

HERB

Higher Education in Russia and Beyond



It's All About Rankings

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«The Red Queen has to run faster and faster in order to keep still where she is. That is exactly what you all are doing!»



Dear colleagues,

We are happy to present the fourth issue of *Higher Education in Russia and Beyond*, a bulletin that is aimed at bringing current Russian, Central Asian and Eastern European educational trends to the attention of the international higher education research community. The new issue is devoted to global university rankings.

This has become a topic everyone is concerned about: prospective students and their families, national governments and, of course, universities themselves. University rankings are of particular interest for Central European countries, Russia, and the members of the Commonwealth of Independent States. Few of them are present in global rankings but many national governments aim at having their universities included in the rankings. Many of them actually see this as an urgent task. But can one improve their ranking positions fast? And should they? Can one do that without losing their organisational identity? These are now essential questions for many universities in the region.

The present issue is divided into three sections. The first one discusses university rankings as an instrument of power rather than measurement. Global rankings are becoming more and more influential, which causes endless criticism regarding their role in the development of higher education. The second part includes articles dedicated to the prospects of the universities situated in the HERB region. The authors have analyzed the efforts and challenges related to the development of universities' international performance in several countries and regions. The third part contains case-studies of certain excellence initiatives.

We hope that this will provide a stimulating reading and useful insights on the role global ranking if the live of modern research universities in Russia and beyond as well as across the world.

'Higher Education in Russia and Beyond'
editorial team



Dear Colleagues,

We are pleased to announce the 6th International Conference on higher education research that will be held in Moscow on October 15-17, 2015. This annual conference, which is organized by the Russian Association of Higher Education Researchers at the Higher School of Economics, has become an important platform for discussion of the issues of modern systems of higher education and the actual research agenda in the field of higher education.

Over the last several years, the conference has been dedicated to young and successful universities, to the universities' history, and to differentiation and institutional diversity. The special topic of the Conference of this year is "Rethinking Students: Ideas and New Research Approaches".

The interest to student studies, appeared in 1960-1970, was caused by college's ambition to take into account student characteristics and to satisfy needs of individual students, despite huge enrollment. Today the interest to research of students remains to be high. If, in the second half of the 20th century, increasing accessibility of higher education facilitated the growth of such research projects, in the 21st century a lot of student studies are dedicated to exploring influence of the new educational formats and technologies on students. New circumstances challenge scholars to

explore students as a new social group, facilitate their curricular and co-curricular experience, find determinants of academic outcomes, and optimize student academic mobility. Moreover, today, student research has to deal not only with voluminous research agenda, but it is also becoming more complex and sophisticated.

The major objective of the Conference 2015 is to discuss new theoretical and methodological approaches of student research, and also to debate various factors that influence students' trajectories, curricular and co-curricular experience, determinants of academic outcomes, student academic mobility and other aspects of student comprehensive development. Among participants of the conference are distinguished Russian and foreign researchers and practitioners of higher education.

Submission of proposals for individual paper presentations has been already started and will be closed June 1, 2015. For more information, please, visit the Conference web-site: <http://educonf.hse.ru/en/2015>

We look forward to meet you at the Conference! We appreciate your contribution to this event and hope that it will be interesting and productive for you!

**Best regards,
Conference Programme Committee**

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How the Geo-Politics of Rankings is Shaping Behaviour

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Political clamour about rankings

For many countries, university rankings are interpreted as saying something quite compelling about a nation's standing in the world. Fursenko, Russian Federation Minister of Education and Science, said that doing well in rankings is equivalent to an "instrument of competitive battle and influence" (New York Times, 5 March 2012). According to Billal, Director of Science at the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO), having universities included within the world's top universities can be a "more powerful asset for a nation than possession of weapon[s] of mass destruction" (UNESCO, 2011). Media headlines are also quick to use rankings to extol – or not – a nation's status in geo-political terms, such as: "America Retreats as Asia Advances", theTrumpet_com (5 March 2010); "Rankings tell a tale of two Indias", Asia Times (4 April 2014); "Ireland outside world elite in university rankings", Irish Examiner (12 March 2015) and "Why are Russia's universities struggling in international ratings?", RBTH (14 October 2014). At the domestic level, rankings can be a political weapon – used by governments to endorse actions and by opposition to denounce them – as illustrated by the war-of-words which has recently broken out in Malaysia following the Education Minister's description of Malaysian universities as world class (Malaysian Insider, 25 February 2015) and a counter-claim arguing: if "our varsities are so good" why are scholars being sent overseas? (FMT, 28 February 2015). What is going on? By placing consideration of higher education within a wider comparative and international framework, for the first time in such an impactful manner, rankings successfully challenged national perceptions of quality, status and reputation. In doing so, higher education was transformed from a local institution into the embodiment of national pride and global competitiveness. Despite on-going criticisms about their validity and meaningfulness, global rankings have succeeded in setting the parameters for what constitutes quality. Being within the "top 100" of an increasingly elite group of universities – representing 0.5%

of institutions and 0.4% of students worldwide – has spearheaded a profound transformation of higher education systems and institutions. Because of its significance, this has put investment in higher education and research firmly onto the political and policy agenda. While their origin may have been influenced by the need to provide better information to students, today rankings are an important tool for governments as they go about identifying ways to boost their share of the global economy.

There are plenty of mixed messages about whether rankings set the strategic goal or direction for policy or whether they are only part of the process to drive up quality, performance and productivity. A former Malaysian Higher Education Minister explained how rankings set the criteria against which university performance should be measured:

The task given to them [the universities] was simple. They knew the measurement criteria of the THES rankings. All they had to do was to identify how their existing plans for improving the quality of their institutions matched those criteria (Malaysia Star Online, 22 July 2007).

A more nuanced interpretation was presented by the Indonesian Minister of National Education, who said "World-Class Universities (WCU) is only a proxy, not the main priority of the higher education development in Indonesia (16 April 2009). Others, such as Okebukola (2013), former Executive Secretary of the Nigerian National Universities Commission (NUC), said rankings help expose "rot in the higher education system" while others assert they challenge incestuous behavior particularly in societies without a strong tradition of external peer-review.

Global concerns about quality

After more than a decade of global rankings, all evidence points to rankings having an on-going and considerable influence on higher education decision-making as well as on opinion-formation – music-to-the-ears of the commercial companies which dominate the rankings industry. As illustrated above, they have been used to highlight ambition and set explicit strategic goals, as well as identify key performance indicators to measure performance and reward success. Students, especially high achievers and international postgraduate students, use rankings to inform choice but so also do other universities who use rankings to identify potential partners. Employers and other stakeholders use rankings for recruitment, publicity or investment purposes.

The emphasis on quantitative indicators has dove-tailed with and strengthened calls for greater transparency and accountability from higher education. Policy-by-numbers predominates almost everywhere supported by a growing international knowledge intelligence industry; inside high-

er education, the role of institutional research and strategic planning – once characteristic of US institutions – is now wide-spread and professionalised. There has also been a noticeable shift away from traditional peer-review institutional-based quality assurance towards national systems; more lately there is increasing evidence of supra-national involvement, e.g. OECD, European Union, World Bank, and controversially, the US federal government.

Higher education is not only critical for national competitiveness it holds the key to a sustainable world economy – and after the experience since 2008, this is a recognised priority. The battle for talent is global, and credentials earned in one jurisdiction must be validated for others. Similarly, the rapid expansion in the number and type of providers, of necessity, requires a global response to monitoring and assuring quality. In the absence of other formats, global rankings have thrived.

Influence on decision-making

At the national level, governments have (controversially) sought to bring their systems into alignment with “international” expectations. Changes are being introduced either directly or indirectly in response to the perceived challenge posed by rankings and to drive and maintain national competitiveness. There are over thirty excellence initiatives, primarily found in Asia, Europe and the Middle East, with less activity in Africa and Latin America. France, Germany, Russia, Spain, China, South Korea, Taiwan, Malaysia, Finland, India, Japan, Singapore, Sri Lanka and Latvia – among many other countries – have all launched such initiatives.

Individual US states are behaving similarly, seeking to build or boost flagship universities to what is known as Tier One status, a reference to US News and World Report college rankings. States have sought to restructure their public systems (e.g. Texas), evaluate success or failure vis-à-vis a policy goal (e.g. Minnesota, Indiana, Texas), increase the selectivity of students (e.g. Kansas, Kentucky), benchmark presidential salaries against improvements in rankings (e.g. Florida, Arizona) and align performance measurement systems.

Universities are also making changes to their priorities and resource allocation models, altering student enrolment practices, strengthening postgraduate activity, etc. The academy is not an innocent victim. It has embedded rankings into faculty recruitment and promotion criteria, and membership of university organisations and networks while using rankings to promote their own self-interests.

Gaming?

Do these actions constitute gaming? In other words, are changes being introduced to improve quality or simply improve university rank? The evidence is mixed as there

is little doubt about the necessity to respond and change in reaction to the competitive environment; after all, no organization or business can continue to function in the same way throughout the decades. However, there is a strong correlation between various actions taken and specific indicators.

There is lots of US evidence about how universities have manipulated student data. The re-classification of faculty, which may involve creation of a non-tenure teaching grade or casualization, is used by universities to help create a more favourable faculty-student ratio or research activity to competitive grants ratio, etc. Allegations and admissions of gaming are most prevalent in the US but there is no reason to believe they don't occur elsewhere. From an institution – or a country's – vantage point, falling or not appearing in the rankings runs the risk of undermining strategies to attract mobile capital and talent. As Espeland and Sauder (2007) have said, whichever actions are taken, “rankings are always in the back of everybody's head”.



Are We Obsessed with Rankings? Voices of Dissent and Concern

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Undoubtedly, rankings have become a significant component of higher education landscape both globally and locally. The increased importance of rankings and its proliferation in unimaginable ways, the commercialization of its use and the corresponding high level of sophistication of ranking companies, the role that rankings play in shaping opinions of current and potential students, employers, and governments on the quality of higher education institutions – these are some of the realities of today's higher education.

At the same time, the emergence of a rankings obsession is a legitimate source of concern about its misuse as it is a key driver of policy decisions both for governments and higher education institutions. The increased and sometimes excessive importance that institutional and government decision-makers place on rankings has become both disturbing and alarming lately.

There is no doubt that rankings do have a value as a reference and benchmark instrument but not always do they serve as the best proxy of HEI quality and relevance. Any ranking is eventually an arbitrary arrangement of indicators aimed at labeling what is pre-defined as a “good” higher education institution. Those in favor of rankings – and especially rankers – may argue that in the absence of sound and comparable information, rankings are the best option to learn about the quality of higher education institutions. However, “the devil is in the detail”, since such pre-defined vision of an ideal institution does not always take significant contextual differences into consideration and tends to impose a one-sided vision of universities, which is not necessarily the most responsive to the needs of the communities where these institutions are located.

Let me elaborate further. Most well-known rankings tend to equate institutional quality and research productivity measured by the number and impact of their publications in peer-reviewed journals. Of course, such a proxy of quality downgrades institutions that place greater emphasis on teaching, prolongs the “publish or perish” principle, drives internal and external funding towards academic programs or research units that are more inclined to get involved in the dynamics of research and publishing. Finally, it diminishes the role of other equally important HEI functions such as teaching and public service.

Another dimension of rankings measures “reputation” by gathering opinions – unfortunately, not always competent and objective ones – either from employers, field experts and/or alumni. Quite expectedly, people tend to favor certain institutions – often regardless of the quality of their academic programs – thus other institutions and programs that may not have a famous name but that are providing a meaningful benefit to the society by preparing “knowledge workers” required for their local and regional economy fall by the wayside. In other words, an institution which is not highly selective and tends to serve students with lower socio-economic-academic background is most likely to be left out of the rankings even though the “value added” that it provides to its students may be higher than that of one of those institutions that have already had the chance to pick up better-off students.

Similarly, it can be argued whether it is appropriate to measure HEI reputation by its alumni’s job profile. As it was nicely put by Jenny Martin, a biology professor at The University of Queensland in Australia, “International rankings are meant to identify the best workplaces, yet none of the rankings evaluate important indicators like job satisfaction, work-life balance, equal opportunity” [1].

An alternative approach being explored by a number of higher education systems is aimed at fostering institutions to “benchmark” with peers in a less disruptive and more proactive way. Benchmarking approach allows for a meaningful comparison of institutions that is based on their

own needs – including the elements that are already incorporated in rankings, such as “publication count,” but in a less pressing way. Institutions should not be impelled to blindly follow a unilateral definition of a “good institution”.

A good example is the University Governance Screening Card Project that brings together more than 100 universities from seven countries in the Middle East and Northern Africa (MENA) region [2]. Sponsored by The World Bank and the Centre for Mediterranean Integration, this initiative is aimed at enhancing university governance and accountability through capacity-building measures founded on an evidence-based and inclusive approach. Participating institutions can benchmark with peers on matters related to governance and management, and a number of them have developed detailed action plans and related capacity-building measures in order to improve their performance. Similar initiatives are being established in other countries as well.

Obviously, it would be naive to assume that rankings would lose their importance in the future. However, while recognizing that they are here to stay, we must be aware of their many limitations, their intended and unintended biases, and their convenience-based employment by institutions and even national governments.

Notes

[1] Martin J. (2015). *Imagine there’s new metrics (it’s easy if you try)*. // <https://cubistcrystal.wordpress.com/>

[2] More information can be found at <http://cmimarseille.org/highereducation/>

University Ratings: Imperfect but Indispensable

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Here is the thing about tools: to be useful, they need to be applied appropriately. A screwdriver is not good for hammering nails, and a hammer is not great at driving screws. However, when you don’t have a hammer, a large sturdy screwdriver is much better than nothing. The thought

occurs when you desperately need to hammer some nails, and hammers have not yet been invented, or are too expensive, or sold out. University ratings used for quality control are like that — awkward, created for something else, a pain to use but will have to be used anyway.

University ratings are easy to hate. It has been noted in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* recently that none of the rankings “speak to the education core of an institution.” It is due to the fact that value added by teaching is very hard to measure, so we all have to rely on imperfect proxies, such as faculty’s publication activity, the share of graduate students, student to faculty ratio, the percentage of alumni who contribute, etc. Media-produced ratings like the US News and World Report have for decades evoked both scorn and hype from academics and academic managers. Until relatively recently it was easy to ignore them and dismiss their findings as not scientific. It was more of a media phenomenon, although many universities were trying to get higher positions in the ratings. However, both elite schools and those at the bottom of the ratings could simply ignore the whole thing.

This is no longer possible: the US Department of Education has published a semi-plan, or rather a progress report on developing a rating of colleges. The metrics include tuition figures, student completion rates, and percentages of students receiving Pell Grants but also, importantly, labor-market outcomes and loan-repayment rates. The plan is not only to make the ratings public (that is, influence consumer behavior) but also, eventually, tie federal aid to the rating outcomes.

Because of what is known as “Campbell’s law”, any new quantitative measure will for sure distort universities’ practices as it becomes more consequential. Any numeric indicator, if taken seriously, will corrupt the very practice it intends to measure. So, to all you critics of ratings out there, I say: you’re right. This is not a proper hammer, it is just a screwdriver. It is terrible at driving nails, we can all agree to that.

However, it appears we do not have an alternative. And by “we” I mean the entire global higher education community, not just the Americans or the Russians. The essential dilemma we all face is the same: without some way of measuring universities’ relative effectiveness, the ever-expanding mass higher education will bring countries to ruin. And mind you, it is not just a problem of expansive growth, which is involving larger proportions of population in education for longer periods of their lives. There is also what is known as Baumol’s cost disease. Like certain other industries (e.g. theater), higher education does not show any appreciable rises in labor productivity but the costs of labor grow to match those in other industries, competing for the same labor. Add here the rising cost of information infrastructure, competition for students (read “expensive construction”), and you will see an economic disaster in the making.

Governments ultimately foot the bill of college dreams. This happens either directly, like in Russia and many European countries, or increasingly indirectly, in the form of student financial aid in the US. US states have been gradually defunding their public colleges over the last two or three decades. But all it does is shifting the cost on to students, and ultimately to the federal government. Moreover, as the crisis of 2008 has shown, in case of serious economic calamity all governments — regardless of ideology use the “too big to fail” logic, and in essence, become socialist. They will bail out banks that hold bad loans — either mortgages or student loans. There is an implied public insurance of private student loans, both the sensible and the extravagant. One person borrows money to go to a medical school while another borrows just as much for a film-making degree. No investor, including public budgets, can afford to be blind to the repayment probability. Staying blind amounts to repeating the bad mortgages cycle, and may bring similar consequences. In the US, it could be another banking bubble, in Russia and other more socialist countries — severe budgetary crises.

What does it have to do with ratings, one may ask? Ratings are attempts to influence consumer behavior. Education is a so-called “credence good,” which means it is difficult for a consumer to assess its utility even after consumption. Ratings are attempts to make the market for such goods at least somewhat transparent, to chip away at the asymmetry of information. However, education is also a publicly subsidized good, and excessively risky behavior on behalf of the consumers, which often arises from ignorance, is becoming more dangerous.

We simply must make sure that public finances flow into something that will bring economic benefit to both the graduates and national economies that subsidize them. You can talk about life dreams or public good until you are blue in the face but unless you’re willing to face another super-bubble like in 2007-2008, you should start counting public money. Or else, why don’t you personally write a 100K check to a kid who goes to a chef school and is likely to end up as a line cook at \$10 an hour. That is, if they graduate at all, which may also be a dream. No, this is serious: the cost of higher education goes up, the percentage of population attempting college does the same, and public budgets cannot keep up. Add to this the ever-increasing anxiety about the uncertainty of the future labor markets. We simply do not know which professions will be needed in 20 years’ time. We don’t even know if most people will still be needed in new economies. The paths of digitization and robotization have been nothing but unpredictable. Will we need as many nurses and mechanical engineers as we think we do? The American Bureau of Labor Statistics, for example, predicts that by 2022 the number of truck drivers will increase by 11 % (see the *Occupational Outlook Handbook*). And yet, if the driverless car technology truly succeeds, this prediction will be worthless.

Mind you, BLS will not compensate you for a wrong career choice made on their advice.

Therefore, some sort of ratings needs to become part of the conversation about public finances. The most important point is this: we do not really have much in a way of directly measuring the value added by higher education; not by outcomes anyway. The accreditation regimes did an OK job for more or less elitist higher education systems. Once a country enters the era of mass higher education, most accreditation systems falter. If you set your requirements too high, you shut entire populations off higher education, and thus shutter any hopes for the knowledge economy. You will be stuck with truck drivers without jobs, rather than with a large population of university graduates, who can learn new skills quickly. If you set them too low, your higher education is instantly flooded with diploma mills. Accreditation is almost entirely input-based, and just does not guarantee much of anything in terms of quality. It is very difficult to tune without making the process prohibitively expensive. Accreditation only works to keep the number of universities low. It is a market entry barrier, not a true regulator. So some kind of a rating is inevitable, and the US Federal Government is doing the right thing by taking the process slowly and deliberately.

I don't envy whoever is in charge of the US Department of Education's project. It is devilishly difficult to capture any signals of university's intrinsic effectiveness. Standardized testing for university graduates remains elusive. The most advanced attempt, College Learning Assessment, focuses on general skills, and leaves domain knowledge out. Using it for consequential financial decisions may prompt universities to train engineers with fine critical thinking skills but with lousy ideas about material strength. If you test every graduate on domain-specific exams, you will get a bunch of incomparable data sets, and some universities may even opt for training more journalists than nurses.

Fooling Campbell's law is difficult but it's possible to mitigate its effects: use multiple measures, complement with qualitative expert judgment; avoid data-driven decisions but welcome data-informed ones. I suggest we look for some clever ways of combining the two flawed instruments — accreditation and rankings — and making a more robust one. For example, the core of accreditation review is determining how well a university controls its curriculum, how often it revises programs, how closely it pays attention to the labor market and the needs of employers. All of these could be converted into simpler numeric values, and appear to be ratings-like. In turn, rating procedures can become just a little more expensive but include spot checking, site visits, and expert comments. I question the move by the US government to introduce the new system of government rankings outside of the existing system of regional accreditations.

Another relatively painless improvement would be to tweak data collected by other government agencies in or-

der to improve education. For example, if taxpayers would indicate their alma mater, their tax returns suddenly become a huge and very valuable data source to assess universities' success. In general, the source of Campbell's law is our ability to manipulate data. The more we learn to use naturally occurring data and rely less on self-reporting, the less room will be left for Campbell's law.

The fact that all solutions seem to be messy does not mean we can afford to wait for a perfect one. It may never come. There is something fundamentally fishy about measuring complex human systems that know they are being measured. So, let's measure what we can in the smartest way possible, and use the results in the most responsible way. Let us not sit and wait for another fiscal train wreck.

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No Success: Performance of Ex-COMECON Universities in International Rankings

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In the first issue of HERB, we provided a short history of ex-COMECON countries' R&D systems from a scientific point of view. This note is aiming at the university level, bringing together data from various rankings and SciVal analytics.

By the end of the 1980s, Communist states had developed a highly specific R&D model, centered on research institutes with limited educational capabilities. Universities' share of research output was very small comparing to the role they play in the West. This share differed across various Eastern bloc countries, with the USSR being the most active proponent of "non-university" R&D model.

After the end of Communist rule almost all countries began gradually shifting focus to a university-dominated research model, which is generally perceived as more efficient and more suited for nascent "knowledge economy". This resulted in a widespread growth in the relative importance of HEIs across former COMECON countries. However, such growth was very uneven. Over the course of the 25 post-communist years, at least two patterns have emerged. EU member states increased the share of universities in their publication output to more than 70% by 2013, effectively returning to their rich European univer-

Figure 1. Share of publication output by country (publications with affiliations to local universities). Selected ex-COMECON countries, USA and EU15. Source: Author calculations based on Web of Science data.

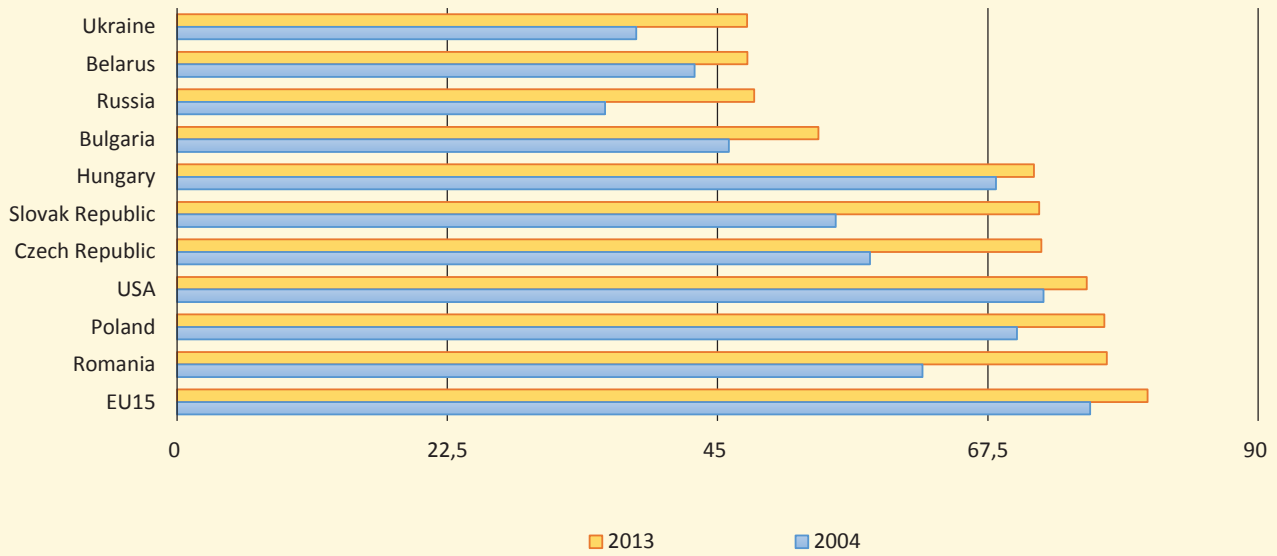


Figure 2. Numbers of universities in Shanghai Ranking top-400 for ex-COMECON and selected leading countries. Source: Author calculations based on <http://shanghairanking.com/>

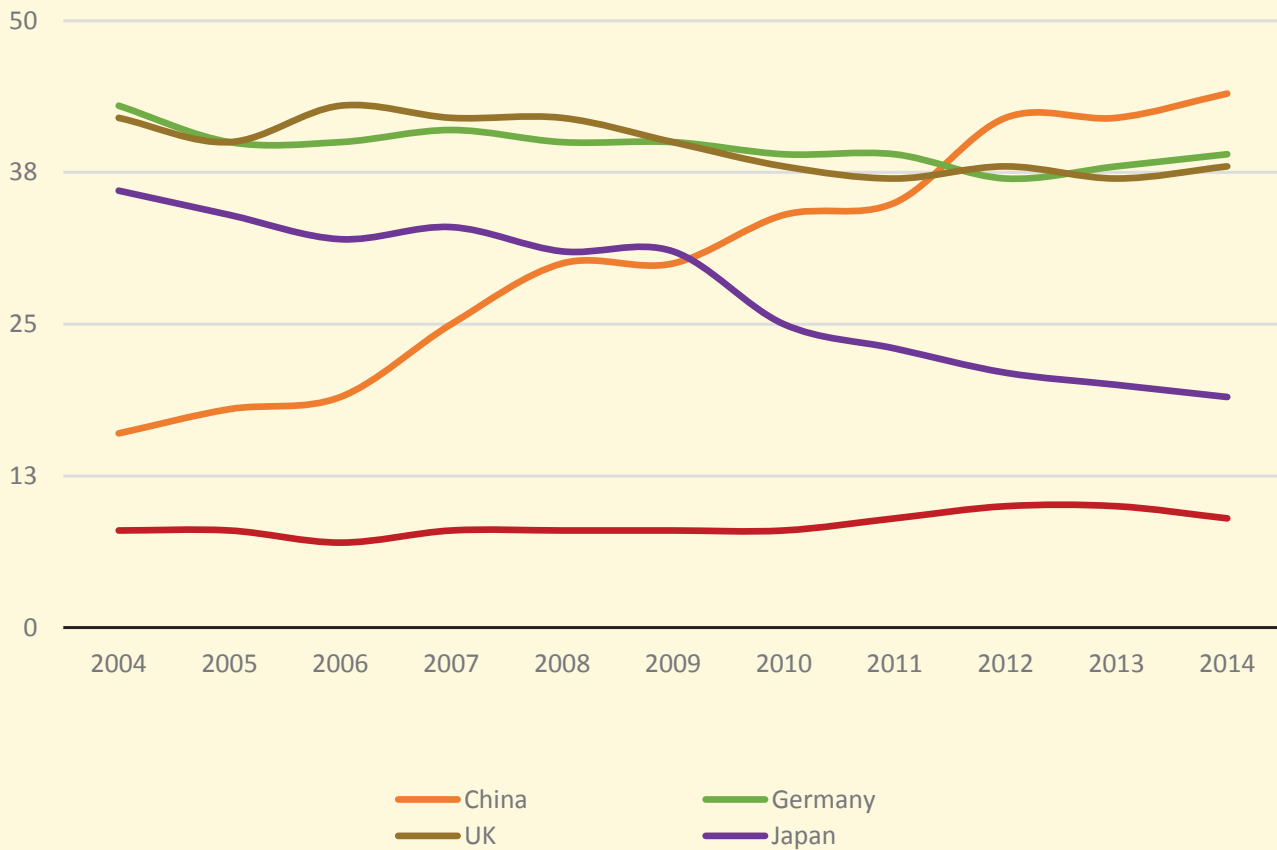
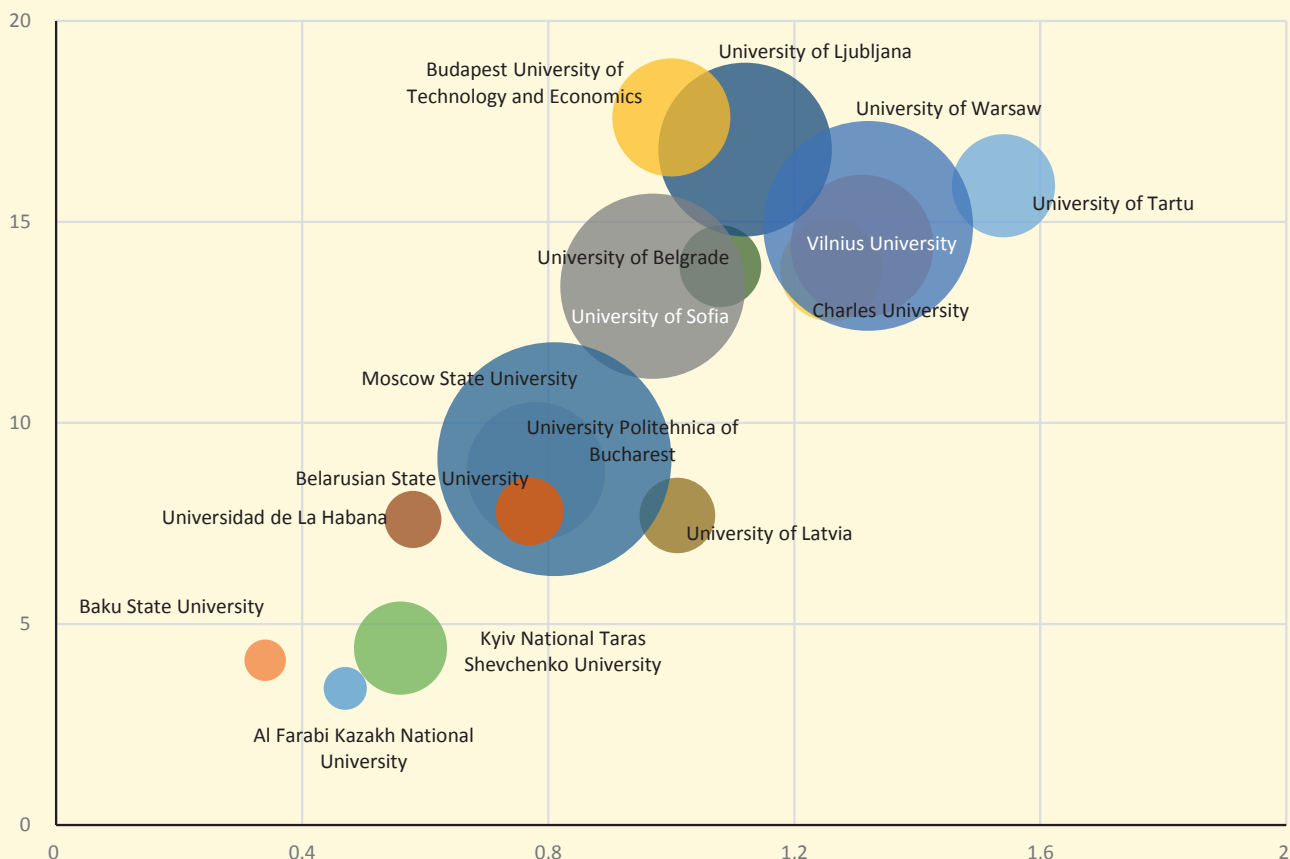


Figure 3. Biggest universities of selected ex-COMECON countries. Vertical scale: Percentage of publications in world's top 10% journals by SNIP, Horizontal scale: Field-Weighted Citation Impact. Bubble size: Publication count. Years 2010-2014, document types: article, review, conference paper.

Source: Author calculations based on SciVal data exported on March 30, 2015.



city traditions (think Charles University or Jagiellonian University). By contrast, universities in Russia, Belarus and Ukraine only achieved a much smaller share of 45-50% (see Fig. 1 with EU15 and US added for comparison). Despite such differences in actual results, government officials of all former Eastern Bloc member nations are committed to increasing the role of universities — at least this is what they say. Their rhetoric is mostly identical and includes similar policy memes like ‘elite world-class research universities’, ‘triple helix’, ‘innovation hub’, ‘MIT model’, etc. The most popular KPI is of course ‘getting into the top league of global rankings,’ which is at times formulated with striking similarity. For example, Polish Minister of Science and Higher Education Barbara Kudrycka declared in 2010 that the aim of new university reforms was to bring five Polish universities into top-100 of the Shanghai ranking within five years [1]. Russian President Vladimir Putin in his 2012 decree stated that five Russian universities have to enter top-100 of unspecified “world university rankings” by 2020 [2]. These goals are typically supported by competitive government subsidies and tend to increase funding inequality among country’s HEIs.

Despite drawing heavy criticism, global rankings are definitely here to stay. Scholars generally conclude that, ‘they are part of transnational drive for evidence-based decision-making and are widely used as points of reference for policy measures’ [3]. Currently the most popular rankings are Times Higher Education World University Ranking (THE), Shanghai Ranking and QS World University Ranking (QS). Ex-COMECON countries perform poorly in all of them but exact figures differ significantly. QS Ranking clearly includes the highest number, with 71 ex-COMECON universities amongst the 863 HEIs in its 2014 edition. THE World University Rankings 2014-15 edition includes only Moscow State University at #196, and Charles University in Prague, Novosibirsk State University and University of Warsaw at #301-350. Shanghai Ranking 2014 includes 9 universities from ex-COMECON countries, with Russia, Poland and Hungary having 2 universities each, and Czech Republic, Serbia and Slovenia only one. The overall success of ex-COMECON in global university rankings is very modest. USA, the former archenemy, has 146 universities in the 2014 Shanghai Ranking edition. Other leading countries’ dynamics in Shanghai Ranking

are shown in Fig. 2 (we have chosen Shanghai Ranking because of the stability and transparency of its indicator design and data sources, and because it has the longest history among the 'big three').

The only ex-COMECON HEI in the Shanghai Ranking top-100 is Moscow State University (MSU). It dropped from 66 in 2004 to 84 in 2014. QS and THE give MSU much lower scores. All the other universities in question occupy such low ranks that speaking of any dynamics would be problematic. It is clear that it will be a long time before they are able to reach top-100 but this distance varies widely for different universities.

Let's take a look at the normalized citation rate – one of the main bibliometric indicators of QS and THE rankings. Fig. 3 shows these rates for the biggest universities of selected ex-COMECON countries. The plot also reflects the percentage of publications in top journals, which, along with normalized citations, is a solid indicator of output quality. We've used Elsevier SciVal, where normalized citation rate based on Scopus data is called 'Field-weighted Citation Impact'. It is defined as 'the ratio of citations received relative to the expected world average for the subject field, publication type and publication year.'

The winners here seem to be the universities located in EU member states but their normalized citation rates are still two or three times lower than those of leading world universities. According to author's estimates, in order to get into top-100, they will have to boost 5-year normalized citation counts to ~2 and raise the share of publications in top journals to 25-30%, provided that the current top-100 residents don't improve their stats. On average, the share of publications in top journals for the aforementioned universities was 9.3% in 2010, and 12% in 2014.

None of the surveyed universities has demonstrated growth speeds that could satisfy Barbara Kudrycka and Vladimir Putin, and that pretty much sums up our short survey.

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Structural Barriers to Russian Success in Global University Rankings

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With the advent of Project 5- 100, global university rankings have increased in importance in the Russian Federation. But while it is undeniably a good thing that there is a concerted effort to raise standards in Russian universities, there are a number of reasons why one should not expect them to show a rapid rise in the rankings. There are in fact a number of structural reasons why Russian universities are likely to have trouble playing the rankings game.

The key issue is scientific output and impact, which directly or indirectly (through indicators such as "reputation") account for the vast bulk of the scoring in all global excellence indicators. As others have demonstrated (see Sterligov & Enikeeva, 2014), Russia has not been able to raise its output of articles over the last twenty years. This is perhaps not surprising; given the length and depth of the crisis in academic finance in the 1990s, it is perhaps more surprising that a significant downturn in output was avoided. Yet the likelihood that Russian universities will be able to ramp up scientific output to the degree necessary to soar in the rankings is low for five key reasons, which are:

1. The Concentration of Money and Talent in the Academies. To a degree unknown in most other countries, scientific talent in the Russian Federation is based outside universities. Among the 5 Russian-based scientists listed in the Thompson Reuters Highly-Cited list of scientists, only one (Simeon Djankov at the New Economic School) is based at a university; the remainder are based in Academies. The need to share resources with another sector and the attractiveness of these alternative research careers means that higher education is shorn of a considerable portion of the funds and talent which in other countries would naturally cluster in universities.

From a state perspective, whether science and research occurs in universities or academies is probably irrelevant as long as the public science system is producing knowledge of value for the economy. However, if the policy goal is specifically to have great universities, then the concentration of resources in the Academy sector is a problem. At some point, the government of the Russian Federation will need to make a decision whether it is prepared to take the step of de-emphasizing the academies in order to improve

universities. If it does so, Russian universities will over time gain access to a huge pool of money and talent which can push them up the rankings. If not, the likelihood of many Russian universities achieving high research standing is fairly low.

2. The Narrowness of University Focus. For better or worse, the large university rankings implicitly reward universities with scale and breadth. Another inheritance from the Soviet period is a large number of narrowly focussed institutes which became universities simply by virtue of creating a humanities faculty and thus achieving the necessary “breadth”. In practice, though, most of these universities still function to a large degree as single-discipline institutes (e.g. universities of nuclear physics or aerospace engineering). Of the fifteen current institutional members of Project 5-100, only nine can be considered comprehensive universities; for the other six, even if they are of extraordinary quality in their own field (for example, the Moscow Institute of Physics and Technology), it is difficult to see how they can break into even the top 500 universities worldwide without developing greater breadth.

To some degree, this problem could be overcome through a process of university mergers. If Lomonosov State University were to be combined with MEPhi and MIPT, for instance, the result would be an institution with both formidable breadth and depth. This would be a departure from the present policy on university mergers, which is more about reinforcing quality at the bottom of the higher education hierarchy than it is about concentrating it at the top. But given the strength and prestige of MEPhi and MIPT, such a policy seems unlikely.

3. The Mid-career Talent Gap. In most countries and most scientific disciplines, research productivity (especially research impact) is driven by mid-career experts, people in their 40s and 50s running their own labs and mentoring post-doctorates and/or new professors. The problem in Russia is that due to the long-running economic crisis of the 1990s, there aren't many of these type of professors around. There are a reasonable number of new, young professors, hired after the return to prosperity in the early/mid-2000s, and there are a reasonable number of academics who started their career well before the crisis. In between, there is a demographic gap where in western universities are clustered the most impactful scientists.

This is not a problem which has an easy policy solution. The demographic gap can really only be solved by the passage of time. It will take another twenty years for this problem to really be fully rectified.

4. The Culture Issue. Russian universities, like many which owe a debt to the German model of higher education, have a tendency to concentrate power over research budgets and research agendas in a relatively few hands. This can be counterproductive: countries which “punch above their weight” on scientific output and im-

pact achieve this in part by finding ways to give younger researcher considerable autonomy in choosing their research concentrations, finding their own research partners (especially international ones), and giving them funding to achieve this. In this way, the management of universities which are very successful in rankings is much more “bottom-up”. Russian universities, on the other hand, are very much “top-down”.

University cultures change very slowly, so no one should expect Russian universities to suddenly becoming free-wheeling havens of progressive academic practice. Change, if it comes at all, will come slowly, and will need to be prodded by outside funding bodies (Project 5-100 could play an interesting role here if it so desired). In the meantime, it is worth seeking policy lessons from other countries with “top-down” academic cultures (e.g. China, Korea) with respect to how they have managed their rise in rankings.

5. English. For better or worse, the language of modern science is English. But fluency in English is not universal in Russian universities (though it is substantially better among younger scholars than older ones). Improving spoken and written ability for key research personnel is a key tactic that Russian universities need to adopt to improve publication outcomes.

Improving English fluency is not simply a matter of having English lessons available or having translators on staff. It means more on-the-ground (i.e. bottom-up, not top-down) international collaboration, more time spent at international conferences, and more mobility for doctoral students to allow them to spend time in English-speaking milieus during their training. Unfortunately, few of these changes seem to be priorities at the moment in Russian universities.

It is not, of course, beyond the capabilities of Russian higher education to deal with these five challenges. But it will take time, and it will not be easy. Even with the large sums of money being invested in Project 5-100, quick and early successes should not be expected.

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Central European and ex-USSR Universities on the QS World University Rankings Map

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University rankings have become somewhat of an obsession in the world of higher education in the last couple of years. And while it is a relatively common topic for North America and Western Europe for quite some time now, the rest of the world – especially the emerging countries in Asia and ex-USSR area – seem to be overwhelmed by the idea of rankings. It is almost impossible to find someone in the academia who is indifferent to the matter, people love or hate rankings, but the main point remains the same: you cannot ignore them.

With three main international university rankings – Academic Ranking of World Universities by Shanghai Jiao Tong University (since 2003), QS World University Rankings by Quacquarelli Symonds Ltd (since 2004) and the World University Rankings by the Times Higher Education (since 2011) – being the key players, dozens of other appear every year. This presents a challenge to universities and all other ranking results users: students, parents, employers, journalists. So what should a university do, how to prioritise the communication with ranking agencies and how to ensure that climbing up the ranking ladder doesn't replace the main focus of the institution? Personally I would strongly encourage anybody involved in this topic to be realistic about their university, evaluate the strengths and weaknesses, and make sure the goals are achievable. Naturally, it is impossible to have more than a hundred of universities in top 100, however hard deans, rectors and ministers are pushing for it, so any of the 3,000 institutions QS evaluates every year should manage their expectations accordingly. Unfortunately in many cases institutions miss the forest for the trees, and instead of looking into the indicators each ranking uses, picking up the relevant ones and improving university's general performance, they try to blindly climb the generic ranking ladder, again and again. However, such things as internationalization of the student and academic body, strong research and publishing activity, collaboration with employers should always come first – and none of those can improve in a blink of an eye.

Central Europe

Back in the early years of university rankings there were about a dozen of universities from this region on the radar. However, as the ranking tables were extended from just top 100 to over 800, many new – for the rest of the world at least – names came forward. Poland and Czech Republic lead in Central Europe by the number of universities recognized in the world university rankings, as well as by their positions: Charles University and Czech Technical University, both in Prague, and University of Warsaw and Jagiellonian University are in the top 500 of the QS World University Rankings 2014/15. There are 5 and 6 universities accordingly representing those countries in the full list of ranked institutions. Hungary and Romania are trying to catch up but they joined the race a bit later and cannot boast strong research recognized globally, and even though each of these two countries has four ranked universities, all of them are beyond the 500 point.

The key strengths of Central European universities are international students and faculty, with Czech universities having the most international student body, as well as teaching and research staff. When it comes down to probably one of the most challenging indicators for the universities – citation index – Czech and Hungarian universities lead the game. With the changing political and economical landscape it is hard to predict what the region will look like in the next five years but one thing is sure: universities have now discovered the benefits of another way of being recognized globally for free, and are working (albeit in a subtle way) towards strengthening their positions. This shows in the employer and academic experts who come forward to share their opinions, data which universities share with the ranking agencies, and more active research productivity in indexed journals, when possible.

Ex-USSR

Two Russian universities – Moscow State University and St. Petersburg State University – were featured in the QS rankings since the first issue in 2004. But it was Kazakhstan who has set up the goal of two national universities reaching the top 200 by 2020 first: back in 2010 President Nazarbayev announced it in his address to the nation. And the results are impressive: the dynamics that Al-Farabi Kazakh National University and Gumilyov Eurasian National University have been demonstrating each year since then speaks for itself. Both institutions started from below 500 in 2009 and both have improved their positions dramatically: KazNU was #299 and ENU #303 in the QS World University Rankings 2013/2014. However both dropped a little in 2014/2015 results: to #305 and #324 accordingly. Kazakhstan comes second to Russia in the number of ranked universities – 9 in total. Ukraine has 6 institutions in the recent global ranking with two – Kharkiv National University and Sumy State University – joining for the first time. Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv and National Technical University

of Ukraine demonstrate steady growth, though it would be fair to say that it will be quite challenging for the country to keep the same pace in the coming years.

Universities from the Baltic countries, Belarus and Azerbaijan are now engaging in the ranking dialogue, however with limited resources available it is hard for them to demonstrate the same progress as their Russian or Kazakh colleagues. University of Tartu, Estonia, is the only institution in top 400 (379th in the QS WUR 2014/2015) with Belarus State University recently entering top 500 for the first time (got into the 491-500 range in the QS WUR 2014/2015).

A universal strength of all the ex-soviet universities is the student/faculty ratio. QS uses it as a proxy to evaluate the quality of teaching, and the quality of interaction between professors and their students. This is the only indicator where Russia, Kazakhstan and other neighbours demonstrate the best results in the world. Unfortunately, such criteria as citation index or internationalization are far from the world average. When it comes to qualitative data, such as employer and academic reputation, a huge gap lays between the most recognized university in the region, Moscow State University, and the rest. MSU can proudly boast to be the 83rd in the world if ranked just by its academic reputation, with Saint-Petersburg State University coming second on the 210th place. Al-Farabi KazNu comes 259th, and Tartu University – 358th. MSU's success is even more impressive when we notice that only 2.4% of all the responses of the Academic Survey come from Russia (out of the 63,676 responses in total – all data is available on www.TopUniversities.com and www.IU.QS.com).

Hard to forecast, but the future looks relatively bright for the universities in the region – institutions are becoming more open to the idea of global recruitment; they start working on the international recognition on B2B and B2C levels; learn how to make money by winning the grants, both local and international, and through collaboration with the companies; are engaging in the activities which will eventually result in better positions in the rankings. However this would only be possible if the current trends remain unchanged for at least 3-5 years and institutions continue to think strategically about their internal and external performance.

The Russian Ministry of Education has recently announced that ten more universities will join the 5-100-2020 project in the coming year. Kazakhstan has allocated funds to support technical universities. All these activities do bring some results, though not always the wanted ones and not at a wanted pace. Position in the rankings cannot be and should never be the goal of a university and its management, this is just one of many indicators of university's success. One should look beyond rankings to evaluate an institution. Whether it is a specific subject ranking or a reputational, regional or global one, it cannot reflect all and every feature of a university. Rankings give a good general picture but a smart researcher or student should dig deeper to find what they really need.



Turkish Higher Education System: Between Expansion and Quality

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Turkey's higher education system has expanded very rapidly in the last decade. One of the main aims of the Justice and Development Party governments in the last decade was to increase access to higher education by establishing new universities. The reason behind this rapid development is simple: Turkey has a large youth population with a high demand for higher education.

During the 1990s and early 2000s, only one out of four applicants was able to go to university. In 2005, nearly one-third went to university, as about 1.9 million people sat entrance exams and only 0.7 million were accepted. In order to balance this demand-and-supply gap, the government decided to establish new universities and increase the number of seats in the existing programs. As a result, the number of public and nonprofit private universities rocketed from 77 in 2006 to about 180 as of 2015. Similarly, student population doubled during the last decade and reached 5,5 million. Now, nearly half of all applicants have a chance to go to university. It seems that the demand is likely to grow further as the government has extended compulsory education to 12 years and due to the demographic tendencies of Turkey.

The government has been criticized for such a rapid increase, which is depicted as the cause of poor education quality. Certainly these criticisms and concerns have some merits, due to high student/teacher ratio in new HEI. For example, in some universities the situation is really dramatic with over 100 students per faculty member.

While the debate goes on, rankings show that some of the universities have made significant progress. According to the Times Higher Education university ranking, Turkey has six universities among the world's top-400 higher education institutes; three of them, founded in the 1950s, are public universities and the other three, founded after the 1980s, are nonprofit private universities. According to THE ranking, Middle East Technical University is in the top 100, there are three other HEIs in the top 200 list, and two remaining ones positioned in the range of 200-400. Likewise, there were seven Turkish HEIs among the top 500 according to the US News & World News Global University Ranking 2014. At this point, the question that comes to mind is, what is the cause of Turkey's significant progress in terms of rankings? Here we will discuss the main contributing factors.

Normalization of Turkish HEI

In the 1990s — early 2000s, universities were home to political dissidence. Political tension brought negative impact on academic freedom and scientific atmosphere. The pressure on universities on behalf of the Board for Higher Education intensified, especially following the February 28, 1997 postmodern coup, and the freedom of teaching/learning was limited. During this period of intense pressure, some faculty members were forced to resign and even some students were expelled. At the same time, the Board for Higher Education and HEIs were permitting and, in some cases, even promoting further pressure over academic freedom, let aside fighting against it. 2007 was a turning point with respect to the development of higher education. Turkey got a new president, who appointed of a new Board of Higher Education chair, which resulted in lower tension in the higher education sphere, and marked the start of a normalization period. After this point, universities could direct their focus to academic issues.

Increased Funding for Higher Education and Science

Another important factor with respect to higher education progress is the increase in state funding received by universities and the Turkish Scientific and Technological Council (TSTC) in the last decade. Although the budget allocated for higher education seems to be lower than OECD average, public spending on higher education has grown from 0.6% to 0.99% of GDP within the last decade. More specifically, the total public expenditure on higher education increased from about US\$6 billion in 2009 to about \$8 billion in 2014, which is directly proportional to economic growth. Additionally, public spending on R&D reached 0.92% of GDP in the last decade.

Moreover, TSTC's various funding programs aimed at supporting research and publications have a serious impact on the progress on Turkish universities. TSTC expanded the funding for international research projects as well as doctoral and post-doctoral international fellowship programs. Thus, the number of funded projects increased ten times between 2000-2014. While the combined TSTC project budget was about \$35 million in 2000, in 2014 it supported 4,200 projects with a total budget of about \$1.2 billion. Besides, TSTC creates incentives for publishing more articles in international journals cited in SCI and SSCI databases. Within the last five years, TSTC's publications budget has grown four times, and this has already had a very significant impact in terms of international publication count.

Internationalization of Turkish Higher Education

Another important point is the internationalization of students and teaching staff. Despite the fact that Turkey has only 1% of the world's international students, the number of international students rose from about 20,000 to 55,000 between 2009-2014. The main reasons for that are increased flexibility and simplicity in application process, as well as the initiation of the Türkiye Scholarships program in 2012. This program supports about 13,000 students throughout the world. Additionally, the number of international teaching staff has augmented from 1,000 to 2,500 in the last decade.

Another supporting factor is student and staff mobility programs, such as Erasmus, and Mevlana, the latter having been recently initiated by the Turkish government. In 2005–2013, the number of Turkish academics going to partner countries as part of Erasmus grew to reach 17,000, while the number of outgoing students amounted to about 80,000. Also, Mevlana program has given an opportunity to go abroad to 600 teaching staff and 400 students in last two years.

The Impact of Rankings on Government and HEI Policies

Indeed, the government's main goal is to expand higher education; however, the government is also involved in enhancing the quality of the top universities, which are TSTC's main "clients" with regard to developing projects and publishing indexed papers. In addition to this, since 2012 the government has also been working on the Ranking of the Entrepreneurial and Innovative University Index. According to this index, the state sends up to \$500,000 extra per year to the top fifty universities.

Top universities use international rankings in their public relations activities and in their attempts to attract the best students and academics. According to their policy documents, their main is to become top research institutions in Turkey and to earn a better reputation globally. To that effect, top universities aim at hiring competent national and international academic staff, and gaining access to national and international research funds. Increase in the number of universities leads to stronger competition for students, especially among the top public and nonprofit private universities. For this purpose, nonprofit private universities have started to offer stipends of up to \$500-\$1,000 per month, and public universities, which did not want to lag behind, have also developed fellowship programs for the best students.

The main common feature between top universities is that the medium of instruction is English. Thus, they can easily hire international and competent national academics. Universities use English as a strategic tool in the process of

building excellence. By offering programs in English, these universities attract top students and competent academics. Another common feature is that these HEIs have many research centers and receive national and international funds for their projects. Moreover, these top universities, both public and private, are mainly located in the two most prominent cities: four in Istanbul and two in Ankara, which plays a considerable role in attracting both academics and students.

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World University Rankings and University Strategy: the Case of Ural Federal University

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The power of rankings

There is probably no other such phenomenon in higher education today which attracts so much attention, both positive and negative, as various university rankings. They are widely recommended as a good benchmarking instrument or as an important tool for internal structural reforms and external positioning of the university, and at the same time heavily criticized for a number of equally important reasons. There is still little doubt, however, in the fact that they are highly influential. Moreover, there is lots of evidence that rankings are becoming increasingly more influential over time: now their impact goes beyond the strategies of individual universities or even higher education systems.

Rankings do influence immigration policies of large states. Or, as a recent report prepared by Andrejs Rauhvargers for European University Association clearly states, “Rankings are [also] beginning to impact on public policy making as demonstrated by their influence in the development of immigration policies in some countries, in determining the choice of university partner institutions...”. Therefore, “Rankings are here to stay. Even if academics are aware that the results of rankings are biased and cannot satisfac-

tory measure institutional quality, on more pragmatic level they also recognize that as impressive position in the rankings can be a key factor in securing additional resources, recruiting more students and attracting strong partner institutions” [1]. Arguably, the Russian 5/100 Academic Excellence Project is actually driven by these rather pragmatic considerations.

Ural Federal University in the 5/100 Programme

Ural Federal University is an important participant of the project. From the very beginning, however, it was absolutely clear for the management team that the resources provided by the programme are (to put it mildly) too limited in order to ensure the breakthrough of the type made by the top universities in China, Singapore, Hong Kong, or South Korea. The programme, of course, has a significant psychological impact on the general atmosphere of Russian higher education, since it has clearly defined the characteristics and criteria of belonging to the elite stratum of Russian higher education and made internationalization one of the most important strategic priorities of the development. The resources, however, are rather scarce.

In this situation there is almost no other choice for a university “dreaming to create a world class university in the heart of Eurasia” (as UrFU road map rather ambitiously states) but to build its programme upon two main principles: concentrating the resources, and arranging rather wide collaborations. What we try to ensure here is a difficult combination of a smooth harmonic development of the university with an advancement in global academic rankings.

Abuse of rankings

Before doing that, however, it is really important to consider several prominent cases of rankings abuse in the process of developing university strategy. Surely, “it becomes clear that rankings ‘seduce and coerce at the same time’”... The universities which want to participate in the ranking game must ‘internalise and institutionalise’ the logic of the rankings” [2]. In this internalization-of-the-rankings logic, members of the university management team must bear in mind that rankings do have some important drawbacks, forgetting about which could affect the overall performance of an institution in its attempt to reach world-class status.

Resources: where to focus?

Strategic concentration of the resources is only possible when we can expressly answer two main questions: what are the resources we are going to concentrate, and where exactly should we do that. Answering the second question requires a certain amount of analytic work. The idea is not only to identify the areas where the university is already strong but also to envisage the development

of new research competences and fields where the university can achieve something in a comparatively short time. This analysis has been done with the assistance of Thomson Reuters (SciVal Spotlight), who helped Ural Federal University to identify 36 research areas in which UrFU is one of the world leaders (is in top 10% of universities in terms of publications) and to locate other 36 fields where UrFU can achieve leading positions comparatively soon (sometimes through collaboration with the institutes of the Ural Branch of the Russian Academy of Science). Concentrating the resources on these 72 rather narrowly defined fields (such as, say, “magnetic faculties of nanocrystal materials” or “domain structure dynamics in ferroelectrics,” etc.) should help the university not only to enhance its research performance but also to increase its academic reputation at least through widening its highest-rated research spectrum. This is really crucial for an advancement in global academic rankings. At the same time, in order to overcome the negative impact of the focus on rankings, there have been established laboratories in social sciences (in tolerance and recognition) and humanities (in Russian history), where we cannot expect to become a leading world university but where some important research teams work.

The second part of the answer to the question on the focal points concerns geographical priorities in internationalization. Arguably, it is too costly to try to promote a university too widely. There should be at least steps in organizing such a promotion. Interestingly enough, Thomson Reuters data points in the direction that we have already chosen as our main geographical priority. Namely, this data shows that universities of South-East Asia and BRICS countries are focusing on similar research areas, and that it is the collaboration with these universities that could help UrFU double the number of its research competences. Focus on BRICS was also instrumented through establishing the BRICS Studies Centre, which is going to play a pivotal role in terms of educational and research collaboration with BRICS countries in the Russian Federation.

These drawbacks include (but are not limited by): some problematic indicators used by the rankings; comparative neglect of arts and humanities as well as of the social role of the university; focus on research without any foreseeable possibility of proper measuring teaching quality etc. All these things could radically undermine efforts of management team to improve quality of university life, if logics of rankings is followed without proper consideration of these problems.

Resources: how to focus?

With these thematic and geographic priorities in mind, UrFU has created a certain amount of excellence centres, international laboratories, and project teams. These teams

are the main recipients of the resources, and their performance is closely monitored and assessed by the university. Now, the resources of what kind are being redistributed in this way?

First of all, we are of course talking of funding. It is expected, however, that the funding will be used for organizing collaborations that would lead to a breakthrough in internationalization, research performance and academic reputation of the university. The collaborations can be implemented in the forms of joint research projects (with joint publications afterwards, elaboration of which, by the way, is supported by UrFU separately), joint research programmes (such as post-doctoral fellowships), professors and researchers exchanges as well as elaboration of joint master and PhD programmes. The resources to be drawn and focused are, thus, mostly human ones. In this way Ural Federal University tries to attract talents globally, and it is this activity that is characteristic for any world-class university. Collaboration does help enhance academic reputation of the university and, by the same token, positively influence its positions in global academic rankings.

This journey has just begun. However, UrFU is already number four in Russia in terms of articles published, and importantly, these articles are of rather good quality. UrFU BRICS Centre has received federal recognition as one of the main centres of educational and research collaboration with these countries. The number of international professors and students is steadily growing. We hope that this is just a start of a long road to academic excellence and establishing a world-class university. We also hope that we have successfully avoided the main problems of over-concentration on rankings. However, that remains to be seen.

Notes

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International Rankings, Competitiveness, and Internationalization Achievements and Challenges: Far Eastern Federal University Case

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The last several years have been marked by significant interest, effort and investment made by the Russian government, as well as most of the G20 countries, into reforming their higher education and science management. Russia's attention is now focused on international university rankings and their global competitiveness, supported by a dedicated Project 5-100, where country's leading universities compete for government funding, international resources, and global visibility.

Far Eastern Federal University (FEFU) was established in 2010 by merging the four top higher education institutions located in Vladivostok. From the outset, FEFU has had a unique mandate in the context of the "Russia's turn to East Asia" strategy, putting collaboration and cooperation with Asia-Pacific Region (APR) in the centre of the project. This brief outlook is my personal view about the changes, challenges, and achievements of the Far Eastern Federal University on its way to building an international brand and becoming an Asia-Pacific hub for Russian innovations.

Unlike its many fellow-counterparts in Project 5-100, the university had to rapidly flash through a number of difficult and critically important internal reforms. The key one was the reform of complex management system. The integration of 4 completely separate universities with distinct and distant campuses, organizational structure and leadership still represent a significant managerial challenge – even after the completion of the reform and creation of a unified organizational system.

The second challenge was to identify, establish, and focus the resources of four different and disconnected institutions around key research areas utilizing a natural and already developed area of internationally competitive research & innovation. Part of the challenge was to link the existing or potentially beneficially-shared expertise as well as accounting for the future industry demand in the Asia-Pacific. The identification exercise of multidisciplinary

priority topics for FEFU development revealed three key areas: i) marine bioscience & biomedicine; ii) Eastern Arctic / Shelf (Arctic Vector); iii) Asia-Pacific Research (Eastern Vector).

The task of implementing these priority areas and translating the plan into research outputs and action plans is complex and multi-fold. FEFU is located in a thriving research innovation area, where competition from Japan, Korea, Singapore, China, Malaysia, and Asia Pacific North America is significant. The only fruitful response in such a competitive environment would be networking and collaboration, where the ultimate focus is put on partnering with strong regional universities and subject-specific centres of excellence. The APRU (Association of Pacific Rim Universities), where FEFU is the only full member representing Russia, is becoming a solid base for finding mutually beneficial collaborations and promoting FEFU brand and visibility as well as providing necessary benchmarking and external expert support.

A necessary element of the partnership model aimed at creating long-term, sustainable results for a university's international position is a clear link with industry and employers. From shipbuilding industry, underwater vehicles and long-established offshore oil and gas development technologies (used in Sakhalin-1 and Sakhalin-2 projects), to biomedicine, new materials, nuclear research and Eastern Institute, FEFU needs to continue actively establishing partnerships with industry. The industry link is critical in both short- and long-term because it serves multiple purposes at the same time. Faculty research tied to industry needs provides necessary technology and expertise transfer from professors to undergraduate and graduate students. Industry R&D link, jointly run laboratories, create necessary elements of sustainability in the strategic development of the Far Eastern region, where a variety of government, academic, and business interests intersect.

Integration with the Russian Academy of Science was another challenging dimension for further consolidation of effective research efforts in the Far Eastern region. Instead of institution (RAS Institute) vs. institution (FEFU) collaboration, which has inherent challenges lying in the organizational, logistical, and financial dimensions (existing regulatory mechanisms of public funding do not seem to provide an optimal framework of reference), FEFU has chosen to integrate the efforts on a project-specific level. Four Institutes of the Russian Academy of Sciences, with subject-specific expertise in marine biology, chemistry, biochemistry, and data processing, provided both their human resources and equipment, which was matched and complemented by FEFU infrastructure. Project team from RAS Institute of Marine Biology partnered with FEFU's team at the School of Natural Sciences; RAS Institute of Chemistry and RAS Institute of Bioorganic Chemistry research teams complemented their capacity with the FEFU School of Biomedicine researchers.

Data processing and control expertise was shared by a research team from RAS Institute of Automation and Control Processes. The main topics of the joint research program in this area evolve around marine ecosystems control, resource accounting, analysis of marine bio resources, and anthropogenic pollution control, which are all interconnected. A unique dimension of the research program is a sub-project on innovative drugs and functional food specific to the region. This longterm integrated research program combining RAS and FEFU key academics and young researchers (about 60% of the entire team) has matched the new framework of public research funding in Russia provided by the mandate of the Russian Science Foundation and the project has competitively won a RScF research grant amounting to 750 mln roubles (approximately USD14.5 mln). The outcomes of this project are already promising: 250 WoS publications with 760 citations. What is even more important here is the successful format of collaboration that proves to be beneficial to all the stakeholders from different parts of the academic community. The ultimate goal of working towards building an efficient education & research ecosystem that would bring visible results for the Russian science and education in the long term is being addressed.

Finally, external partnerships and visiting/in-residence faculty collaborations will help translate external expertise into internal capacity, creating short-term wins in research, publication, student recruitment, and international visibility. Recent research output analysis based on data from RFBR, Scopus and WoS, has shown that the publications from international collaboration projects carry greater weight and are, on average, cited from twice to three times more often than non-collaborative publications. At FEFU, the goal is to increase the share of international collaborations along with the engagement of the leading Russian and international researchers from external markets to 60% by 2020.

Together, all of these elements are connected to international university ranking positions with different weights attributed to each of them in different ranking models and ultimately lead to the integration of science-university-industry into an efficient system, driving regional and national economic growth. The methodology of prevailing international rankings – such as QS – heavily relies on both qualitative and quantitative factors, including academic reputation, employer reputation, citation per faculty, number of international students, etc. These and other factors of university environment will have to be built through time and effort as well as achieved through specific collaboration projects. Further proactive implementation of these measures will help establish a strong international reputation and position for Russia's key university in the Asia-Pacific region.





HSE

National Research University Higher School of Economics is the largest center of socio-economic studies and one of the top-ranked higher education institutions in Eastern Europe. The University efficiently carries out fundamental and applied research projects in such fields as management, sociology, political science, philosophy, international relations, mathematics, Oriental studies, and journalism, which all come together on grounds of basic principles of modern economics.

HSE professors and researchers contribute to the elaboration of social and economic reforms in Russia as experts. The University transmits up-to-date economic knowledge to the government, business community and civil society through system analysis and complex interdisciplinary research.

Higher School of Economics incorporates 47 research centers and 25 international laboratories, which are involved in fundamental and applied research. Higher education studies are one of the University's key priorities. This research field consolidates intellectual efforts of several research groups, whose work fully complies highest world standards. Experts in economics, sociology, psychology and management from Russia and other countries work together on comparative projects. The main research spheres include: analysis of global and Russian higher education system development, transformation of the academic profession, effective contract in higher education, developing educational standards and HEI evaluation models, etc.

CInSt

The Center for Institutional Studies is one of HSE's research centers. CInSt focuses on fundamental and applied interdisciplinary researches in the field of institutional analysis, economics and sociology of science and higher education. Researchers are working in the center strictly adhere to the world's top academic standards.

The Center for Institutional Studies is integrated into international higher education research networks. The center cooperates with foreign experts through joint comparative projects that cover the problems of higher education development and education policy. As part of our long-term cooperation with the Boston College Center of International Higher Education, CInSt has taken up the publication of the Russian version of the "International Higher Education" newsletter.

About HERB

Higher Education in Russia and Beyond (HERB) is a quarterly informational newsletter published by National Research University Higher School of Economics since 2014. HERB is intended to illuminate the transformation process of higher education institutions in Russia and countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia. The newsletter seeks to adduce the multiple-aspect opinions about current challenges and trends of regional higher education and give examples of the best local practices. Our audience represents wider international community of scholars and professionals in the field of higher education worldwide. The project is implemented as part of cooperation agreement between Higher School of Economics and Boston College Center of International Higher Education.

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