

On the interpretation and misinterpretation of university rankings

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Abstract

Since the appearance of the Shanghai ranking, the number of global academic rankings has grown. These rankings not only differ horizontally and vertically, but also in the methods and indicators used to evaluate university performance. Rankings have become increasingly popular over the years and receive wide media attention. It is therefore essential that ranking results, their underlying methodologies and indicators are interpreted correctly. Furthermore, knowledge of the used semantics is crucial, especially in inter-organizational data collection. Too often conclusions are drawn without considering what a particular ranking result exactly entails. This poster presents an overview of frequently occurring misinterpretations of rankings.