Do university rankings contribute to transparency?

William Locke, Assistant Director
Centre for Higher Education Research and Information
The Open University, UK

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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