

The Quest for a Meaningful Accountability Framework: Uses and Abuses of Rankings

Jamil Salmi
WB Tertiary Education Coordinator
Brussels, 14 December 2011

• 1983



• 2003



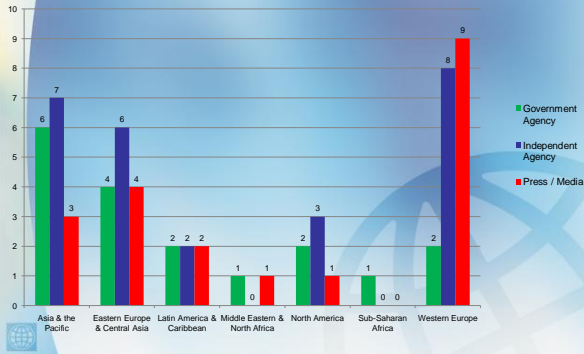
QS TOP UNIVERSITIES Ranking Web of World Universities



ranking systems in 2011

Region	National and International Ranking System
Eastern Europe and Central Asia	Kazakhstan (A, B), Poland (C), Slovakia (B), Romania (B/C), Russia (B, IB), Ukraine (B/C)
East Asia and Pacific	Australia (B), China (B, C, IB), Hong Kong (C), Japan (B, C), Malaysia (A), New Zealand (A), South Korea (B, C), Taiwan (B, IB), Thailand (A), Vietnam (A)
Latin America and the Caribbean	Argentina (A), Brazil (A), Chile (C), Mexico (B, C), Peru (B)
Middle East and North Africa	Israel (C), Tunisia (A)
North America	Canada (B, C, B/C), United States (C)
South Asia	India (A, B/C), Pakistan (A)
Sub-Saharan Africa	Nigeria (A)
Western Europe	France (IB), Germany (B/C, C), Ireland (C), Italy (C), Netherlands (A, IB), Poland (C), Portugal (C), Romania (B), Slovakia (B), Spain (B, C, IC), Sweden (C), Switzerland (B/C), United Kingdom (A, B, IC)

who prepares the rankings?



ultimate form of accountability?

or

dangerous distraction?

6

a thin line between love and hate

- disagreement with principle
- criticism of methodology
- boycotts
- court actions (New Zealand, Holland)

outline of the presentation

- uses and abuses of rankings
- the need for accountability
- how rankings can help
- from rankings to benchmarking

8

methodological problems

- validity of criteria
- research bias & hard sciences
- peer evaluations
- English language publications



Anglo-Saxon bias



10

methodological problems

- validity of criteria
 - research bias& hard sciences
 - peer evaluations
 - English language publications
- validity of weights given to various criteria
- statistical robustness



a false precision

“Could there not...be a move...away from the false precision? Could you not do away with rank ordering and overall scores, thus admitting that the method is not nearly that precise and that the difference between #1 and #2 - indeed, between #1 and #10 - may be statistically insignificant?”

Stanford University President to Editor of U.S. News (1996)

Playing With Numbers?



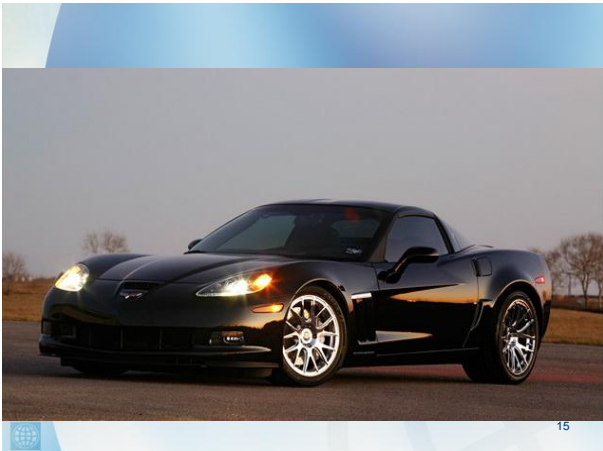
let us buy a sports car (Car and Driver ranking)



13



14



15



16

let us buy a sports car (Car and Driver ranking)

- 21 variables, 235 evaluation points
 - Porsche Caiman: 193
 - Chevrolet Corvette: 186
 - Lotus Evora: 182
- price = 20% weight
 - Chevrolet Corvette: 205
 - Porsche Caiman: 195
 - Lotus Evora: 195

17

methodological problems (cont.)

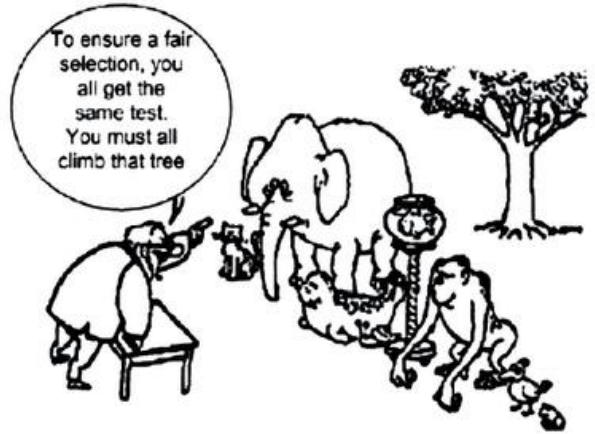
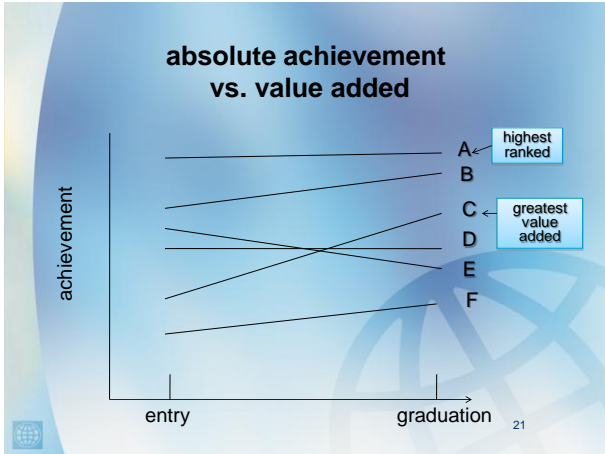
- do all the indicators taken together actually measure quality?
- do the score differences reflect actual quality differences?
- are the rankings comparing the same types of institutions and programs?

Victoria University

- multi sector University
 - university (bachelors through PhD)
 - vocational education (technical and trades education)
 - further education (language, literacy numeracy; career support and planning; learning skills development)
- 20.7% of enrolments from low SES
- 1 in 2 students from non English speaking background
- majority are first in family to attend tertiary study

Victoria University and its region

- VU has a commitment
 - to serve Western Melbourne enshrined in its Foundation Act
 - to engage in research and education that “makes a difference” to peoples’ lives
 - to work-based and community-based learning for 25% of every students course



- ### danger of rankings
- changes guided by rankings criteria
 - priority given to top students (equity concern) and/or foreign students
 - resource allocation (research)
 - fraud in data presentation or survey participation, payment of students



Red Queen effect



25

government responses

- let us make a new ranking (Russia, Ecole des Mines, France / EU)
- scholarships and student loans
- special visa program
- let us encourage mergers (France, Russia, Denmark, Finland)

latest controversy in Australia (Dec 2011)

- leader of Opposition blasts Government for “declining performance of national universities”
- need to have leading 8 Universities among top 50 in THE ranking within 5 years

27

risk of resource misallocation

‘...Australia cannot afford to spread its relatively small resources too thinly. It must invest in niche areas. This means that some universities and some fields should get preferential treatment. If Australia does not have some universities playing at the high end, Australia will fall behind.’ (Gallagher, 2008)

meet my son Yacine...



so should we just get rid of rankings?



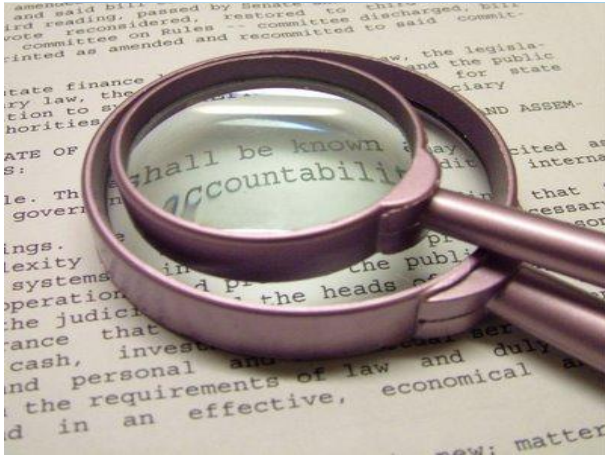
30

outline of the presentation

- uses and abuses of rankings
- **the need for accountability**

31





accountability is healthy

- ❖ effective use of resources

34



Japan

- 2011 report: inefficient use of existing facilities in 15 top public universities
- 222 million \$ worth of facilities and equipment

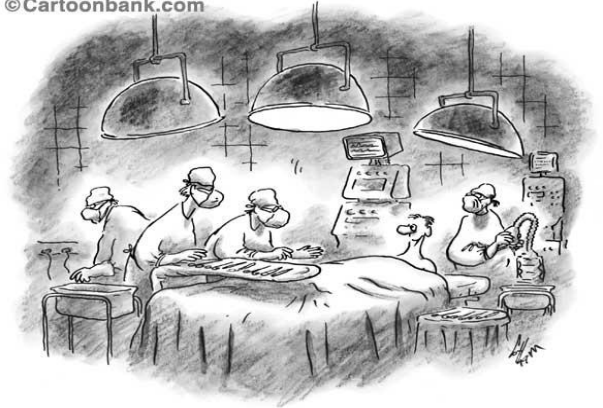
accountability is healthy

- ❖ effective use of resources
- ❖ quality of results



37

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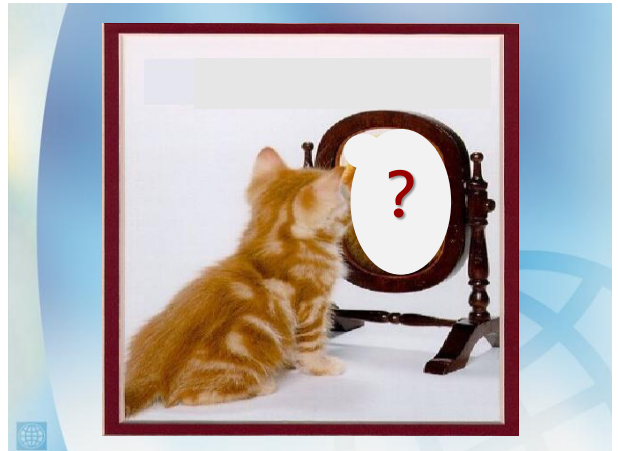
"It would be a great honor for me to be counted as one of your successes."

accountability is healthy

- ❖ effective use of resources
- ❖ quality of results
- ❖ accountability for change



39





accountability is healthy

- ❖ effective use of resources
- ❖ quality of results
- ❖ accountability for change
- ❖ unethical behaviors

42



accountability mechanisms

- legal requirements
- quality assurance requirements
- financial incentives
- demand-side funding
- university boards
- information

44

benefits of information

- choice of institution
 - domestic
 - for studies abroad

45

information mechanisms

- student engagement surveys
- labor market observatories

46

The screenshot shows the website for 'Futuro Laboral' (Future Laboral) in Chile. The header includes the logo of the 'GOBIERNO DE CHILE' (Government of Chile) and the 'MINISTERIO DE EDUCACIÓN' (Ministry of Education). The main content area features a navigation menu with categories like 'descargas' (downloads) and 'varios' (various), listing items such as 'Documento oficial (PDF)', 'Estudios', 'Base de Datos (XLS)', 'Nota Metodológica (PDF)', and 'Video Demo!'. A central banner asks '¿técnico o profesional?' (technical or professional?) and '¿busca tu carrera?' (looking for your career?). The footer contains a brief description of the website's purpose and a page number '47'.

47

information mechanisms

- student engagement surveys
- labor market observatories
- rankings

48

outline of the presentation

- uses and abuses of rankings
- the need for accountability
- **how rankings can help**

49

positive use of rankings

- focused ranking
- tool for self-diagnosis and improvement
- national assessment

50

Romania

- 1997-2000, the University of Medicine and Pharmacy „Grigore T Popa” issued 63 forged diplomas of stomatology to Italian citizens

Romania: Coalition for Clean Universities

- 2007 survey - 77% of students and 35% of lecturers consider high level of corruption
- **14 coalition members** from civil society, including students and professors associations

scoring sheet

- **administrative probity** 30 points
- **academic probity** 20 points
- **democratic governance** 35 points
- **sound financial practice** 15 points

integrity ranking

universities divided from 5 stars to 0

- no university received 5 stars
- 3 universities received 4 stars
- 18 universities received 3 stars
- 10 universities received 2 stars
- 5 universities received 1 star
- 6 universities received 0 stars (“you don’t want to study there!”)

positive aspects at institutional level

- collecting and publishing more reliable data
- analyzing key factors explaining ranking
- seeking to improve teaching, learning and research
- proposing concrete targets to guide [but not replace] strategic planning
- entering into mutually advantageous partnerships

the power of rankings

- public debate at national level
 - Malaysia
 - Brazil
 - France

1310 MONSIEUR LE 24 JANVIER 2014

SOCIÉTÉ

ENSEIGNEMENT SUPÉRIEUR

La grande misère des universités françaises

Plusieurs conseils d'administration d'université ont menacé de ne pas voter leur budget pour protester contre l'insuffisance de leurs moyens. Malgré un budget global en hausse de 3 %, les établissements sont contraints à des restrictions sévères et font des « économies de bout de chandelle »

PARLERS DU FINANCEMENT public de l'enseignement supérieur et de la recherche, succès de la pollution « sauver la recherche », signer par 22 000 chercheurs l'université française est en état de crise étonnante. Selon Michel Laurent, le vice-président de la conférence des présidents d'université, ce « PLAN D'URGENCE » a été révisé lors des assises nationales, organisées jeudi 22 et vendredi 23 janvier par l'UNEF et le Snesup-PSU, les principaux syndicats d'enseignants et d'étudiants. La première grande France l'annonce au 157 RANG d'un classement international de l'enseignement supérieur établi par une université chinoise. Selon le chercheur Jean-Jacques Pagan, le système français est « le plus rigide et le plus inefficace des pays développés ». Il se propose pour une AUTONOMISATION accrue des universités et une sélection à l'entrée.

government responses

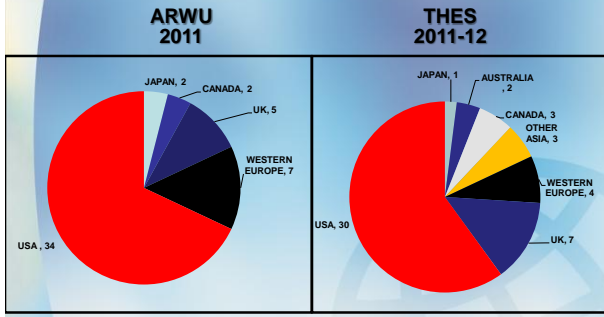
- let us make a new ranking (Russia, Ecole des Mines, France / EU)
- scholarships and student loans
- special visa program
- let us encourage mergers (France, Russia, Denmark, Finland)
- let us give additional money (Excellence Initiatives)

outline of the presentation

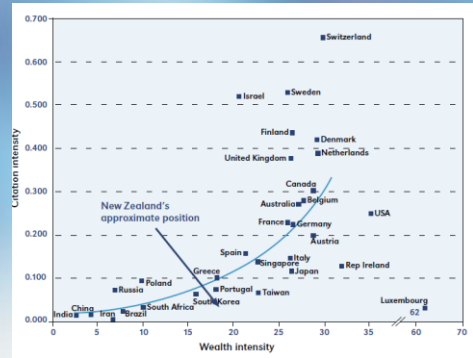
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what do rankings tell us about a country's performance?

top 50 universities (2011)



size effect

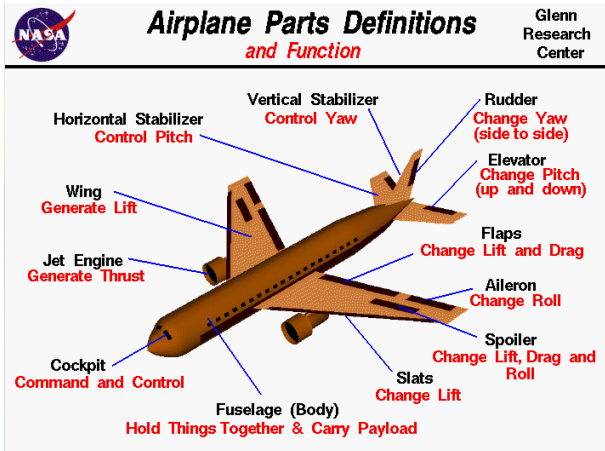
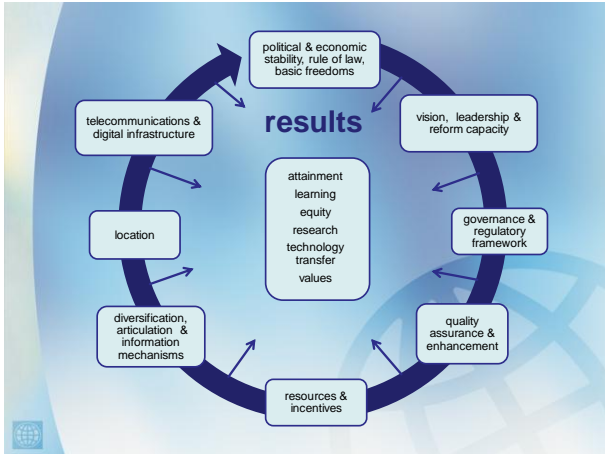


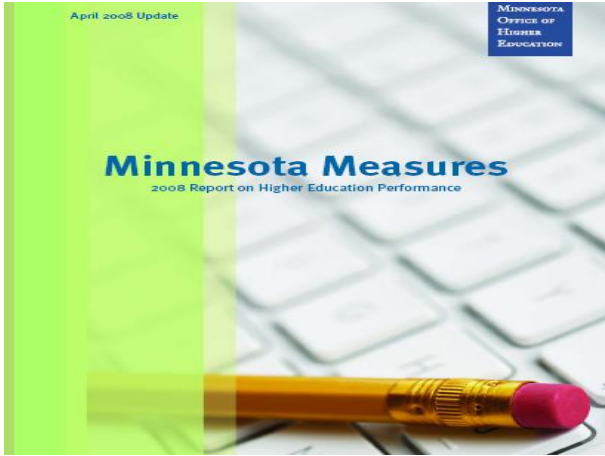
ARWU ranking related to population

Country	No. Top 500s	population (000s)	people required to produce each top 500 U
Ireland	3	4,451	1,484
Denmark	4	5,565	1,391
Australia	17	22,327	1,313
Norway	4	4,883	1,221
Austria	7	8,382	1,197
Switzerland	7	7,790	1,113
Israel	7	7,577	1,082
Finland	6	5,363	894
New Zealand	5	4,371	874
Sweden	11	9,394	854

what is benchmarking?

- comparing the performance of one's tertiary education system to that of other systems
 - competitors
 - good practices





clear goals

Building Minnesota's world-leading status in the knowledge economy requires setting goals for HE and measuring results.

Governor Tim Pawlenty

GOAL ONE	Improve success of all students, particularly students from groups traditionally underrepresented in higher education.
GOAL TWO	Create a responsive system that produces graduates at all levels who meet the demands of the economy.
GOAL THREE	Increase student learning and improve skill levels of students so they can compete effectively in the global marketplace.
GOAL FOUR	Contribute to the development of a state economy that is competitive in the global market through research, workforce training and other appropriate means.
GOAL FIVE	Provide access, affordability and choice to all students.

benchmarking

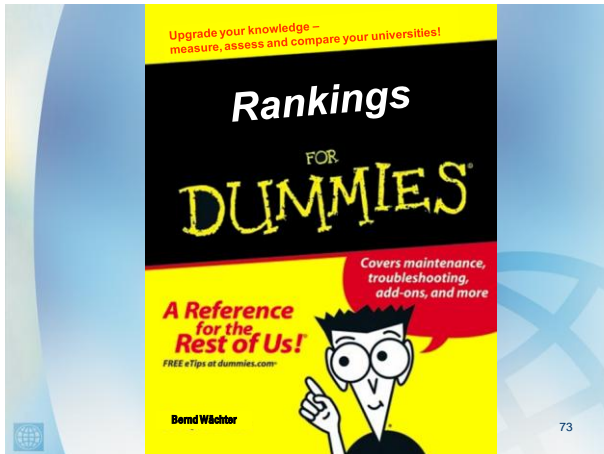
Research Expenditures as a Proportion of Gross Domestic Product by State and Country

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Top 3 States					
New Mexico					8.0%
Maryland					6.3%
Massachusetts					5.2%
Minnesota	2.3%	2.6%	2.6%	2.8%	2.7%
Rank	17	16	14	15	14
National average	2.7%	2.7%	2.5%	2.6%	2.4%
Peer States ^a	2.7%	2.7%	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%
OECD Countries Average	2.2%	2.3%	2.2%	2.3%	2.3%
Top 3 Countries					
Finland					3.5%
Japan					3.1%
Korea					2.9%

Source: The National Science Foundation (national data), Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (international data).
 Note: In order to scale the measure across states, the indicator was divided by gross domestic product by state which is provided by the Bureau of Economic Analysis.

conclusion

72



lessons

- thirst for information and accountability
- rankings = one among many QA and accountability instruments
- national and international comparisons help to assess strengths and areas for improvement

lessons (II)

- to be meaningful, institutional rankings must be multi-dimensional
- to assess strength of tertiary education **systems**, need for benchmarking approach

