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?