A World of Difference:
A Global Survey of University League Tables

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What we examine

University league tables issued nationally

> ➤ 16 national league tables or rankings ...

> ➤ ... issued from 10 separate countries

>> ➤ Australia, Canada, China, Germany, Hong Kong, Italy, Poland, Spain, the United Kingdom and the US

University league tables generated for an international audience

> ➤ Shanghai Jiao Tong University's
>
>   Academic Ranking of World Universities

> ➤ The Times (of London) Higher Education Supplement's World University Rankings

What we don't

- ➤ Ranking systems generated on a sub-institutional basis
  - ➤ League tables that compare law or medical schools; departmental rankings are not considered

- ➤ Straight-ahead institutional guidebooks
  - ➤ Usually no rank order is listed or implied
  - ➤ Usually described according to subjective criteria
  - ➤ Often student-experience-focused (ie quality of pubs on campus, etc)

- ➤ Rankings focused on specific activities (ie research, Internet connectivity, student services)
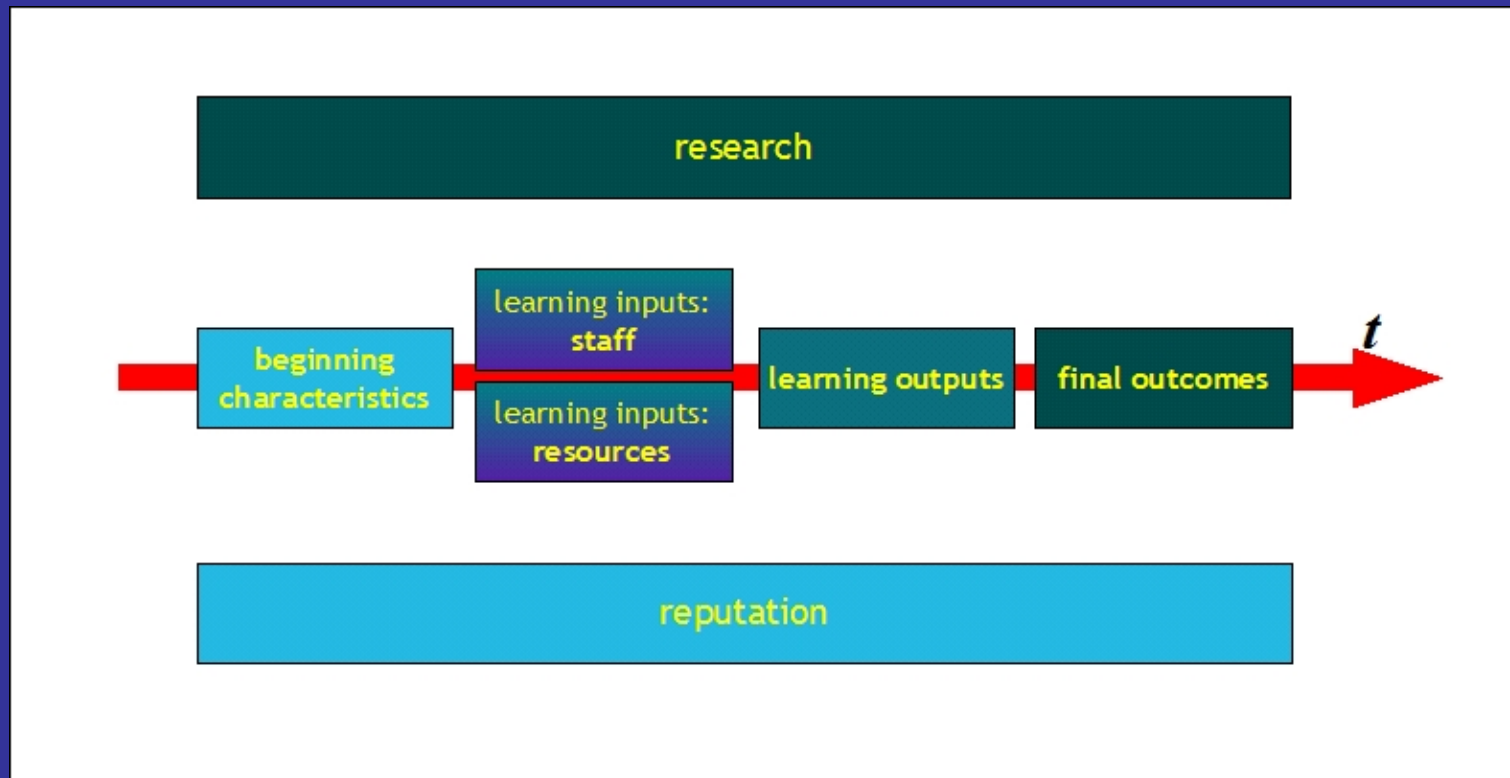
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Three sources of data for indicators

➤ Surveys of opinion or experiential data

➤ Independent third parties
  ➤ Governmental educational authorities
    ➤ UK's UCAS, HESA, QAA
    ➤ Australia's DEST
    ➤ Italy's CNVSU

➤ University/Institutional sources
    ➤ US News, Maclean's

Indicator totals by type

	Raw indicator count	Survey data	parties	Third	Universities
Asiaweek—Asia's Best Universities	18	-	-		18
Daily Telegraph (2003)	1	-	1		-
Education18.com	9	3	4		2
Excelencia, 2001	71	-	71		-
Financial Times (2003)	17	-	17		-
Guangdong Institute of Management Science	17	-	14		3
Guardian—University Guide 2005	7	-	2		5
La Repubblica	23	2	21		-
Maclean's University Rankings	24	1	5		18
Melbourne Institute— International Standing of Australian Universities	26	3	23		-
Netbig, 2004	18	1	10		7
Perspektywy / Rzeczpospolita Uniwersytet	18	1	2		15
Shanghai Jiao Tong University—Academic Ranking of World Universities	6	-	5		1
The Times—Good University Guide 2005	9	-	9		-
Times Higher Education Supplement—World University Rankings	5	1	1		3
US News and World Report— America's Best Colleges 2006	15	1	3		11
Washington Monthly—College Rankings 2005	8	-	1		7
Wuhan University Centre for Science Evaluation	45	2	22		21

The Finnie-Usher quality model schematic, modified

Listing of League Tables

Publication	beginning characteristics	learning inputs - staff	learning inputs - resources	learning outputs	final outcomes	research	reputation
Asiaweek (India/Asia)	25	28.3	10	0	0	16.7	20
Daily Telegraph (UK)	0	100	0	0	0	0	0
Education18.com (Hong Kong)	20	15	5	0	0	20	40
Excelencia (Spain)	0	25	25	25	0	25	0
Financial Times (UK)	9	19	15	10	27	20	0
Guangdong Institute (China)	0	0	0	57.1	0	42.1	0
Guardian University Guide (UK)	28	35	10	10	17	0	0
La Repubblica (Italy)	10	44.4	15.6	10	0	20	0
Maclean's (Canada)	15	20	44	5	0	0	16
Melbourne Institute (Australia)	11	3.5	11	12.6	4.8	40	17.1
Netbig (China)	12	21.8	6	0	0	45.2	15
Perspektywy / Rzeczpospolita (Poland)	8	20.5	11.5	0	0	0	50
Shanghai Jiao Tong University (Intl/China)	0	0	0	10	0	90	0
The Times Good University Guide (UK)	3.3	53.3	6.7	3.3	3.3	30	0
Times World University Rankings (UK)	5	25	0	0	0	20	50
US News and World Report (US)	15	20	15	25	0	0	25
Wuhan (China)	10.6	8.5	16.6	3.4	0.6	48.6	11.7

Consistency of outcomes across league tables

➢ Given wide disparity in indicators chosen between league tables …

➢ … We should expect different ranking methods to yield different ordinal rankings of universities.

➢ This is not what we observed.

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Outcome consistency across league tables, II

Australia

Institution	Melbourne Institute Ranking	SJTU National Rank	THES National Rank
Australian National University	1	1	1
University of Melbourne	1	2	2
University of Sydney	3	3	5
University of Queensland	4	4	6
University of New South Wales	5	5	4
Monash University	6	7	3
University of Western Australia	6	6	11
University of Adelaide	8	8	8
Flinders University of South Australia	9	13	n/a
La Trobe University	10	12	13
Macquarie University	11	9	9
University of Tasmania	12	11	14
University of Newcastle	13	10	n/a
Murdoch University	14	14	n/a

Outcome consistency across league tables, III

China

Institution	Netbig	CUAA	SJTU	THES
Tsinghua University	1	1	1	2
Peking University	2	2	2	1
Nanjing University	3	5	4	4
Fudan University	4	3	3	5
University of Science and Technology of China	5	9	6	3
Shanghai Jiaotong University	6	6	5	n/a
Nankai University	7	11	n/a	n/a
Zhejiang University	7	4	7	n/a
Renmin University of China	9	n/a	n/a	n/a
Beijing Normal University	10	26	n/a	n/a

Outcome consistency across league tables, IV

United Kingdom

Institution	SJTU National Rank	THES National Rank	FT Rank 2003	Daily Telegraph (teaching quality only) 2003	Guardian 2005	Times Good University Guide 2005
Univ Cambridge	1	2	2	1	1	2
Univ Oxford	2	1	1	4	2	1
Imperial Coll London	3	4	3	5	3	3
Univ Coll London	4	5	6	7	6	6
Univ Edinburgh	5	8	14	42	15	13
Univ Manchester	6	6*	15	17	11	17
Univ Bristol	7	12	9	16	16	12
Univ Sheffield	8	21	25	13	20	26
King's Coll London	9	13	18	18	7	16
Univ Nottingham	10	24	13	6	10	14

Outcome consistency across league tables, V

United States

Institution	SJTU National Rank	THES National Rank	US News Ranking	Washington Monthly
Harvard Univ	1	1	1	16
Stanford Univ	2	5	5	5
Univ California - Berkeley	3	2	21	3
Massachusetts Inst Tech (MIT)	4	3	5	1
California Inst Tech	5	4	8	63
Columbia Univ	6	10	9	32
Princeton Univ	7	7	1	44
Univ Chicago	8	8	14	20
Yale Univ	9	6	3	15
Cornell Univ	10	12	14	4

Outcome consistency across league tables, VI

- ➢ Measuring epiphenomena ?
  - ➢ 'Dark matter'

- ➢ Age of institution ?
- ➢ Faculty size ?
- ➢ Per-student expenditure ?

Rankings without league tables:
the CHE/DAAD approach

- ➤ CHE/DAAD of Germany does not weight

- ➤ Nor does it aggregate

- ➤ The user decides which criteria are important...

- ➤ ... which allows for personalised rankings...

- ➤ ...on a discipline-by-discipline basis.

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Conclusions

> ➢ Huge differences:
>> ➢ league tables' definition, measurement and implicit notions of 'quality'
>
> ➢ Geographic or cultural sources?
>
> ➢ Bias to the big
>
> ➢ Implicit / tacit agreement as to 'the best'

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http://www.educationalpolicy.org/pdf/
World-of-Difference-200602162.pdf

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