



Do university rankings contribute to transparency?

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‘League tables’ & the UK

- Serious methodological shortcomings
- Deficit model of a university
- Fits with the UK’s hierarchy of HEIs
- The role of university rankings in an increasingly marketised and customer-focused system
- Differentiating ‘world class’ and other national HE systems
- Reflecting and reinforcing reputation
- Concealing quality and performance



Impact on HEIs

- Strong influence, but reluctance to acknowledge this
- Simplicity and power of 'league tables', for:
 - governors
 - institutional managers
 - prospective students and staff
- Reinforces the influence of the individual indicators
- Diverts attention from core activities
- Conflicts with broader policies



Perceptions of Impacts on Users

- ‘Traditional’ applicants from advantaged backgrounds
- Internationally, on:
 - overseas students
 - academics from abroad
 - foreign governments and scholarship bodies
- But, how important in decision-making are they really?
- Impact on government policy?
 - ‘world class’ universities: research selectivity
 - widening participation in the ‘top’ universities
 - maintaining the binary divide in practice



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