p>...in order to underpin balanced national development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster horizontal differentiation between HEIs with distinction based on specialised fields of expertise; • Balance excellence with support for “good quality universities” across the country; • Drive differentiation by combination of funding and compacts; • Emphasis on capacity of the eco-system overall 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialisation of research, across full research-innovation spectrum, with emphasis on use-inspired and application focused research • Focus on Mode 2 and Mode 3 research co-produced and focused on solving complex problems; • Measure research in terms of excellence with impact and relevance; • Achieves accountability via social and public accountability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Portfolio of diverse and differentiated HEIs working collaboratively • Strong correlation between teaching and research; • Emphasis on HEI as “anchor” tenant in region, but linking globally; • Recruits students regionally, nationally and internationally. •

Unintended Consequences (1)

- Prestige and reputation become dominant drivers of the “system” leading to steep(er) hierarchy – rather than pursuance of equity and diversity;
 - Measure *resource-intensity*, and reward sustained concentration and selectivity in a few elite universities;
 - Amplify benefits and prestige of elite universities and their graduates,
- Concentrating resources and research activity may be counter-productive and undermine national economic capacity
 - Widens privilege gap, affecting other HEIs and their students, but may also threaten the cities and regions in which they reside, exaggerating long-standing inequality issues;
 - No evidence more concentrated national systems generate higher citation impact;
 - Financial costs can be very high – and threaten other policy goals.

Unintended Consequences (2)

- Rankings affect/reorient research priorities and practices:
 - Emphasis on global impact may undermine regionally relevant activity/outcomes;
 - Measures past performance rather than potential;
 - Fails to capture activity across the full research-innovation eco-system;
- Privileges the global reputation over social responsibility
 - Undermine teaching mission and service to society;
 - Realigns research with implications for regional/national development.
- Because rankings incentivise behaviour, what is measured is critical.

Influence on HEIs

- Rankings become dominant strategic driver of university decisions.
 - Act as a national/international benchmark – external to historic or disciplinary biases;
- BUT increasing evidence shows that they are also used to:
 - Set explicit strategic goals which may vary with mission;
 - Identify KPIs used to measure performance and reward success;
 - Inform academic recruitment and promotion, and identify under-performers;
 - Identify potential partners or membership of international networks;
- Plenty of evidence of Presidents saying: “I’ll do whatever it takes to be in/get into the top-rankings”.

Costing Your Ambition?

- Estimates of world-class university = ~\$2bn/annually;
- U Rochester: To make even a small change in USNWR rankings would “require a sustained increase of over \$112m per year to be allocated” based on just two indicators – statistically insignificant.
- U Kentucky: goal set by state legislature to reach the top-20 by 2020 according to USNWR criteria.
 - by 2009–2010, university had failed to keep pace with its 2006 metrics, plus there was a major funding gap of over \$ 420 million.
- Given that rankings methodologies change frequently - should university strategies or priorities change accordingly? And if this occurs, who is setting higher education strategy?

In Summary

- Being part of international HE world is vital.
 - Globalisation not only accentuates regional and socio-economic disparities but it also provides an entry route into the world economy. No country can afford to be on the other side of history.
- Rankings may appear to provide a simple and useful way to measure and compare quality and performance.
- Yet, one of the big lessons of global rankings is the extent to which higher education (policy) has become vulnerable to an agenda set by others.
- The trick is distinguishing between rankings as just a simple benchmarking tool and using them as a regressive policy driver.

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