



HERE Seminar “Ranking of HEIs – pros and contras – how is ranking linked to quality in HE and EU integration process”

Venue Ministry of Education, Podgorica (Vaka Đurovića b.b.,2nd floor),

May 14, 2019

Introduction

Rankings have become a widespread phenomenon in an increasingly competitive world of higher education. They differ with regard to their aims, objectives, target groups, and with regard to their relationship to quality and quality assessment. Generally, rankings are an external assessment of the performance of higher education institutions; they enable transparency about systems of higher education.

Quality assessment has become one of the most prominent issues in discussions about higher education, both within the academic world and in higher education policy.

While such issues have gained particular attention during recent years due to some structural changes in higher education, we have to keep in mind that higher education and science have an intrinsic relation to quality and excellence. “Evaluation, assessment and assurance of academic quality is intrinsic to higher education” (Brown, 2004, p. x). The search for scientific knowledge and discoveries is a striving for excellence. Various forms of evaluation and peer review have a long tradition in science and higher education.

At the same time, there are some developments and changes in the world of higher education which have put even more stress on issues of quality in a system that had by the 1980s been described as an “evaluative state” (Neave, 1998) or part of an “audit society”. Enumerating some factors leading to the current context is useful:

- First, competition among universities has significantly increased, both on a national and an international scale. Universities are competing for students, staff, funding and last but not least, reputation. Global rankings, such as that of ‘World Class Universities’ undertaken by the Shanghai Jiaotong University, or The Times Higher Education Supplement World Rankings have made their contribution to the worldwide comparison of universities.
- Second, the expansion of higher education and the diversification of universities has created an incredibly rich and varied array of courses, programmes, and diplomas, again both on a national and an international scale. ‘Consumers’ are therefore more dependent on instruments that can create transparency for higher education institutions and programmes. Germany for example, has around 10,000 undergraduate degree programs in higher education institutions.
- Third, there is an international trend towards higher autonomy for individual higher education institutions. A higher degree of freedom and self-governance has created a new need for



accountability towards administration and the public in general. This is particularly an issue in European higher education systems, which are largely shaped by public universities financed via taxes.

- Fourth, from a European perspective, the strategy of thirty-three European countries to create a 'European higher education area' under the so-called Bologna Process aiming to implement joint degree structures in the European higher education systems, is posing major challenges and changes for many European higher education systems. The mobility of students and teachers, the Recognition of degrees, and the quality assurance of study programmes are to be improved.

There are still many open issues concerning ranking, Nowadays it is clear that we need further research on several important themes such as evaluation methodology and, particularly, statistical methods to compare and to rank. Next, we need to study the influence of ranking on institutional management and public policy, and implications for developing countries. In this final chapter we discuss a few selected themes that are in our opinion crucial for substantial progress in evaluation and ranking procedures. Basically, the methodological problem of determining the quality of a subject is still far from solved, as illustrated by the results of re-review of previously granted research proposals). Re-iteration of the expert-survey with renowned scientists from the first-round 200 top-universities is a first, necessary step in the direction of judgment by highly qualified reviewers. It would be very interesting to see what 18 differences will emerge from such a first-iteration expert round as compared to the original ranking and, by that, how robust the first ranking is.. Bibliometric analysis for evaluation purposes has to be more than just using what is readily available in databases. This is a crucial element of advanced bibliometric research, development and practical application. Scientists write their publications for communication and knowledge dissemination. So 'bibliometric evaluators' have their own, specific responsibility that is different from and beyond that of an individual author, particularly as far the attribution of publications concerns.

In addition to research performance, various facilitating factors (important examples: library, housing for international guest researchers and students, quality of city life) are crucial to become and to remain a 'world class' university. Finally, we plead for evaluation procedures in which the involvement of the research units to be evaluated will be limited to the absolutely necessary. Thorough evaluations make great demands on the time of scientists involved in these evaluations, both on the side of the evaluators as well as on the side of those to be evaluated. An intensification of research performance assessment procedures may very well damage the academic potential, as they will destroy the already scarcely available rest for thinking and developing new ideas. Advanced bibliometric methodology provides the opportunities to carry out effective evaluations with a low burden for the objects of the



evaluation. One of the 'products' of advanced bibliometric methodology is an extensive, high quality worldwide benchmarking of universities by ranking.

Reading materials:

<https://eua.eu/resources/publications/384:global-university-rankings-and-their-impact.html>

https://www.timeshighereducation.com/sites/default/files/the_2019_world_university_rankings_methodology_pwc.pdf

AGENDA

8.30-9.00 **Registration of the participants**

9.00-9.15 **Welcome and introductory addresses**

- Mr. Aleksandar Mitrović, State Secretary, Ministry of Education
- Ms. Vanja Drljević, National Erasmus+ Coordinator, National Erasmus+ Office
- Prof. Mira Vukčević, President of HERE team

9.15-10.40 **University ranking: what is ranking and why to do it? The aim, advantages and disadvantages**

University ranking: Methodology and indicators

Prof. Melita Kovačević, SPHERE expert, University of Zagreb

10.40-11.00 **Discussion**

11.00-11.30 **Coffee break**

11.30-12.45 **Ranking limitations and opportunities: are there alternative ways?**

Prof. Melita Kovačević, SPHERE expert, University of Zagreb



12.45-13.15 **Discussion**

13.15-14.15 **Lunch**

14.15-14.45 **Closing remarks and conclusion**

14.45-17.00 **Individual consultations with interested stakeholders**