Pros and Cons of University Rankings

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Abstract— University rankings have been of interest to many specialists, academics, and independent researchers, who are affiliated to educational or scientific institutions. The matter was also the subject of discussion among students at the master's and doctoral levels about the feasibility of these rankings, whether there is any desired practical benefit from them and what the disadvantages of these university rankings are. The aim of this research is to provide a detailed explanation of the pros and cons of university rankings. At the end of the research, I will provide the final results through which institutions of higher education can take the positives and abandon the negatives contained in academic rankings.

I. INTRODUCTION

What are the academic rankings?

Ranking is generally a mechanism by which one thing is preferred over something. Academic ranking is a set of criteria by which the performance of a university or educational institution is compared with that of another institution.

The criteria on which each ranking depends on the mechanisms, algorithms and equations on which the ranking body relies on this, the different structure of the content of each ranking, the different target group of the ranking, and the quality and data collection mechanism.

Why each ranking's standards are different

The criteria upon which ranking bodies depend vary according to the target group as well as the date of establishment of each ranking. The date of appearance of the ranking plays an important role in determining the criteria and structure on which it is based, as well as the different mechanisms that underpin it and the privileges it offers and which are not provided by any other ranking body.

II. PROS OF RANKING

The central theme of this paper is the centrality of the ranking or in other words its benefits and disadvantages. Are there benefits to university rankings? Are there disadvantages to these rankings? Can this be avoided? Can ranking be handled in a way that is beneficial?

Pros

Platform for universities to monitor their work:

This point seems to be an optimal, holistic, and essential point. This is because any university in the world takes the (ranking / recognition) theme as aportal that attracts lecturers and students and considers it a strength to others. The departments of educational institutions take the policies of punishment and reward or more clearly reward and punish the representatives in the case of progress or decline in ranking and this shows the great role played by the ranking for these universities, it is clear without any doubt that ranking has intellectual, marketing, knowledgeable, scientific and financial importance to these universities and this is the reason that pushes higher educational institutions to eagerly anticipate the release of ranking results and sometimes even to create divisions, units and departments to support quality and improve ranking.

All of these processes (in the case of transparency) contribute to improving the goodness level and quality of the institution to reflect positively on its work.

A platform for students to choose the optimal university.

It is clear to all observers, internal and external ones, that the ranking of the university is one of the main questions that can be asked by any student wishing to enroll in the university with other questions such as:

- Is the program certified/accredited?

- Is there a quality policy application?

- What is the employment rate of university graduates?

- What is the ranking of the university?

- How many PhD holders?

- Is there a central library at the university?

In addition to that, other questions students might ask about before admission.

Because of the importance of ranking to a student, the option of studying a similar program at another university can be made without any reason other than that it has a higher ranking.

If we want to take absolute neutrality at this particular point, it is clear that the student will look at the most important data and information related to the university he/she wishes to study and perhaps the ranking (although sometimes does not have a direct relationship with the student or teaching process) is one of the criteria that are taken into consideration.

This point illustrates the importance of ranking for the student and the higher education institution.

Encourage universities to compete with other similar or close universities in the ranking.

Competition is ubiquitous and mistaken for those who believe that the field of higher education is not without competition.

There are many aspects that universities and educational institutions can compete with, including:

- Availability of sufficient scientific resources.

- Publishing scientific research in scientific journals.

- Teaching staff who are holding high degrees.

- High academic rankings.

- Graduates who have received international awards and competitions.

- Permanent development plans.

- Provide the student with sufficient knowledge resources.

Such points, in addition to other points that a university can give in the contrary to another university that is not able or do not want to provide, thus, and in this case, ranking can hold a real effective and optimal portal for universities to compete among to get a higher ranking than other universities or get a higher ranking comparing with last year's ranking. There are many opportunities that universities can compete with each other, but ranking is one of the most important and most famous of these opportunities.

Encouraging universities to establish partnerships with universities of common interest

Simply enough, rankings play an important role in expanding university's partnerships and networking, both regionally and internationally, and contribute to improving the work of universities and increasing the confidence of management in the decisions they make.

It is possible for a university specialized in medical sciences located in one of the Asian countries to communicate with a university of similar interest located in one of the European countries and sign a memorandum of understanding contribute to the exchange of students, the development of the educational process and curriculum development without any prior communication between them or without any previous operating or communication of any kind. Ranking can play a golden role for such opportunities for such universities.

Supports decision-making policy, promotes courage and encourage educational institutions to make courageous steps for the best of their students.

The university's progress in the ranking can contribute to the decision to support and develop the university structures or increase scientific research or increase the financial resources paid by the university on the development of teaching staff or the development of curricula or even push the university to communicate with universities that have not previously communicated with them. The main motivation for such step is progress of ranking. It can also promote concrete steps to support the quality policy of the institution.

Development of the university in specific areas

Regardless of the inability of any ranking to develop the entire educational process due to the specialization of rankings in specific fields, the university ranking remains a reliable source that contributes to measuring the performance of the university in specific areas directly or indirectly related to the centrality of the university work.

A university can work to develop these specific aspects to contribute at a later process to the overall development of the educational process. Assuming that phase A is one of the criteria covered by the ranking, phase B is not covered by the ranking criteria, whereas C and D are bound by these criteria. As a result, the ranking will be similar to that of dominoes that drop all the stones in their path. As a result, the ranking contributes to the improvement and development of the institution that are not directly covered by the ranking.

Encourage the university to do scientific research

Most of the ranking bodies listed in the previous table (Table 1) encourage scientific research and even support the university's research and scientific, intellectual and cognitive studies or at the very least, encourage the educational institution to publish text files on its site to contribute to the support of scientific content.

Many people who are interested in the ranking (and they have wrong or misunderstanding of the ranking) believe that the ranking of universities is a graphical technical process based on archiving universities on the Internet without having any scientific, cognitive or academic value.

In fact, ranking is a scientific academic research process based on the technical knowledge provided by modern technology and thus, the process is basically scientific and not technical.

Also, many ranking bodies work to limit about 40-50% of the criteria of the ranking on results that were taken from scientific and academic factors, such as the number of research and academic publications, the number of books published by the university and other scientific standards. The scientific factor of the ranking is clear enough.

Encouraging the university to develop action plans

The more plausible the plans, the easier they will be to achieve the goals of the institution and accomplish them within the specified time period, as well as enable the institution to present new goals and visions.

Continuous process and continuous success based on hard work facilitates the success of the educational institution. In this regard, when the institution progresses over a period of time in the ranking and make for several years tangible progress (real non-fake and commensurate with the work done on the ground, not that contrary to reality) the institution will be able to develop its tactics and work and develop its plans and programs. Hence, it will be able to find the appropriate motivation to change the entire structure of the institution to contribute to improve quality assurance of the whole process.

It is important to note that ranking is a mirror that reflects the real and actual reality of the university at the scientific, cognitive, intellectual and capacity level. Therefore, this mirror should be honest and reflects the real portrait, not a magic mirror showing a situation that contradicts reality. From this point on, the institutions of higher education should observe this point and deal with ranking in a realistic and logical way.

Motivation for positive change

It is very important to note that ranking is the main motivation for educational institution towards a positive change in its work. Whether there is a progress or a downgrade in the institution's ranking, there will be an incentive for the institution to make real, tangible change to achieve as much progress as possible.

If there is a downturn in an institution, there will be a meeting at that institution to discuss the cause of the downturn and steps will be taken to identify weaknesses in the work, which in turn will lead to solutions that ultimately help to avoid existing gaps and improve the ranking.

If there is progress in the ranking of this institution, meetings will be held to identify places, factors and reasons that contributed to the improvement of the ranking and are they start working to develop, improve, focus, support and strengthen them (without neglecting the rest of the factors in the educational process) ultimately contributing to further improvement and progress. Further follow-up success that contributes to the support of the institution as a whole and support its scientific processes.

Helps families understand the development or decline of the university that their sons and daughters study.

It is important for families to know the current level of the university that their children want to study and follow the level of progress or decline and even to follow the knowledge status of this university. It is also necessary for these families to help choose the right option to study for their children. In this regard, ranking is one of the evidence and methods that parents can rely (at least in part) on the current state of this university and the current state of their children learning process.

Independent and autonomous reference for information

The neutrality, transparency, and transparency of the results and outputs are one of the most important reasons why researchers trust them. The increasing dependence of researchers on the ranking, its results and outputs has raised many important points regarding the neutrality of the results presented.

A number of researchers observed the criteria set by a number of rankings and analyzed the inputs and interrupted them with the outputs and results issued by the ranking authority to ensure the credibility of the information.

These researchers found that the results fully and completely correspond to the outputs issued by the ranking and such a thing to ensure the impartiality, independence and automation of the ranking and the credibility of its results.

Permanently updated information

Perhaps the most important factors that depend on the ranking is the novelty of the information provided and the periodic and permanent update in the results and tables provided by all ranking bodies.

Most rankings carry out two annual updates as they release their results in January and July. This raw data is collected and a median is found. This median is counted as the resulted ranking.

The speed of updating the results and the frequency of the operation depends more than once if the process is automated. In the case of manual aggregation of results, the process is performed once a year and slower than the automated process.

III. Cons

Similar to the existence of positive ranking benefits and data, there are some negative factors and criteria that should be addressed to solve them, to find a way to avoid them, or to make recommendations to ensure that they are avoided.

The main cons for rankings (any ranking can have such cons with verity depending on the fame of the ranking).

Rankings carry relative chaos

There is an unjustifiable logical relative chaos that cannot be repaired, altered, changed or delayed due to the impartiality and independence of ranking bodies in their standards, structure, criteria, factors and results, and the mechanism of collecting and exporting information to the results.

Take, for example, Oxford University. The same university can have different rankings and categories in different

rankings. Furthermore, and to make things worse, Oxford University can lead another university in one ranking while it would be lesser that the same university in a different ranking.

Another point that raises some confusion, uncertainty and confusion in the university ranking is that the number of universities targeted in each ranking is different from the number in the other rankings. One of the rankings when compared to the results issued by another ranking and in this particular point we have (and for parents and students and researchers and interested) dialectical credibility of the ranking and the credibility of the results it provides, which cannot be predicted and absolute dependence because of the different number of universities submitted to each ranking, which in turn leads to an increase in the abnormality factor (ratio) in the results presented and increase or decrease the error rate in the results submitted, which leads many to move away from the ranking or distrust of the results it provides.

A great problem that raises when talking about ranking of higher education institution is the real definition of "higher education institution"! What is a university? What is the difference between a college, high school, faculty, Academy and university? Do not they all hold the same meaning?

This point is really problematic!

According to Wikipedia, the following definitions are described as the following:

University: A university is an institution of higher (or tertiary) education and research which awards academic degrees in various academic disciplines. Universities typically provide undergraduate education and postgraduate education.

College: A college is an educational institution or a constituent part of one. A college may be a degree-awarding tertiary educational institution, a part of a collegiate or federal university, an institution offering vocational education or a secondary school.

High School: High school, in the United States and Canada, is the education students receive from approximately 14 to 18 years old. Most comparable to secondary schools, high schools generally deliver phase three of the ISCED model of education. High schools have subject-based classes.

Academy: An academy is an institution of secondary education, higher learning, research, or honorary membership. Academia is the worldwide group composed of professors and researchers at institutes of higher learning.

As it can be seen, all definitions are similar so, rankings of higher education should be an umbrella for all categories of higher education institutions.

Distracting the student

It is normal for the student to lose the ability to concentrate during permanent and continuous comparison in the results issued by the academic rankings. It is also normal for the student to feel with lost and even with disappointment while trying to understand the reason for this difference in results between two different rankings for the same university. The situation of loss, dispersion and confusion increases when comparing two universities. The second is in a particular ranking while falling in front of it in another ranking, which leads the student to distrust the ranking or the results provided by the mechanism through which to compile and determine the results and criteria on which to build.

In this case, it is not possible to ask ranking bodies to change the protocols on which they are working, nor to request them to standardize their mechanism and methodology. All we can do is explain the reasons for the different results for students and ask them not to take the results of the rankings as the main and only reason to select a university for admission.

Neglect of higher education institutions to the educational process and work to focus on ranking and non-transparency through the manipulation of results in order to obtain a high ranking

One of the most negative factors that can play a destructive and ominous role in the educational process of higher education institutions is the neglect of the institution of all standards, foundations, systems, structures, motivations and scientific blocs and scientific, educational and educational process and focus only in one and uniform, consistent and only on the factors that improve the ranking and raise the ranking and appear in better than they are.

Regardless of the scientific and ethical aspect (which rejects such practices completely and utterly), we should make it clear to educational institutions that such wrong practices will have a negative and destructive impact on the educational process at the university because this ranking obtained by the university in this case is the result of absolutely illusory situation and not based on any logical, rational or clear basis and therefore, prolong the time or shorten, it will be clear to everyone the falsity of this fake ranking and this will lead to the destruction of the institution's academic reputation in front of all other educational institutions.

By making this absolutely wrong move, the university will be similar to the false shepherd who went every day to his village and tells the villagers that the wolf is attacking his herd. All the inhabitants were quickly running to the herd to kill the wolf to find the herd intact without any wolf being present. One day, this time, the wolf attacked the shepherd's herd and the shepherd quickly went to the people of his village for help. This time, the villagers thought that the shepherd was deceiving them like every time and no one went to help him. The wolf ate the herd of the naive shepherd, who lost everything because he had lost his reputation in front of the villagers.

After the institution loses its reputation, it will be like this shepherd. No one will believe it and no one will hear it. Even if it has already improved its educational standards and developed a quality policy, it will not be of any use.

Permanent and continuous criticism of the subject of ranking

In the field of higher education, No matter received a level of criticism and controversy as obtained by the subject of university ranking and accusations of a subject related to higher education was not attributed to the extent suffered by the ranking and did not ridicule the topic of researchers, academics and specialists to the extent suffered by the subject of ranking.

Is there credibility to the ranking?

Is the ranking real or is it a scam?

Is the ranking based on scientific factors or not?

Can students compare universities by ranking?

Can an institution improve its work with ranking?

And many many more questions and queries that are asked permanently and continuously.

All ranking bodies agree on one rule: "Ranking is an academic scientific initiative that aims to provide a clear comparison and approach between universities in accordance with specific scientific standards that use modern technology to present this intellectual and cognitive approach."

All critics of ranking can direct their attention to topics that contribute to the improvement of the educational process, improve the ranking methodology, build new credible data, or build new rankings of their own.

The inability of ranking to improve teaching programs in the educational institution

It is illogical, rational, or ethical to ask a body to provide something contrary to what is required of it, and this includes ranking bodies. Is it the duty of university ranking

bodies to improve and develop educational programs? Or is this the responsibility of the university?

Should ranking agencies develop quality policies and standards for the institution or is this the responsibility of the quality, recognition and accreditation bodies? Should ranking bodies develop curricula, systems and mechanisms that contribute to raising and improving the level of education, support the educational process, and develop the mechanisms, methods and systems of scientific research, or is this the responsibility of specialized agencies?

We must define the responsibilities of each body, entity and agency, and we can then blame and point the finger at one institution and one entity.

The problem of ranking in dealing with educational institutions that provide educational programs remotely

Some ranking agencies add all educational institutions that have the status of a higher education institution, for example HERanking Higher Education Ranking. While other ranking agencies avoid the ranking of such institutions on the grounds that they provide educational programs through the Internet. Distance education is still one of the most problematic issues. Up to date, these programs and universities that offer such programs are viewed inferior to other universities and institutions that follow the traditional pattern. Ranking bodies must find a logical and rational solution to this dilemma.

IV. RESULTS

After looking at the pros and cons of university rankings and what each of them causes, we draw the following conclusions:
There are many benefits and disadvantages of university rankings
Students can view the ranking as a guide to help them choose the right university and to avoid the abnormalities that may occur. A student can make a cross point between more than one ranking before making the option to enroll in a university.
Encouraging ranking authorities to increase their approved standards in order to prevent or reduce fraud or manipulation of results.
Encouraging ranking bodies to take into account the geographical dimension.
Encouraging higher education institutions to focus on supporting the educational process without regard to ranking.
Encourage all those interested in ranking around the world to treat the subject with independent neutrality as a tool that helps in the development of higher education.

Trying to find an optimal way to rank educational bodies that rely on distance study.
Ranking bodies are not required to adopt specific criteria because of the independence, decision and methodology of ranking bodies.

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