

2008-04-07

## The Rising Popularity of University Rankings: Lessons and Implications

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### Recommended Citation

Hazelkorn, E.: The Rising Popularity of University Rankings: Lessons and Implications. Presentation given at Centre for the Study of Higher Education (CSHE) seminar, University of Melbourne. Melbourne (AU), 7 April, 2008.

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# The rising popularity of university rankings: Lessons and implications

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CSHE – University of Melbourne Seminar  
7 April 2008



'What are the universities people talk about internationally – Oxford, Cambridge, Harvard, Stanford – but no German universities...We look back decades and people came to German universities; today they go to US universities.'

'The Lisbon Agenda aims to make Europe "the most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy in the world...by 2010" But when the statistics are reviewed, Europe has only 2 universities in the top 20. Change is required.'

'The only reason I know that Harvard, Cambridge, Princeton and Yale are the best universities is through movies,...and that establishes people's perception.'

'It's a reputation race/game, and in this – research is sexy. Reputation, unfortunately, is always based on research,...and research attracts the best talent.'

'As we approach [our] 50th birthday in 2015, ...we have set our sights on [being] firmly in the top 50 of world universities.'

# Themes

1. The Story So Far...
  - Obsession with Rankings
  - Methodological Framework and Questions
2. Impact on HEIs and HE
  - International Study, 2006
  - German Experience
  - Australian Experience
  - Other Evidence
3. Issues and Implications
  - Institutional (re)Actions
  - Policy Challenges
4. Concluding Observations

# 1. The Story So Far...

# Obsession With Rankings

- Satisfy a 'public demand for transparency and information that institutions and government have not been able to meet on their own.' (Usher & Savino, 2006, p38)
  - Cue to students/consumers re: monetary 'private benefits' of university attainment and occupational/salary premium
  - Cue to employers what they can expect from graduates
  - Cue to government/policymakers re: quality, international standards & economic credibility
  - Cue to public because they are perceived as independent of the sector or individual universities
  - Cue to HEIs because they want to be able to benchmark their performance

# Difficulties with Rankings

- Technical and Methodological Difficulties
  - Indicators as proxies for quality?
  - Quality and appropriateness of the metrics
  - Veracity of Times QS vs. Shanghai Jiao Tong
- Usefulness of the Results as 'Consumer' Information
  - Rater bias? Halo effect? Reputational ranking?
  - Quality and appropriateness of the information
- Comparability of Complex Institutions
  - One-size-fits-all? Single-digit Indicators? Diversity of missions?
  - Matthew effect?
- Motives of the Rankers/Publishers
  - Self-interest objectives, e.g. sell papers, strengthen case for additional funding

# Research Questions

- How are HEIs responding to *Rankings*?
- Do *Rankings* influence/inform – positive or perverse – institutional decision-making and academic behaviour?
  - strategy and mission
  - institutional priorities – academic and research
  - resource allocation
  - recruitment and marketing
  - academic and student recruitment
- Do *Rankings* influence collaboration or partnerships?
- Do *Rankings* influence the views or decisions of key stakeholders?
- How should HEIs be measured?
- Are *Rankings* influencing broader higher education objectives and priorities?



# Phase 1: International Questionnaire

- Membership of IMHE (OECD) and IAU.
- Email questionnaires sent to leaders/senior administrators in June-September 2006.
  - 639 questionnaires sent, with some unquantifiable 'snowballing'
  - 202 replies received
  - 31.6% response rate

# Respondent Profile (N=202)

- 41 Countries
- Age:
  - 36% post 1970
  - 24% 1945-1969
  - 40% pre 1945
- 83% publicly funded
- Institutional type
  - 30.4% teaching intensive
  - 19.3% research informed
  - 29.2% research intensive

# Phase 2: Case Studies

- Conducted in association with OECD and IAU, and under auspices of Institute of Higher Education (US) with funding from Lumina Foundation
- Germany, Australia, Japan (and Canada)
  - Government responses, e.g. national competitions/benchmarking, excellence initiatives
  - International exposure
  - Competitive environment
- Interviews
  - 4 universities per country: representation across mission, geography and status/reputation
  - Key stakeholders (e.g. policymakers, business organisation, university associations, trade unions, student groups)

# Thus far...

- Germany (January 2008):
  - Universities/Fachhochschulen: Bielefeld U; RWTH Aachen, Reutlingen U, Potsdam U
  - Stakeholders: German Rectors Conference (HRK); German Business Association (BDA); Gewerkschaft Erziehung und Wissenschaft (GEW)
- Australia (February/March 2008)
  - Universities: CDU; QUT; ANU; U of Melbourne
  - Stakeholders: DEEWR; Universities Australia, Go8; NUS; AUQA; NTEU
- Japan (May/June 2008)
  - Universities: Tokyo U; Tokyo Institute of Technology; Waseda University ; Tohoku University; Hiroshima University; Nagasaki University
- Self-Study
  - U Capetown, Copenhagen Business School

## 2. How Rankings Impact on HEIs/HE?

- International Study, 2006

# Playing the Rankings Game

- Despite methodological concerns, strong perception that...
  - Rankings play critical role in enabling/facilitating HEIs to maintain and build institutional position and reputation.
  - High achieving students use rankings to 'shortlist', especially at postgraduate level
  - Stakeholders use rankings to influence funding, sponsorship, and recruitment
  - Benefits and advantages flow from high ranking
- HEIs taking results very seriously...

# Ranking Status

- 93% and 82% respondents, respectively, want to improve their national or international ranking.
  - 58% respondents unhappy with current ranking
- 70% of all respondents wish to be in top 10% nationally, and 71% want to be in top 25% internationally.
- 56% have a formal internal mechanism for reviewing their
  - 56% by the Vice Chancellor, President or Rector
  - 14% by the Governing Authority
- Almost 50% use their rank for publicity/marketing purposes



# Benchmarking and Monitoring

- 40%+ respondents consider an HEI's rank prior to entering discussions about:
  - international collaborations
  - academic programmes
  - research
  - student exchanges
- 57% say rankings were influencing willingness of other HEIs to partner with them
- 34% say rankings influencing willingness of other HEIs to support their institution's members of academic/professional organisations

# Perceptions of Impact

Positive impact if highly rated:

- 'Decent rankings may help raise/reassure awareness of institution/department/program and help support their activities'
- 'Foreign universities are interested in the fact that we are one of the three best private universities in our country'
- 'Installation of a privately funded department of real estate management' by a benefactor/sponsor in response to rankings

...but potentially harmful if reverse is true:

- 'Denial of collaboration because of a bad position in the Shanghai Ranking'
- 'Local newspapers write that local government should not spend more money for our university'
- 'Decline in enrolment'

## ■ German Experience

# Policy Environment

- Move away from egalitarianism to create 10 'Elite' universities/German 'Ivy League'
  - *Exzellenzinitiative* (Initiative for Excellence) 2006
  - Competitive research funding, €1.9b 2006-2011
- Increase number of places by 90,000 by 2010 - €1b
- Greater institutional autonomy –
  - University Freedom Law + *Excellence Initiative* making universities more strategic, autonomous and entrepreneurial
  - Contract agreements/targeted funding re. DFG/Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft
- National Rankings: Centre for Higher Education Development (CHE)/DIE ZEIT ranking
  - Other rankings/ratings, e.g. business and research
- Bologna process

# Popularity of Rankings

- Ranking-consciousness has risen sharply, esp. since 'Excellence Initiative'
  - Discussed at Rectorate whenever new ranking published
  - Detailed reports scrutinise/assess standing
- 'Must take rankings into account, because others do'
  - Shanghai Jiao Tong especially important for German politicians
  - Rankings elevate institution's reputation and profile
  - Recruitment of high level students → high reputation
- Professionalization of university management
  - E.g. appointment of Rector and marketing personnel, change management teams/consultants

# Inform Strategic Thinking & Options

- Use to identify niche strengths and weaknesses
  - Refine/clarify profile and mission
  - Resource allocation/investment
- Help set strategic goals –
  - 'To retain top position in business'
  - 'To be no. 2 in state; to be among top 10 in Germany – currently around 11 and could be around no. 5 but it will take some time'
- Organisational Changes
  - Consider merger/re-organisation of departments
    - Increase visibility, because size matters
  - 'Good practice': how to better structure research, e.g. interdisciplinary centres; and QA processes
  - Marketing campaign for Masters and PhD students – within Germany, but also internationally
- Identify peers and form networks

# Impact on Students & Stakeholders

- CHE rankings esp. important for domestic undergraduate students, but global rankings vital for postgraduate and int'l students
  - Among students, ranking-consciousness rises once become students
  - But, domestic mobility on the rise
  - Ranking = source of pride and confidence
- Employers have implicit rankings based on own experience which is self-perpetuating
  - Most important for large/int'l businesses rather than SME sector
- Results of *Excellence Initiative* perceived and used as a ranking, esp. by international/Asian partners and employers
  - Peer HEIs monitor ranking of universities, and visa versa

# Changes in Academic Work

- Increased emphasis on academic performance/research outputs
- Active head-hunting of academic staff/PhD students
  - Academic staff attracted by 'reputation' = combination of 'word of mouth', publications and rankings
  - Recruit from other countries
    - Need to recruit in English to attract internationally – so practices within the faculties need to change
- Contract management
  - Deregulation of salaries
  - Merit-pay based on research income earned (£200k over 2-3 yrs).
    - Can retain merit pay if continue to earn, which has pension implications, but if fail to do so, can lose.
  - Rankings used to identify under-performers
- Rankings influence departmental budget



# Impact on System (1)

- Rankings accelerating competition between institutions
  - Broadly welcomed as positive
    - Changes in HEI as response to rankings/competition = modernisation
    - Global ranking of German universities = national pride
  - 'Federalism' acts as engine of competition
    - States vying with each other for 'excellence'
    - HEIs use rankings to improve relationship with their Lander/funder
  - Governments use rankings to help inform decisions about funding
    - *Excellence Initiative* illustrates that (even small amts of) funding instruments drive behaviour
- National rankings have predominated, but global influence growing
  - Changing demographics will have great impact after 2015
    - Undergraduate students have primarily been domestic/regional
    - International student recruitment now seen as vital

# Impact on System (2)

- Benchmark or Monitor?
  - Perceived correlation between rankings and reputation
    - Rankings serve QA role which is less developed in Germany than elsewhere – seen as positive
    - Link to accreditation for certain disciplines, e.g. business
  - Mergers/collaboration likely to be more important in future
    - National becoming less important, replaced by European and/or regional/cross-national institutional collaboration
    - Reconsideration of relation w/ Max Planck and Fraunhofer Institutes
- Growing institutional stratification/differentiation
  - N-S and W-E differentiation:
    - Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg have done best in *Excellence Initiative* due to wealth/investment
    - East German HEIs weaker
  - University/Fachhochschulen binary withering/being replaced?

## ■ Australian Experience

# Policy Environment

- Competitive and market savvy HE environment
  - Internationalisation of HE system – and funding dependency
  - Competitive and Performance-based funding is the norm
- Concern over Australia's geo-political position
  - Within OECD – but also more broadly
    - Anxious to carve out a more independent but internationalist role
  - Cf. EU
- HE Review vs. Innovation Review
- Geographic/regional impact on HE/HEIs and principles of 'unitary system'
  - Unresolved Dawkins tensions

# Popularity of Rankings (1)

- Strong rankings-consciousness among HE leadership
  - 'Rankings here to stay'
  - Undertake detailed interrogation of metrics/mapping performance against metrics
    - Regularly reportage to senior team
    - Rankings = external recognition
    - More rankings the better; preference for disciplines/department
  - Concern shared by all universities – top-ranked and not-ranked
    - 'fall from grace' vs. 'ability to survive in competitive int'l student market'
    - Use rankings as political lever for more funding – but this can be double-edged sword
    - Re-positioning the institution to lift it's profile/position: 'can't be internationally significant university unless recognised nationally'

# Popularity of Rankings (2)

- National rankings have been dominant influence
  - Regionalism of domestic student population
  - ~2% undergraduate student mobile but this will increase esp. among high achievers
    - Specific efforts to target this group
  - Global rankings have drawn attention to Australia's ranking position, and that of individual universities
    - Strengthen position of some universities at expense of others?
    - Expose 'perceived' weakness of Australia:
      - lacks 'truly stellar research universities, now seen as vital attractors of human, intellectual and financial capital in a knowledge economy' (Marginson, 2008)

# Inform Strategic Thinking & Options (1)

- Focused attention on quality and performance
  - Rankings  $\approx$  accreditation = impact on reputation
  - Rankings as benchmarking mechanism
    - Selective use of metrics/indicators for mgt purposes
    - Help set internal KPIs
    - Aim to position self in 'top-rank of' as many disciplines/fields as can
- Re-organisation and change
  - 'rod for management's back'; 'carrot and stick'
  - Allow mgt to be more business-like: provides the evidence for change despite the quality/questions about the metrics
  - Challenge for management – dealing with ignorance, misinterpretation and 'falls'

# Inform Strategic Thinking & Options (2)

- Critical for peer assessment and partner/network formation
  - Global university partnerships increasingly vital
    - Internationalisation of 'brand'
    - Benchmarking within int'l networks
  - Both sides of partnership use rankings information
  - Unlikely to consider research partnerships with lower ranked university unless person/team exceptional



# Impact on Students & Stakeholders

- International market most strongly influenced by rankings –
  - Rankings = short-listing mechanism
    - 'Might know about Australia, but not where in Australia to go'
  - Rankings enhance profile and visibility
    - 'Profile has increased because of rankings' – among int'l students, agents, other HEIs
- Students identify rankings with pride and/or concern for their future
- Employers use rankings to short-list candidates; applicants see rankings as 'glass ceiling'
- Alumni, philanthropists, industry partners refer to rankings as an indication of the 'value' of their relationship

# Impact on Academic Practice

- Academic staff perceive much greater university focus on rankings than HE mgt says/acknowledges
  - 'Normal' mis-interpretation/misunderstanding or two sets of messages?
  - Increased pressure for research output, in named journals
  - Concern about impact of 'metrics' on professional disciplines
- Rankings impact on staff morale –
  - Sense of pride when doing well; anger/shame or fighting-spirit when doing poorly
- Recruitment
  - Emphasis on mid-career scholars
    - Negative impact on young, post-docs, and gender due to domestic-labour issues?
  - Contracts/promotion tied to targets – new element or now more explicit?

# Impact on System (1)

- 'Australia clearly wants [needs] to play on the global pitch'
  - Rankings ratcheting-up level of competition
    - New dynamic introduced into system/debate about HE
    - Renewed debate about purpose/role of *mass* HE
  - System-wide concern and fear
    - Impact on international students and hence funding
      - Depends on institutional exposure, esp. smaller/regional
      - How will gap be made up and by whom?
    - Growing focus on domestic student market – esp. among high achievers, and financial packages (cf. US merit funds, etc.)
    - Funding pressures w/ repeated comparisons with OECD, US, EU and select Asian countries
  - Membership of international networks now viewed as critical
    - University networks
    - Regional networks, e.g. Austral-Asia?

# Impact on System (2)

- HE Review and/vs. Innovation Review
  - World-class universities vs. world-class system debate
  - Connectivity between rankings: QA, ERA and 'compacts'?
  - How to balance commitment to equity and excellence?
- Driver of Change?
  - Rankings, in various forms (e.g. T&L, NUS), work as change drivers
  - Rankings broadly welcomed as mechanism to improve performance nationally and individually
  - What is the relationship between performance and compacts, e.g. mission (re)definition and targets?

- Other Evidence

# Impact on Student Choice

- High rankings → rise in applications (*NY Times* 2007)
- Rank important for high-ability students: US, UK, Germany, NZ (Griffith/Rask 2007; Clarke 2007)
- US:
  - 11% said rankings were important factor in choice (McDonagh et al 1997, 1998)
    - Above-average students make choices based non-financial factors, e.g. reputation (Spies 1978)
    - High ability and second-generation students, and students from Asian backgrounds (Griffith/Rask 2007; Ehrenberg 2004; etc)
  - Full-pay students likely to attend higher ranked college (even by a few places) but grant-aided students less responsive
- UK:
  - 61% refer to rankings before making choice (Roberts 2007)
  - 70% consider rankings important/very important (Roberts 2007)
- Germany
  - 60% know/use rankings as 'one source among others' (Federkeil 2007)

# Impact on Int'l/PG Student Choice

- Indicator of 'value-for-money' (Clarke 2007)
- 92% int'l students used UK League Tables (Roberts 2007)
- Postgraduate students increasingly responsive to rankings (Kallio 2001)
- Scholarships for study abroad restricted to students admitted to highly ranked universities – e.g. Mongolia, Qatar (Salmi & Saroyan 2007)
- Worldwide rankings important for particular disciplines – law, medicine, business (Wedlin 2004; Sauder & Lancaster 2006; Berger 2001)

# Impact on Stakeholders

- Employers rely strongly on institutional reputation gained from rankings and implicit knowledge
  - 'You should hold a degree from a Times top 100 university ranked at no 33 or higher'
  - 25% UK graduate recruiters refer to rankings as 'main source of information about quality and standards) (University of Sussex, 2006)
  - US Law firms use USN&WR to 'determine threshold for interviews' (Espeland/Sauder 2007)
- Rankings influence institutional behaviour
  - Teaching and Learning (Australia) (Baly 2007)
  - Can incentivize government to spend more on poorer ranked HEIs (Zhe Jin 2007); e.g. German Excellence Initiative, France 'pôles', Russia 'Russell Group'
- Governing Boards
  - 68% of university boards discuss rankings; 71% did so for ½ hours + (Levin 2002)



# 3. Issues and Implications

## ■ Institutional (re)Actions

- 'Driven us to consider unhelpful merger proposals'
- 'Made us spend money bolstering demand in key overseas markets to counter league tables'
- 'We have developed a set of internal research output indicators...for internal benchmarking'
- 'Made us devote time to restoring our damaged feelings'
- 'If we wanted to influence our position, we would need to:
  - Appoint teaching only staff,
  - Adopt US model and have undergraduate teaching done by teaching assistants,
  - Divert funding to research & focus more on outcomes'

# Institutional Responses

## International Study (Hazelkorn 2007)

- 63% respondents have taken strategic, organisational, managerial or academic actions in response to the results

Of those,

- Overwhelming majority took either strategic or academic decisions and actions
- Only 8% respondents indicated they had taken no action

## US experience (Levin 2002)

- 76% of U presidents thought *USNWR* rankings somewhat/very important
- 51% had attempted to improve their rankings
- 50% used rankings as internal benchmarks
- 35% announced the results in press releases or on the web
- 4% established task force/committee to address rankings
- 20% said they ignored them

# Strategic Actions

	Examples
Strategy	<p>'Indicators underlying rankings are explicit part of target agreements between rector and faculties'</p> <p>'Write a new strategy'/'Develop strategic plan'</p> <p>'Have become part of a SWOT analysis'</p> <p>'We have charged a person with managing some of the key indicators...We do not orient our strategy to please the rankings, but do consider the meaningful measures they provide'</p>
Organisation	<p>'A position in the controlling department of the administration has been established to deal with indicator improvements and ranking'</p> <p>'Reorganisation of department structure'</p> <p>'Regular observation of rankings and methods; supervision of the data delivery to ranking projects; continuous observation of indicators of other universities'</p> <p>'Renewed emphasis on the accuracy/amount of data gathered and shared with 3rd parties'</p>
Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Rector enforces the serious and precise processing of ranking as well as control of the relevant indicators'</li> <li>· Improvement of the results has become a target in the contract between presidency and departments'</li> <li>· 'Development of better management (budgetary) tools for supporting fields of excellent research'</li> </ul>
Academic	<p>'Deans and faculties are increasingly sensitized for ranking results and underlying indicators'</p> <p>'Results of rankings are regarded in the construction of the new study structure'</p> <p>'Strategy for improving structure of teaching and output (number of degrees)'</p> <p>'Formulation of explicit demands for the productivity of the individual researcher'</p>

# Strategic Choices (1)

- Ignore vs. Counter?
  - Influence 'easy-to-affect' metrics
    - Ensure consistent HEI brand and signature
    - Accurate data, e.g. student/int'l student
    - Improve research activity and output
  - Invest to influence metrics
    - How do you have to spend? How much can you afford to spend?
      - Redirect resources, get more resources or both
    - Publicity and Marketing
    - Student and academic staff recruitment, re-focus priorities & organisation
  - Rational vs. irrational re(action)?

# Strategic Choices (2)

- Focus on Research and Teaching vs. Concentrate on Research?
  - Consider level of research comprehensive-ness and intensity
    - Research concentration vs. related to relevance/competences?
    - Organisation of research activity – in faculties, centres, graduate schools, institutes
  - 'Buy-in' research talent vs. Staff development
  - New Contracts and Performance Measurements
  - Undergraduate vs. Postgraduate?
- Recruit students who are 'assets' to maintain/enhance rank (Clarke 2007)
  - Recruit high ranking students only
  - Increase number of applicants but not number of places
  - Admit students on probationary or pt basis so their (relatively) lower entrance scores will not be included in official data

# Strategic Choices (3)

- Reconfigure the Organisation
  - Cluster academic activity/research for greater visibility
  - Retain disciplinary/academic spread vs. look for efficiencies, greater specialisation and/or merge units
- Review Mission
  - Refine or re-define institutional mission?
  - Focus on mission and what's do best or Become what is measured?



■ `...our aim to push [xxx] into the top eight research universities in Australia and the top 200 in the world...We've been busy recruiting some of the world's top researchers for our core research areas,...Many have joined us already; others are on the way to link up with our top-class current staff.'

<http://www.vc.mq.edu.au/about.php>

■ `For us, this aspiration is known as 1:5:40. We will achieve this aspiration through...reform in the four core areas of: research and innovation; learning and teaching; student experience, and community engagement and outreach.'

<http://www.usyd.edu.au/about/publication/stategic/2006/usyd.shtml>

■ `we have set our sights on making [xxx] a universally acknowledged world centre of higher education by 2015, firmly in the top 50 of world universities....We must also continue to attract only the highest quality staff and students, who will be drawn to the University by its reputation and its supportive and challenging community.'

<http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/about/vision2015/>

## ■ Policy Challenges

# Policy Choices

- Invest to compete?
  - Identify/back 'winners' vs. Dispersed knowledge centres/creation
  - Preferential funding? Fund strongest vs. fund weakest?
  - How big is your cheque book?
- Equity vs. Excellence? Equity & Excellence?
  - 'Size O' vs. 'Real Beauty'
  - Ltd. 'Centres of Excellence' vs. 'Excellence' wherever it occurs?
    - Concentration of resources vs. Dispersed socio-economic development?
    - Vertical vs./and hierarchical diversity?
    - T vs. R or T + R
- Regulation, Steering or Planning?
  - Institutional contracts/compacts tied to targets, ranking or mission?
- Public information campaign
  - Counter subliminal messages of 'rankings'

# Can we/you afford the 'reputation race'?

Rankings inflate academic 'arms race' locking institutions and governments into continual 'quest for ever increasing resources'

(Ehrenberg 2004)

- German Excellence Initiative = €1.9b over 5 years but compare:
  - 'world-class university': \$1b-\$1.5b-a-year operation + \$500m for medical school; would require 40% increase (Usher 2006; Sadlak & Liu 2007)
  - China's \$20b '211 Project'
  - Korea's \$1.2b 'Brain 21' programme
  - Billion dollar fund-raising capabilities of US universities
- Public HEIs have hard time competing: '...measures favor private institutions over public ones' (*Chronicle HE*, 25/05/07)

# Where Do We Go From Here?

Einstein: 'Everything that can be counted does not necessarily count; everything that counts cannot necessarily be counted.'

- Whose Metrics? Which Metrics?
- Develop new/appropriate comparison metrics
  - Purpose:
    - Give fair and unbiased picture of the strengths/weaknesses
    - Provide student choice for a programme and institution
    - Enhance accountability and quality
  - Define excellence and world-class
    - How to define quality?
      - Basic norms/multiple standards, tied to mission?
    - How to measure?
    - By whom?
    - For what?

# Which Metrics?

- Multiple rankings or sets of metrics?
  - Teaching/learning, 'added value', community engagement/regionalism, breadth and depth of research, 3<sup>rd</sup> mission
    - How to measure 'added value'?
    - Output, outcome and impact?
    - Ranking within peer group?
    - OECD: PISA for HE?
  - Ratings rather than rankings? Banding via classification/typology?
  - Emphasis on discipline and fields not whole institutions
- Which data: Publicly available data, self-reporting, surveys or questionnaires, peer review?
- By whom? National agencies, governments, inter-governmental agencies, accreditation agencies, NGOs?

## 4. Concluding Observations

# 1. Rankings

= manifestation of globalisation and geo-political battle for 'talent'

= metaphor for competition, reputation race, visibility, status\*

- Indicator of national economic strength/virility
- Academic research seen as vital to (linear) innovation cycle/timeline
  - PhDs = key to IP generation
- Innocuous consumer product now driving competition
  - Unintended consequences of accountability drive?

\* cause & effect may be indirect



## 2. Re-structuring HE systems – nationally

### ■ Policy instrument

- Governments using rankings to help inform decisions
  - 'Hidden hand' replacing regulation/steering – replacing difficult policy choices?
  - Pace of reform likely to quicken as governments believe reform will lead to more competitive and better (more highly ranked) HEIs  
Rankings can/do influence institutional behaviour
- Rankings serve a public accountancy role
  - 'Name and Shame' – increasing institutional attention to quality and performance across range of metrics
- Management Tool
  - Strategic planning/management; professionalization/modernisation of HEIs; reorganisation of departments
  - Changes in academic practice

### 3. Restructuring HE Systems – internationally

- World-class university/knowledge city-states
  - Development of 'single world market' (Marginson, 2006)
- Mergers, association/consortia and int'l/global networks
  - 'National pre-eminence is no longer enough'
    - HEIs as trans-national corporations
    - (combined) Wealth greater than many nations
      - Recruitment, Benchmarking, QA and Accreditation within networks
  - Worldwide comparisons more significant in the future
  - Implications for all, esp. developing, economies/societies
    - Centre-periphery arguments (Altbach 2007)

## 4. International division of knowledge

### ■ Post-massification HE world

- Widening gap between elite & mass education → redefining mass education?
- Pursuit of access → quality/excellence → status/reputation
- Elite formation/recruitment/reinforcement (e.g. Stevens 2007; *Chronicle HE* 25 March 2008)

### ■ Reputational differentiation

- Rankings define and change behaviour: concept of 'reactivity' (Espeland/Saunders 2007)
- Rankings used to protect/enhance professional privileges/culture (Slaughter & Leslie 1997)
  - Fetishization of citations/HiCi vs. impact metrics

### ■ Whose metrics? Which metrics?

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<http://www.oecd.org/edu/imhe/rankings>