

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

Dr. Marguerite Clarke
University of South Australia



#### **Overview**

- o Definitions
- Questions
- o Methodology
- o Findings
- o 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

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



### **Findings**



#### **Organization**

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

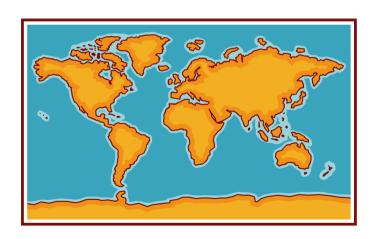


#### **General Observations**

- Multitude of factors (and trends) impact on choice, access, opportunity
- o 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





Academic, social, personal, financial factors

#### o 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

#### o Access

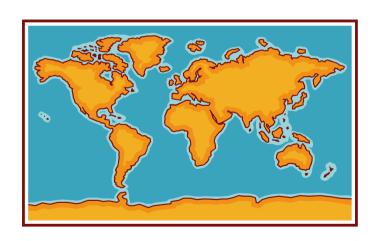
- Colleges: Early decision, pricing policies, merit aid, consumption benefits, # of elite colleges
- Business Schools: Test scores, financial aid, class size, two-tier programs

#### 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

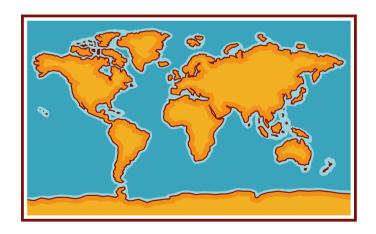


# Nigeria, Slovakia, Thailand: Impact of Non-Commercial Rankings

- o 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**

#### o 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?