



## **Rankings as a Driver of Institutional Strategy and Behaviour – Evidence from U-Multirank**

Gero Federkeil  
Managing Director U-Multirank

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1. Impacts of Rankings
2. Rankings, Indicators and Strategic Management
3. U-Multirank: Informing University Strategy by  
Benchmarking

# Agenda

# Impact of Rankings



- 2003: First Global Ranking: Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU, „Shanghai Ranking“)
- Stimulated discussion about poor performance in many European countries
- Since 2003: 20+ global rankings emerged
- Global rankings created an obsession about „World class universities“ (236 mio Google search results!)
- „World class university“ is now defined as being among the Top 200 of the major global rankings

**The emergence of  
global rankings  
created an  
obsession about  
„World Class  
Universities“**

Global Rankings have an impact on

- Mergers of universities (e.g. France, Scandinavia)
- National excellence projects (e.g. China, Russia: „5 to 100“, Germany)
- Student exchange policies (e.g. India)
- Recognition of foreign degrees (Russia)
- National immigration policy (Netherlands)

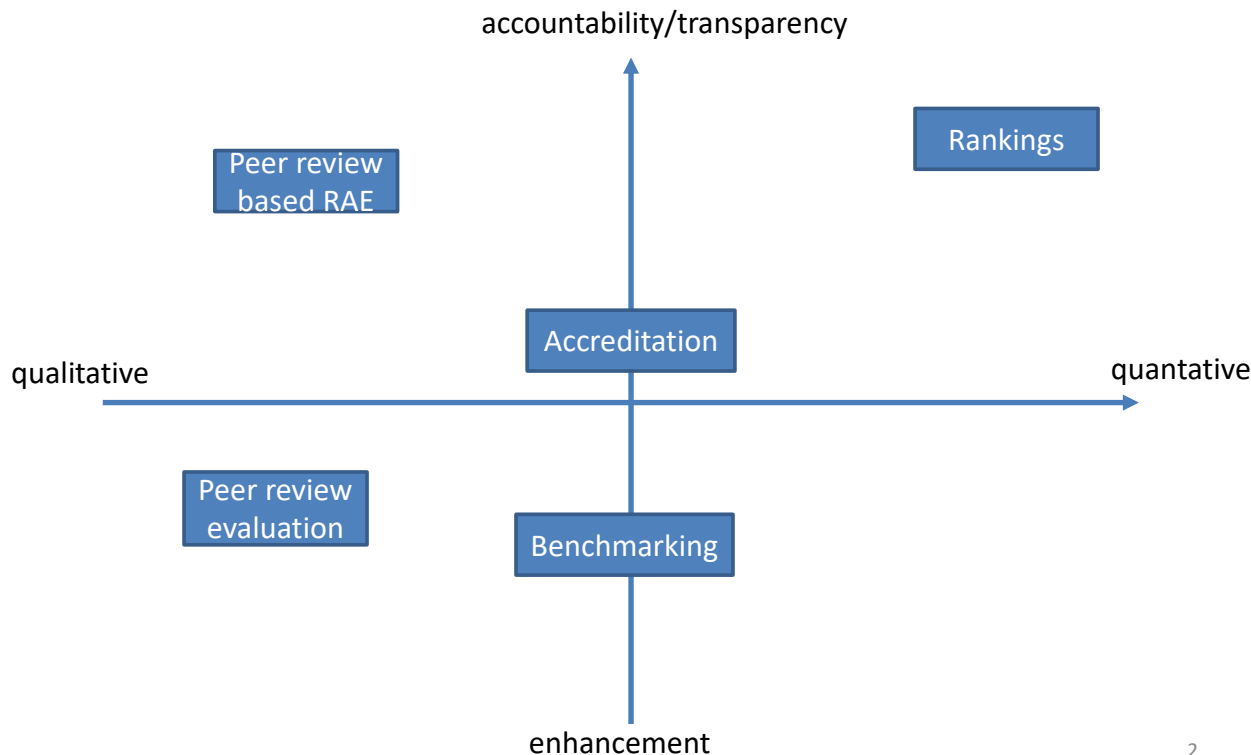
## **Global Rankings: Policy Impact**

Global Rankings have an impact on

- Mergers of universities (e.g. France, Scandinavia): „Size matters“
  - Staff policies (buying in foreign researchers to improve in bibliometric indicators; e.g. in Saudi Arabia)
  - Stronger focus on research and reputation (at the expense of teaching and other missions?)
- In general: Incentive rather to improve in rankings than to improve quality?

## **Global Rankings: Institutional Impact**

# **Rankings, Indicators and Institutional Strategies**

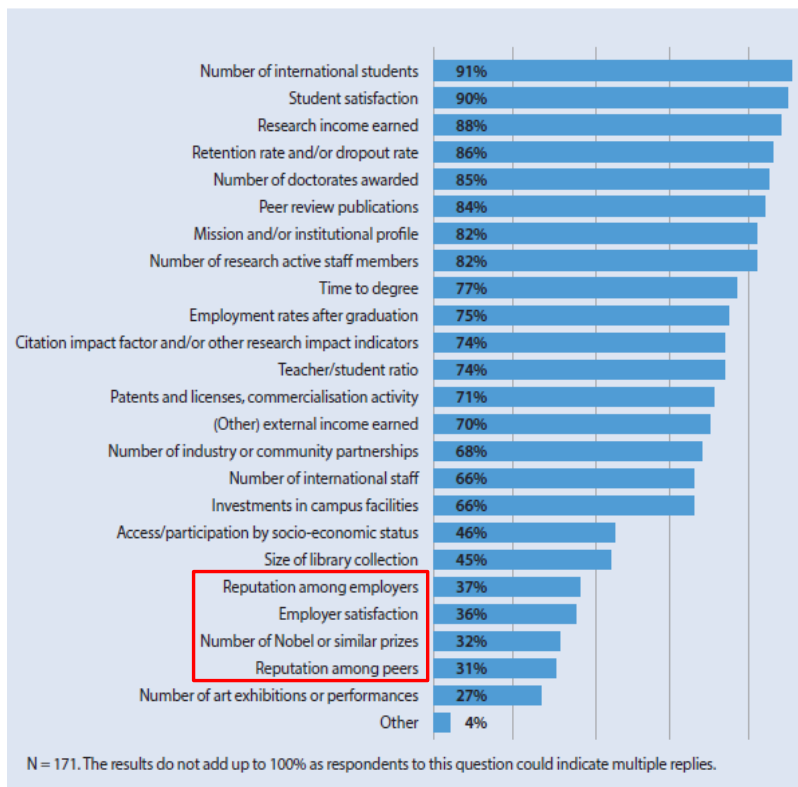


# Ranking and other instruments of comparison / assessment

Rankings cannot provide causal analysis; they can help to ask the right questions, but cannot give (all) answers



According to an EUA Survey among its member universities, 2014:



12 out of 15 items most relevant to universities are covered by U-Multirank

Least important items not covered by U-Multirank (but play a major role in other rankings)

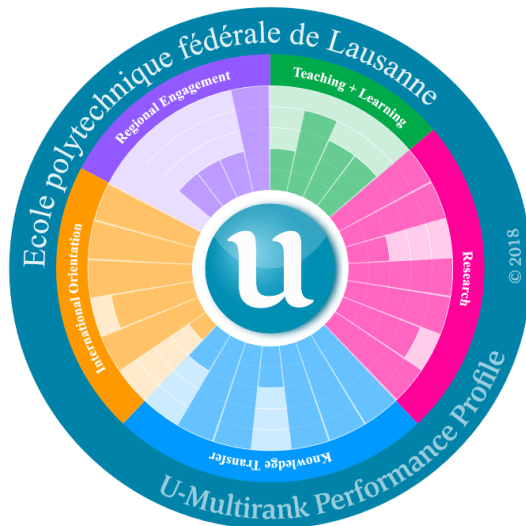
## Indicators relevant for strategic management

Rankings should measure what counts, and not count what (simply) measures



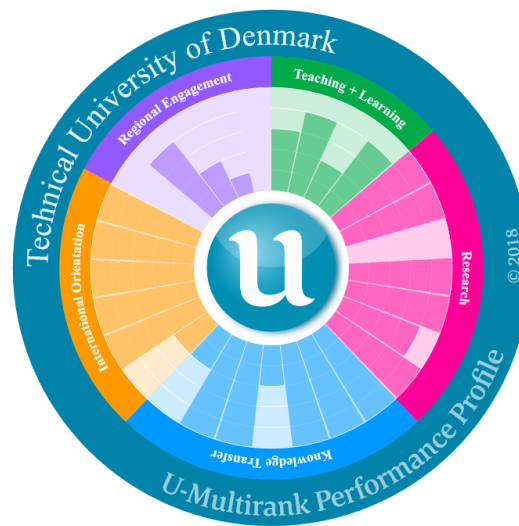
**But  
traditional  
rankings  
follow a  
simplistic  
model of  
quality**

Which university is better?



QS overall rank 22  
THE overall rank 38

QS reputation score 72,8



QS overall rank 112  
THE overall rank 153

QS reputation score 27,8

**... and have a  
strong focus  
on reputation**

# **U-Multirank offers benchmarking to inform institutional strategies**





## 2014

850 universities covered

70 countries included

4 subject areas covered

>1,000 departments

> 5,000 study programmes

>60,000 students responses

## 2019

1,711 universities covered

96 countries included

24 subject areas covered

>5,000 departments

>12,500 study programmes

>100,000 students responsesd

## Facts & Figures:

**U-Multirank is  
more than just  
the  
‘Top 100-200’  
research  
universities**

Not limited to  
international  
research  
universities



Diversity of HEIs

No league table



Ranking into 5  
categories  
(‘A’ to ‘E’)

No composite  
score,  
no weights on  
indicators



Multi-dimensional  
ranking

**U-Multirank is  
radically  
different**

### Teaching & Learning

Select all

- ☐ Student-staff ratio
- ☐ Graduating on time (bachelors)
- ☐ Graduating on time (masters)
- ☐ Academic staff with doctorates
- ☐ Contact with work environment (masters)
- ☐ Hospital beds available for teaching
- ☐ Innovative forms of assessment

### Teaching & Learning (Students' views)

Select all

- ☐ Overall learning experience
- ☐ Quality of courses & teaching
- ☐ Organisation of program
- ☐ Contact with teachers
- ☐ Library facilities
- ☐ IT provision
- ☐ Room facilities
- ☐ Inclusion of practical experience/clerkships
- ☐ Bedside teaching
- ☐ Linking clinical/preclinical teaching
- ☐ Skills Labs

### Regional Engagement

Select all

- ☐ Regional joint publications

### Research

Select all

- ☐ External research income
- ☐ Doctorate productivity
- ☐ Research publications (absolute numbers)
- ☐ Citation rate
- ☐ Top cited publications
- ☐ Interdisciplinary publications
- ☐ Research orientation of teaching
- ☐ Post-doc positions

### Knowledge Transfer

Select all

- ☐ Income from private sources
- ☐ Co-publications with industrial partners
- ☐ Patents awarded (absolute numbers)
- ☐ Publications cited in patents

### International Orientation

Select all

- ☐ International orientation of master programmes
- ☐ Opportunities to study abroad
- ☐ International doctorate degrees
- ☐ International joint publications
- ☐ International research grants

**U-Multirank  
presents 30+  
indicators  
covering 5  
dimensions**

## Transfer

- Patents
- Professional publications
- Publications cited in patents

## Interaction

- Co-publications with industry
- BA /MA theses in cooperation with industry

## Mobility

- Student internships in the region
- Graduates employed in the region

**U-Multirank  
provides an  
indicator basket  
on impact**



# Conclusions 1:

## The Impact of Rankings



- Within 15 years global rankings gained tremendous impact, both on politics and institutional strategies and behaviour
- They are doing so with a poor model of quality and methodology
- Reification: Rankings heavily influence reputation, but they are doing so by measuring exactly his reputation
- There is a new industry of reputation management and branding consulting
- A better way to compare universities is multi-dimensional benchmarking, as introduced by U-Multirank

## **Conclusions 2:**

# **The measurement of impact in rankings**



- Traditional rankings focus on research and reputation
- U-Multirank provides a basket of indicators assessing impact
- But (still) focus on technological and economic impact
- Lack of data in many universities
- There are no valid indicators to measure the cultural and societal impact of universities

**So, talking about  
societal impact,  
rankings should not  
promise too much**





# Thank you!

Contact: [gero.federkeil@che.de](mailto:gero.federkeil@che.de)

