

INQAAHE Conference-2011
Madrid, Spain
5-7 April, 2011

**Living with national and global rankings
- the dilemma for national QA systems in
times of global competition.**

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Outline

- QA and Rankings- the context and contrasts
- The ranking scenario-Global and Indian
- The claims and Impact
- The concerns and issues
- Join the game or shun it ?
- Way forward- Educate , Advocate and regulate !

QA and Rankings- the context and contrasts

- The good news for QA people is that Quality is the most talked about word in corridors of universities. But the bad news is that many are talking about so called rankings, the glamorous and sensational cousin of QA.
- The rankings and league tables are there since 1980s in USA and Europe. Serious discussions started only after Shanghai Jio tang Rankings appeared in 2003.
- Harvey (2008) attributes the change to 'increasing marketisation of higher education, greater mobility of students and ultimately the recruitment of foreign students, which has gathered pace since 2000.

- More than 50 ranking models exist today at global, regional and national levels.
- There are more than six global ranking bodies like THES, ARWU, QS, HEEACT, USNWR, Webometrics etc. Regional rankings include Organization of Islamic countries Rankings (OIC) and European Commissions Multi Dimensional Global University Ranking.
- Country wise rankings include CHE (Germany), Australia, Maclean's (Canadian) rankings, China, France, UK(Research Assessment Exercise, Sunday Times University guide), US, Spain, Switzerland, South Africa (League Tables of South African universities), Netherland, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh etc.

The Ranking Scenario - India

- Many media houses in India are engaged in ranking.
- Three major among them are India today, Outlook and Education times.
- India today has been ranking colleges since 1997, but in 2010 it also ranked top 50 universities. Outlook ranks professional colleges. Education times ranked the institution based on the streams (includes universities and colleges).
- Many other business magazines and some unheard agencies are also in fray of ranking.

The Claims and Impact of Rankings –

The main claim of rankings is to provide interpretable information about the institutions to different stake holders .

The International Ranking Expert Group (IREG) was founded in 2004 by the UNESCO. IREG has formed Berlin Principles on Ranking.

Some of the Ranking bodies also claim that rankings can also serve as part of a framework for national assessment, accountability and quality assurance in the higher education system and arguably can provide some of the rationale for allocation of funds.

Impact of Ranking

- Thakur (2007) says, there is evidence that ranking systems have had an impact on higher education institutions and their stakeholders.
- Harvey (2008) argues that 'Rankings have had an impact far beyond that which their arbitrary design would warrant.
- As Laura (2010) puts it, numerous countries have embarked on effort to create "world class" universities capable of competing with the top institutions on the Shanghai index. In China, the government has provided significant resources through the 211 and 985 projects for Emerging Global Model (EGM) of elite research universities.
- In India, the government has now pumped in huge money to develop at least 30 world class universities.

The Concerns and issues

- The critiques have time and again pointed out serious lacunas with rankings regarding methodology, reliability and even challenged motives of some rankings.
- Marginson (2006) says, 'THES ranking favors universities already well known regardless of merit and they protect known reputations and block new comer institutions or nations ,turning competition into a rigged game.'
- Badat (2008) argues, 'The critique of global university rankings is not a refusal of critical public scrutiny of universities. ...The reality is that none of these important goals are advanced by the THE-QS and SJTIHE global university rankings.'

The concerns and issues ...contd

- According to Stella and Woodhouse (2006), the central concern is that ranking contravenes a fitness-for-purpose approach, which at least in theory is at the heart of most quality agency approaches.
- Harvey (2008) stresses that, 'rankings provide a real threat to quality processes. The simplistic measurement..... league tables appear to have more popular appeal and even credibility....., than the meticulous hard work of quality agencies.'
- In fact these concerns are more acute in developing countries like India where Access and equity are equally important as quality. Onslaught of rankings backed by powerful media are causing confusions among stakeholders. While the QA is still voluntary, the HEIs have found easy option of obtaining quality tag by opting to media rankings. (Patil, 2010)

Addressing the concerns – To join the game or Shun it?

- QA community is not much vocal about its criticism on rankings.
- In fact Badat says that ‘. Instead of a politics of refusal to play the game as formulated by the SJTIHE and THE-QS, there is collusion with the game for the sake of self-serving interest and prestige.’
- In India some institutions accredited by NAAC refused to join Rankings stating that they are quality assured by National QAA.
- But such institutes also have fear of being invisible to larger stakeholders if they shun Rankings.
- ‘the challenge is to ensure that global rankings are effectively displaced by alternative instruments that serve important educational and social purposes,’[Saleem]
- Student body in Europe has called (ESU, 2008) for information systems to be set up that acknowledge ‘the diversity and multiple purposes..and ‘can become a useful tool for student choice’.
- IREG initiative by UNESCO is an attempt in this direction which talks about Self- regulation by ranking bodies as guided by Berlin Principles.

The way forward...

- Educating stakeholders including students, universities and policymakers about issues relating rankings.
- Provide alternatives for information needs that are supposedly served by the Rankings
- Advocate for introduction of the regulatory mechanisms at national and international levels to ensure accountability for ranking bodies.

Thank you !

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