



The Impact of Rankings on Student Access and Opportunity: Global Issues and Trends

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Overview

- Definitions
- Questions
- Methodology
- Findings
- Conclusions and implications



Definitions

- **Rankings**
 - of colleges or graduate schools
- **Access**
 - to college or graduate school
- **Opportunity**
 - employment/earnings
- **Choice**
 - student selecting where they want to go to college or graduate school



Questions

- What is the impact of rankings on student access to higher education?
- What is the impact of rankings on student opportunity after graduation?



Methodology

- Delimitations
- Literature review
 - Research on rankings
 - Models and theories of choice, access, and opportunity
- Media search
 - Reporting on rankings



Findings



Organization

- General observations
- Analysis of trends and issues by
 - Developed Economies (High-Income)
 - National rankings
 - Developing Economies (Low- and Middle-Income)
 - National rankings
 - Global
 - International rankings



General Observations

- Multitude of factors (and trends) impact on choice, access, opportunity
- Impact of rankings in particular
 - tends to reinforce pre-existing factors and trends
 - linked to both official and unofficial uses
 - may be positive or negative
 - based mainly on anecdotal data



Developed (High-Income) Economies





General Impacts

- Choice

- Academic, social, personal, financial factors

- Access

- Concentration and stratification by SES
- Aided by demographics, test score requirements, tight budgets, soaring tuition, merit aid, competition

- Opportunity

- School status, specialization, the economy



US: Impact of *USNWR*

- **Choice**

- Colleges and Business Schools: # and type of applicants

- **Access**

- Colleges: Early decision, pricing policies, merit aid, consumption benefits, # of elite colleges
- Business Schools: Test scores, financial aid, class size, two-tier programs

- **Opportunity**

- Business Schools: Earnings



Developing (Low- and Middle-Income) Economies





General Impacts

- Choice

- Academic, social, personal, financial factors

- Access

- Quality assurance and 'fair' access through centralized exams and screening
- Lack of academic preparation, cost, limited places as barriers

- Opportunity

- Poor quality programs lead to incompetent graduates, negative employer perceptions of unis, refusal to recognize degrees by foreign countries
- School status
- (Mismatch with needs of) economy



Nigeria, Slovakia, Thailand: Impact of Non-Commercial Rankings

- Choice
 - Comparative information to aid in consumer decision-making
- Access
 - Unclear
- Opportunity
 - Quality assurance for employer
 - School status



Global Trends





General Impacts

- **Choice**
 - Cross-border higher education/joint ventures and partnerships
- **Access**
 - Trend toward privatization
 - Increasing costs
 - Increased reach of West
 - Equity vs. excellence
- **Opportunity**
 - Global market and trade in knowledge



Impact of *FT*, *THES*, and *Jiao Tong* Rankings

- Choice
 - Shopping around for best value; government funding for study abroad
- Access
 - More options BUT pressure for at least one university to pursue meritocracy; high rank used to justify cost; focus on research/graduate students at expense of teaching/undergraduates
- Opportunity
 - Global status, specialization, economy
 - Fast-track visas for graduates of *FT* top-50 MBAs



Conclusions and Implications

- General
 - Markets and higher education
 - Globalization and higher education
- Rankings
 - Need for new research/data on these issues
 - Need to explore ways to make rankings part of the solution instead of part of the problem
 - Need for government intervention?