

Rankings and Quality Assurance - The Case of Higher Education

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The CHE – A Short Introduction

Rankings and Assessment in HE

Approaches to Ranking

Conclusion: Rankings and QA

- Private, not-profit organisation
- Founded in 1994 by Bertelsmann Foundation and German Rectors Conference

- Goal:
Initiate and promote of reforms in German higher education

- Activities:
 - HE policy issues (e.g. Bologna, funding, ...)
 - Consulting
 - Communication & training
 - Ranking

- Ranking of German universities among founding tasks of CHE

- First ranking published in 1998

- Extension in terms of fields and indicators

- Continuous further development of methodology

- Internationalisation

- Extension of CHE Ranking: Austria, Switzerland, Netherlands

- U-Multirank project to “develop the concept and test the feasibility of a global multi-dimensional university ranking”

- Founding member of IREG –Observatory on Academic Rankings and Excellence (“Berlin Principles”)

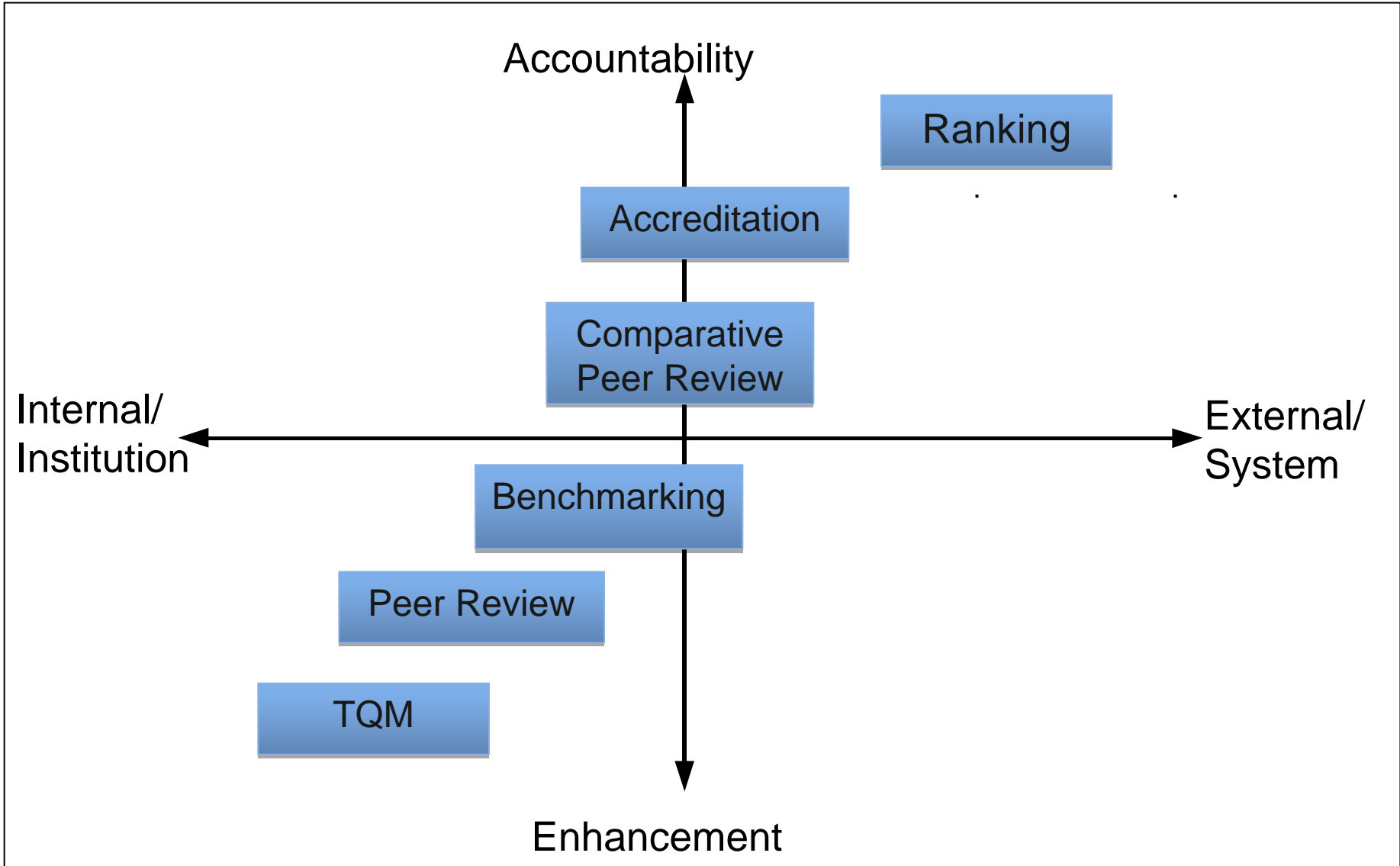
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Rankings and Quality Assessment



Rankings are the most external instrument with a systems perspective and a focus on transparency/accountability

The term “ranking” refers to a *method*: Comparison of institutions by numeric indicators in terms of better/worse. They do *not* offer an analysis of processes

Unlike evaluation: Rankings may ignore the *causes* of low performance

“Ranking” is independent of aims, purposes, target groups and the dimensions measured

According to the Berlin Principles on Rankings of Higher Education Institutions, rankings should

... be *one* of a number of diverse approaches to the assessment of higher education inputs, processes, and outputs.

Rankings can provide comparative information and improved understanding of higher education, but should not be the main method for assessing what higher education is and does. Rankings provide a *market-based perspective* that can complement the work of government, accrediting authorities, and independent review agencies.

Rankings are not a genuine instrument of
institutional quality assurance!

Their role for QA in a systems perspective is only
indirect

... and there are examples of dysfunctional
effects

Can rankings support institutional QA?

Yes, but this depends on their methodology!

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Who is doing rankings?

- Newspapers/commercial org. (US News, THE, QS)
- Academic institutions (Shanghai Jiaotong University)
- Independant organisations (CHE, Perspektywy)

Whom is it for?

- (Prospective) students
- Academics /researchers
- HE managers, policy makers, ...

Who is ranked?

- Which kinds of institutions? (E.g. „World class univ.“)
- Whole institutions or fields / departments

What is ranked?

- Teaching & learning
- Research
- „Best party schools“ ...

Ranking of whole institutions

- Most users are interested in information about “their” field
- Institutional rankings give misleading averages across fields/units

Composite overall indicator

- Composite indicators blur profiles and strengths & weaknesses
- There are neither theoretical nor empirical arguments for specific weights for single indicators

League table approach

- Small differences in the scores of indicator lead to big differences in league table
- Give false impression of exactness (“Number 5 is better than number 8”)

Field based ranking



- Give more meaningful information to users
- Reflect internal heterogeneity of universities

Multi-dimensional ranking



- Show profiles, allow for an analysis of strengths & weaknesses
- Refer to a user-focused concept of good performance /quality

Rank group approach



- Avoid false impressions of exactness
- Take serious limitations in data (quality)

Human Medicine

Universities

You already know which subject you want to study? With My Ranking you can select your own criteria, to compare faculties and courses at different universities. Find out which universities fulfill your criteria best and then save your results in the My Ranking Archive. [\[more information\]](#)

Please choose up to five criteria

		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
1.	Overall study situation (S) <input type="button" value="v"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
2.	Support in bedside teaching (S) <input type="button" value="v"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
3.	Number of Cases per Student (F) <input type="button" value="v"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
4.	many citations (F) <input type="button" value="v"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
5.	Research Reputation <input type="button" value="v"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>

(S)=Student's judgement (F)=Fact (P)=Professor's judgement

Field-based

User-driven

The CHE ranking

Research Reputation [?]
 many citations (F) [?]
 Number of Cases per Student (F) [?]
 Support in bedside teaching (S) [?]
 Overall study situation (S) [?]

An interactive,
 personalised
 ranking

Revealing
 different
 profiles

Uni Heidelberg Medizinische Fakultät Mannheim	1.7	1.7	0.0	11.2	67.6
Uni Heidelberg Medizinische Fakultät Heidelberg	2.0	1.8	0.0	9.3	67.6
TU Dresden	2.1	2.3	0.0	6.4	5.1
Uni Greifswald	1.9	2.0	0.0	5.6	0.6
Uni Lübeck	1.7	2.2	0.0	6.5	1.5
Uni Witten/Herdecke (priv.)	1.5	1.5	0.0	6.3	0.2
TU München	2.7	3.6	0.0	9.6	26.5
Uni Düsseldorf	3.2	3.1	0.0	9.2	2.3
Uni Frankfurt a.M.	3.0	3.0	0.0	11.4	7.9
Uni Bonn	2.7	3.2	0.0	8.8	9.1
Uni Göttingen	2.4	2.8	0.0	8.8	15.3
Uni Leipzig	2.3	2.7	0.0	7.1	2.3
Uni Ulm	2.4	2.7	0.0	8.1	4.0
Uni Kiel	2.4	2.9	0.0	9.8	2.6
TU München	2.7	3.6	0.0	9.6	26.5
Uni Düsseldorf	3.2	3.1	0.0	9.2	2.3
Uni Frankfurt a.M.	3.0	3.0	0.0	11.4	7.9

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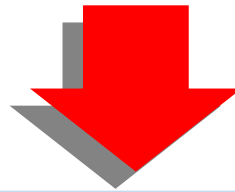
Rankings are an external, market-driven instrument of transparency about a system

They provide comparative performance indicators of institutions, which in principle can be used as an input to QA

But: rankings in general cannot offer causal analysis/ explanations. They can only help to ask the right questions on performance which can be helpful to QA.

The orthodox ranking approach fails to fulfill this role

- ← Aggregated averages for whole institutions blur profiles
- ← Composite indicators define quality externally



User driven, multi-dimensional, field-based rankings *can*

- offer benchmarking information to universities
- which can be used as input to internal QA
- and support strategic management

But there might be limits to rankings
nevertheless ...



„You‘re kidding! You count publications?“

Thank you very much !

More information:

www.che-ranking.de

www.u-multirank.eu

www.ireg-

observatory.org