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European "Transparency Instruments": Driving the Modernisation of European Higher Education

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Abstract	This paper reviews the background and assesses the usefulness of the various transparency instruments (e.g. college guides, accreditation, classification systems, benchmarking models, global rankings). While there are differences between these various “instruments”, they can all be considered as part of the growing trend for greater transparency, accountability and comparability which began with college guides or handbooks around 1970. It will then place the most recent European developments (e.g. U-Map and U-Multirank) and other EU-funded initiatives (Expert Group on the Assessment of University-based Research and the 3-M Project on Third Mission) within this context. In doing so, the paper will discuss the extent to which these initiatives provide greater transparency and information for stakeholders, and the impact that such initiatives are having on higher education. The paper asks to what extent these initiatives support broad higher education policy objectives, e.g. the modernisation agenda of higher education institutions, their strategic orientations and the requirements of knowledge-driven societies.

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Chapter 19
European "Transparency Instruments": Driving the Modernisation of European Higher Education

Ellen Hazelkorn

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19.1 Globalisation and Accountability

Even before the global financial crisis of 2008 (GFC), there were question-marks over the degree to which higher education is accountable for its actions/activity to public stakeholders and students, and the needs and demands of society and the economy. Some of these questions arose in response to the ideological shift in many countries since the 1980s which favoured neo-liberal values of the market, business efficiency models and unquestioned support for public services. But the queries also focused on more fundamental issues.

Higher education and the application of knowledge has become the undisputed source of social, economic and political power in the age of globalisation. Its contribution to economic growth can be so significant that higher education is regularly described as "the engine of development in the new world economy" (Castells 1994, 14). It is considered an essential component of the productive economy and a key plank of government strategy for growth and innovation. Studies regularly show the strong correlation between educational attainment and social and economic advantages for individuals and society (OECD 2009). National pre-eminence is no longer sufficient to guarantee success. Seen in this context, it is not surprising that the productivity, quality and status of higher education institutions (HEI) and university-based research have become vital indicators of a nation's ability to compete successfully in the global economy.

This trigger has been amplified by the emergence and rising prominence of global rankings – an inevitable development in a globalised world. They have

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linked the investment attractiveness of nations with the talent-catching and knowledge-producing capacity of higher education. Universities are vital magnets for mobile talent, students and faculty – the crude oil of the twenty-first century. The world order is regularly presented as a league table, in which the fortunes of nations are reflected in the performance of universities. Recognising this significance, the Irish Minister for Education and Science, speaking on behalf of the European Council at the time of the first edition of the Shanghai *Academic Ranking of World Universities* (ARWU), said the "news is not all that good" that too few European universities featured among the world's top 500 (Dempsey 2004) – especially for a [AU2] region which seeks to be the "the world's most competitive and dynamic economy by 2010" (European Commission 2000). In the intervening years, the status of European universities has barely changed while the US continues to dominate global rankings, and China and other Asian countries have begun to challenge (European Commission 2011, 2; Levin 2010).

These developments have "sparked a public debate on university reform" (Dewatripont 2008, 6; Lambert and Butler 2006; Aghion et al. 2007; Ritzen 2010) across Europe and beyond, intensifying in the aftermath of the GFC, which has seen many countries struggling with large public deficits. How higher education is governed and managed has itself become a major policy issue. At the same time, there are heightened "concerns about quality, particularly the quality of graduates and research outputs", especially in publicly-funded systems (Harman 2011, 36). And the public is not the only stakeholder asking questions; students are concerned about escalating costs and tuition fees, when compared with employability, career opportunities and potential salary. Whether funded from public or private sources, rising costs prompted *The Economist* to suggest higher education could be the next bubble (Schumpeter 2011).

In response, governments have embarked on significant reshaping and "modernisation" of their higher education and research systems; the EU is no exception (Maassen and Stensaker 2011; Van Vught 2006). The common theme is value-for-money and efficiency, greater/better accountability and transparency, and ensuring investor confidence. Verifiable evidence of quality and excellence are two key mantras dominating higher education. A wide range of stakeholders are now taking an interest in the performance and productivity of higher education including national and regional governments, students and their parents, employers in the public and private sector, industry and businesses of all kinds, civil society, the media and the public opinion.

Initially, higher education appeared reluctant to engage fully with the questions suggesting it represented an unwarranted interference in "academic freedom" or was the unsavoury side of "new public management". Indeed, it is probably fair to say that higher education has been poor at showcasing willingness to demonstrate value beyond the L'Oreal mantra: "because we're worth it". The confluence of events has however heightened policy, public and student interest in the performance and productivity of higher education – at the organisational level, and also at the level of the individual faculty member and student. Calls for greater accountability and transparency are driving change across systems and institutions, in

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academic contracts, in service-level agreements with students, and with society at large. While higher education yearned for the time it would head the policy agenda, it never anticipated the intensity of scrutiny that would follow.

This paper provides an overview and brief assessment of the different transparency instruments – from college guides to global rankings. While there are differences in approaches and purposes, each instrument can be considered as part of the growing trend for greater transparency, accountability and comparability – the level of enquiry increasing in response/reaction to global and stakeholder pressure. It is in this context, that the European Union, beginning in 2005, provided funding to [AU3] develop alternative methodologies. Section 19.2 provides a typology of transparency instruments, comparing and contrasting their purpose, methodology and audience. Section 19.3 looks in more detail at recent EU initiatives, asking whether these initiatives provide robust alternatives. Finally, Sect. 19.4 discusses whether these instruments provide real accountability and transparency for stakeholders, and makes some recommendations.

19.2 Accountability and Transparency Instruments

University rankings had their origins in the US in the early part of the twentieth century. According to Webster (1986, 14, 107–119), the man who invented rankings was James McKeen Cattell; in 1910, he published *American Men of Science* to show the "'scientific strength' of leading universities using the research reputation of their faculty members". *U.S. News and World Report* Best College Rankings (USNWR) marks the second phase in 1983, providing consumer-oriented information to students and parents. Its rise to prominence coincided with the ideological and public "shift in the Zeitgeist towards the glorification of markets" (Karabel 2005, 514). Today, there are over 50 different nationally-oriented rankings (Salmi and Saroyan 2007; Usher and Jarvey 2010). Global rankings, which have become an international phenomenon since 2003, represent the latest and most popularised form of measuring and comparing higher education performance and organizational effectiveness (Shin 2011). As such, they should be seen alongside other formats and methodologies, inter alia, college guides, accreditation, quality assurance, benchmarking and classification (see Table 19.1). Operating in tandem but differing considerably with respect to purpose, policy orientation, stakeholder and customer, and methodology (see Table 19.2 and discussion below), the different formats form part of a broad movement for greater transparency and accountability.

19.2.1 Overview of Instruments

- COLLEGE GUIDES can be divided into three categories, depending upon whether they provide basic statistical information, a narrative account of

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Table 19.1 Typology of transparency and accountability instruments

College Guide: fulfil public service role, helping and informing domestic undergraduate students and their parents;
Accreditation: used to certify the legitimacy of a particular HEI including the authority to award qualifications, either directly or via another agency;
Quality Assurance, Evaluation and Assessment: used to assess quality of research, teaching & learning, institutional processes and/or governance structures in order to compare and improve performance;
Benchmarking: used to more strategically, effectively and efficiently manage and make decisions through systematic comparison of practice and performance with peer institutions;
Classification Systems: provides a typology or framework of higher education institutions to denote diversity usually according to mission and type;
National Rankings: national comparison of performance to underpin accreditation, aid resource allocation, improve quality, etc.;
Global Rankings: international comparison of institutional performance and reputation.

Source: Hazelkorn (2011, 41)

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"what it is really like" to be a student at a particular college or university or an audience-focused guide to help students find "good matches" (Hunter 1995, 5–9). This market has grown in response to the rising costs of higher education, student mobility, and the importance attached to a qualification for future career opportunities and quality of life. Many of these are published under a generic *Good University Guide* title and are widely used by domestic undergraduate students. While they began life in hard-copy format, the rise of the internet and new forms of communication have revolutionised access to information, stimulating growth of many on-line versions. The type of information varies from one publication to the next, but broadly they provide information about the overall student experience, e.g. student housing, social life, costs to resources and education/teaching quality. They are developed and promoted by commercial organisations, which are a clear driver for the annual updates and supplements.

- As the number and range of higher education providers has expanded to meet demand, ACCREDITATION has taken on increasing significance. Undertaken by governments directly or through specialized agencies, it recognizes the legitimacy or authority of particular HEIs to offer programmes of instruction and award qualifications. It focuses on the capacity of an institution to achieve the appropriate standard, in addition to improving and expanding provision in accordance with national qualifications framework and institutional missions. The process may be considered "voluntary" and is generally non-competitive but without accreditation HEIs cannot operate or receive government funding – and herein lies the influence or power of government even in more diffusely regulated regimes such as the US. The trend towards enhanced government involvement and regulation reflects increasing "pressures of accountability and concern about the quality of provisions and outputs" (Harman 2011, 46). Accreditation

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Table 19.2 Comparison of characteristics and uses of transparency instruments

	College guide	Accreditation	Quality assurance, evaluation and assessment	Benchmarking	Classification	Rankings
Goals	Student information	Recognize legitimacy or authority	Enhance quality	Enhance quality, performance & competitiveness	Differentiate & categorise HEIs	Compare performance
Stakeholder	Media organisation or publisher	Government Government agency Professional organisation	Government HEIs Government agency	HEIs Government	Government HEIs	National government agency Media or research organisation
Actions	College information & description	Recognize programmes or level instruction Award qualifications	Quality assurance Quality audit Quality enhancement & improvement	Share data Share best practice Staff development & mentoring Peer-to-peer	Categorise by mission or specialisation Categorise by student cohort or programme Categorise by pedagogy, research, engagement, etc.	Ranking by institution Ranking by field or discipline Ranking by region or nation
Indicators	Student life Fees & living costs Education & teaching	Institutional mission & breadth of provision Leadership & governance Teaching & learning Research	Teaching & learning Research Services	Teaching & learning Research Student services Engagement & Third mission Central services	Teaching & learning Research Engagement & Third mission activity Student or faculty performance	Research Reputation Staff/student ratio

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Table 19.2 (continued)

	College guide	Accreditation	Quality assurance, evaluation and assessment	Benchmarking	Classification	Rankings
Data sources	Institutional data Student feedback On-site visits	Institutional data National data	Institutional data National data Survey information Peer-to-peer	Institutional data National data	Institutional data National data Survey information	Institutional data National data Public data
Link to policy	Not directly	Institutional legal status Degree awarding authority Operational funding Research funding	Institutional legal status Degree awarding authority Operational funding Research funding	Influence policy direction if led by government	Funding Accreditation Status	Funding Accreditation Status
[AU4] Customers	Students & their parents	Government HEIs Students	HEIs Government Students	HEI	Government, Students & parents Employers, industry & business Civil society Foundations & philanthropy Other HEIs Media & public opinion	Government, Students & parents Employers, industry & business Civil society Foundations & philanthropy Other HEIs Banks and rating agencies Media & public opinion

t2.30 Source: Based on Shin (2011, 26)

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uses similar criteria as rankings, e.g. faculty reputation and research productivity, number of research students and ratio to total student population, etc. – but there is increasing attention to output factors (Brittingham 2011).

Accreditation may also be undertaken at the programme level, e.g. business, medicine, architecture, engineering or law, by their respective professional organisation to ensure an overall quality standard to reassure the public, students and the profession. In this way, the profession asserts control over its bailiwick, as in many instances, graduates are refused permission to practice in a particular field unless the programme has been accredited. While programme accreditation may be voluntary, the imprimatur of, for example, the Association to Advance the Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), Accreditation Council for Business Schools Programs (sic) (ACBSP) or European Quality Improvement System (Equis) run by the European Foundation for Management Development suggests it is an essential quality-mark. In a global professional labour market, accreditation brings necessary international recognition and is used by prospective students to identify a good place to study.

- QUALITY ASSURANCE "refers to national and institutional systems designed to assess and improve the quality of teaching and research, and provide relevant information to key stakeholders on the academic standards and employment of graduates" (Harman 2011, 36). Conducted at the whole-of-institution or sub-institutional level, these systems emerged during the 1980s and have acquired "more systematic and rigorous approaches" over subsequent decades (Harman 2011, 40). Their purpose is to assess, monitor and audit academic standards, on a regular basis, so that all stakeholders can be confident of the quality of student outcomes. In Europe, this process is generally driven at the nation-state level, but there have been efforts to establish a European framework and standard, to underpin student mobility. In response to 2003 Berlin communiqué, ENQA developed "an agreed set of standards, procedures and guidelines on quality assurance" and explored "ways of ensuring an adequate peer review system for quality assurance and/or accreditation agencies or bodies" (ENQA 2005). The way may also be "sub-contracted out" to other organisations; for example, the EUA Institutional Evaluation Programme is often conducted under the auspices of a national agency using the principles of self-evaluation and peer-to-peer exchange to encourage continual improvement rather than top-down imposition of criteria. The focus of most QA processes has been on teaching and learning, but more recently attention has turned to the administrative units.

  Research assessment is a multifaceted review of performance using peer-review and quantitative indicators; conducted by public agencies, it has become a major policy driver. As public funding of scientific-scholarly activity has risen, questions have been asked about value-for-money, impact and benefit. Research assessment is not without controversy because in addition to monitoring performance, it is often used to allocate resources and drive differentiation between academics and HEIs (AUBR 2010, 53–55). The UK's research assessment exercise (RAE) is a good example. Organized every 5 years since 1986, it

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is based on institutional submissions in subject areas or units of assessment, which are ranked by a panel of subject specialist peer reviewers. The results determine the level of resource allocation. This is in sharp contrast to other systems that focus mainly on quality assurance, such as in the Netherlands (Spaapen et al. 2007; for a summary of different systems, see AUBR 2010, 84–144). In recent years, concern about the financial cost, the human and time resources, and bureaucracy, plus allegations of "gaming", have led to the adoption of indicator-based assessment systems using data sources. Results are often published in a hierarchical format called a "league table". This practice has led to a growing convergence between assessment and rankings (Clarke 2005).

- BENCHMARKING has transformed institutional comparison processes into a strategic tool, helping higher education leaders, governing authorities and governments to systematically compare practice and performance with peer institutions or countries. Benchmarking can also be used as a diagnostic tool underpinning a programme of continuous improvement. The process is generally voluntary, and often justifies joining or establishing an international network; indeed, many of these networks indicate that sharing good practice is a key objective (Labi 2011). Alternatively, HEIs may identify a basket of peer institutions with which to compare performance or activity by choosing an appropriate sub-set within one of the global or national rankings. While not generally considered a transparency instrument, benchmarking uses soft power to improve quality, performance and competitiveness through peer-to-peer learning and mentoring. This is the approach used by the European Centre for the Strategic Management of Universities (ESMU) which says benchmarking is a "powerful management tool designed to help modernise higher education management and to promote the attractiveness of European Higher Education". Data exchange for strategic decision-making formed the basis of unique partnership formed by ten Canadian universities (Proulx 2010). A different approach is used by the OECD, whose Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) intends that the publication of comparative national data on educational performance will jolt governments into assessing policy in order to achieve improvements.
- CLASSIFICATION SYSTEMS provide a typology or framework to "describe, characterize, and categorize colleges and universities" usually according to mission. The most well-known is the US Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education (CCIHE); first established in 1973, it provides an all-purpose basis to "represent [the]…diversity [of HEIs] by grouping roughly comparable institutions into meaningful, analytically manageable categories" (McCormick and Zhao 2005, 52–53; Jaschik 2005). While the audience for classification systems is primarily policy makers, HEIs or researchers, they have had a considerable influence on how different institutions are described and describe themselves – with positive and perverse effects. The former has brought greater clarity and understanding about the differences between types of HEIs, while the latter has confused institutional change with "striving" (O'Meara 2007, 123–124). To eradicate the worst offences, Carnegie was redesigned in 2005 creating a

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multi-dimensional system whereby HEIs can reside in multiple categories. *U-Map* (see below), the European version has been developed as a profiling instrument for policymakers and HEIs.

- Over the last decade, the number and type of UNIVERSITY RANKINGS have grown exponentially, in response to "public demand for transparency and information that institutions and government have not been able to meet on their own" (Usher and Savino 2006, 38). Today, there are national rankings in more than 50 countries, and ten global rankings of varying degrees of popularity, reliability and trustworthiness. There are also discipline-based rankings, e.g. medicine, law and business, and ranking by higher education system or specialist theme, e.g. green agenda, community colleges, contribution to community/city. Global rankings have become a phenomenon since the 2003 publication of *ARWU*, quickly followed by, inter alia, *Webometrics* (produced by the Spanish National Research Council), *THE-QS World University Ranking* (*THE QS*) 2004–2009, Taiwan *Performance Ranking of Scientific Papers for Research Universities* (HEEACT) in 2007, *The Leiden Ranking* (2008) by the Centre for Science and Technology Studies (CWTS) and *SCImago* (2009) by a team of Spanish researchers. More recently, *QS World University Rankings* (2010), and *THE*-Thomson Reuters World University Ranking (*THE*-TR) (2010) have emerged, the latter representing a significant market intervention by the producer of a major bibliometric database. The EU is sponsoring U-Multirank (2011).

[AU5]

Rankings' popularity is largely related to their simplicity – but this is also the main source of criticism (Hazelkorn 2009, 2011; Rauhvargers 2011). They compare HEIs using a range of different indicators, which are weighted differently according to "some criterion or set of criteria which the compiler(s) of the list believe … measure or reflect … academic quality" (Webster 2001, 5). The choice of indicators and weightings reflect the priorities or value judgments of the producers; there is no such thing as an objective ranking. Given the difficulties of identifying meaningful internationally comparable data, most global rankings focus unduly on research. They also focus primarily on whole institutions, although there is an increasing attention to sub-institutional rankings at the field of science level (natural science, mathematics, engineering, computer science, social sciences) or by discipline or profession (e.g. business, law, medicine, graduate schools). Rankings have become a more powerful tool because of the "appearance of scientific objectivity" as a means to measure performance (Ehrenberg 2001, 1).

Due to their popularity, few countries and institutions are unaffected by them. The users of rankings exceed the original target audience of students and their parents, and embrace government and government agencies, industry and the civil society, businesses and employers, other HEIs, philanthropists, public opinion and the media. The latter is both a producer, e.g. The *Times Higher Education*, *Sunday Times*, *Macleans, USNWR* and *The Guardian*, and promoter of rankings regularly covering results and reaction. There are over 16,000 HEIs worldwide, yet rankings have encouraged a fascination with the standing and trajectory of the top 100 universities – less than 1%.

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19.2.2 Discussion

Each transparency instrument has developed in reaction to the increasingly more inquisitive and demanding environment in which higher education operates. College guides responded to the massification of higher education, the diverse array of new models of higher education, greater mobility and the need for students to make better informed choices about where to study. As market principles intruded further, most countries witnessed the emergence and expansion of private and for-profit providers, franchising and subsidiaries – sometimes of international providers. In some countries, there has been a growing controversy about "diploma mills" (CHEA n.d.). The transformation of internationalisation from a student cultural exchange of short duration to an intrinsic part of undergraduate and most critically post-graduate study is also a key driver. How can students learn about different HEIs if they are unknown outside their own national boundary or basic information is unavailable or difficult to understand?

As a consequence and arguably of necessity, there has been a need to regulate the marketplace. This has led inexorably towards greater government involvement either directly in the process or in the use of the outcomes in policy and decision making. Hence, the "voluntary" or "self-regulating" aspect of many transparency instruments hides the reality that failure to participate can have significant implications for institutional legitimacy, funding or reputation. Even the US, where higher education is largely the remit of individual states (Tierney 2009), has seen the progressive incursion of federal oversight; the Commission on the Future of Higher Education or Spelling Commission controversially recommended the "creation of a consumer-friendly information database on higher education" and the "development of a *privacy-protected* higher education information system that collects, analyzes and uses student-level data as a vital tool for accountability, policy-making, and consumer choice" (CFHE 2006, 21–22). Transparency instruments at supra-national level, e.g. those designed by the EU or OECD, represent a paradigm shift. Voluntary internalised processes or self-regulation with confidential outcomes are no longer acceptable. This is evidenced also by the fact that with the exception of college guides and global rankings which are commercially-oriented, the process is driven directly or indirectly by government; benchmarking can operate at either the national or institutional level. Rankings effectively put the issue of higher education quality, performance and productivity onto the public and policy agenda. This suggests that higher education is effectively losing its role as the primary guardian of quality (Harman 2011, 51; Dill and Beerkens 2010, 313–315).

19.3 Recent European Developments

19.3.1 Overview of Initiatives

The publication and rising obsession with global rankings, especially regarding what they mean for European competitiveness, has been a key driver behind the EU's involvement. The Bologna Process, beginning 2000, anticipated the need for

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enhanced convergence across national systems to create a coherent system of higher education able to compete internationally (van Damme 2009, 40–41). The Sorbonne Declaration (1998) said the "harmonization of the architecture of the European higher education system", paved the way for Bologna with the objective that "the Europe we are building is not only that of the Euro, the banks and the economy, it must be a Europe of knowledge as well". While Sorbonne represented a "quantum leap" in European higher education policy (Witte 2006, 124), it was the arrival of global rankings in 2003 that was the clarion call for urgent reform or "modernisation". The results of *ARWU* and *THE-QS*, first published in 2003 and 2004, respectively, challenged the perceived wisdom about the reputation and excellence of European universities especially when placed alongside the Lisbon strategy's objectives. The German Ministry of Education and Research put the situation in context:

> We have a lot of very good universities across the board in Germany, a high average standard, but what we lack are really top universities … The latest ranking table clearly shows why it is that Germany needs top universities (Dufner 2004).

A year later, June 2005, the German government launched the *Exzellenzinitiative* (Initiative for Excellence). Similarly worried by France's overall weak showing in the rankings, the French Senate issued a report arguing its researchers were disadvantaged in favour of English-speaking institutions (Bourdin 2007–2008). In 2008, under the auspices of the French Presidency of the European Commission, a conference was organised championing a new EU ranking (EU Presidency 2008). *Europa 2020* restated the challenge: "Europe must act: … According to the Shanghai index, only two European universities are in the world's top 20" (European Commission 2010).

Enhancing transparency and boosting performance and competitiveness are integral to the success of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and the European Research Area (ERA), and meeting the goals of the *Lisbon Strategy* and *Europe 2020*. Bologna was predicated on the free movement of students, faculty and workers across national boundaries facilitated by "trustworthy information and with the assurance that their performance will be recognised in other parts of Europe" (Reichert 2009, 107). The vision was equally outward-looking, on the basis that to encourage and facilitate talent and investment from around the world requires a system easily understood and harmonious and not constrained by parochialism. By stressing the importance of measuring performance and competitiveness, the European Commission is saying the future will be based on demonstrated merit rather than assertion.

- "Universities should be funded more for what they do than for what they are, by focusing funding on relevant outputs rather than inputs…" (2006, 7);
- The "challenges posed by globalisation require that the European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area be fully open to the world and that Europe's universities aim to become worldwide competitive players" (2007, 3);
- The "performance of education systems must be enhanced, and the international attractiveness of Europe's higher education reinforced" (2010, 34).
- The "potential of European higher education institutions to fulfil their role in society and contribute to Europe's prosperity remains underexploited. Europe is no longer setting the pace in the global race for knowledge and talent, while emerging economies are rapidly increasing their investment in higher education" (2011, 2).

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Thus, in 2005, the EU sponsored the first phase of a European classification system, launched as U-Map in 2009 (van Vught 2009), and in 2009, a consortium was established to test the feasibility of a multi-dimensional ranking, launched as *U-Multirank* in 2011 (DGEAC 2008; CHERPA 2010a, b). In parallel and feeding into the process, an Expert Group, in 2008, was asked to propose a comprehensive methodological approach for research assessment (AUBR 2010, 10), and another project was funded to identify, measure and compare Third Mission activities (E3M Study 2011, 4).

- U-MAP is the European classification system; based on the Carnegie system, it aims to map/profile the diversity of European higher education landscape. Its multi-dimensional format, enabled by interactive web-based technologies, facilitates different "users and stakeholders to make deliberate choices about which dimensions are relevant for their purposes" (Bartelse and van Vught 2009, 68). By broadening the dimensions of comparability to include teaching and learning, student, research, knowledge exchange, international orientation, and regional engagement, U-Map is making an important statement about the breadth of higher education's endeavours and a critical comment about the narrowness of existing practices, most notably global rankings.
- *ASSESSING EUROPE'S UNIVERSITY-BASED RESEARCH* was the outcome of an Expert Group tasked with developing a multidimensional methodology to assess university-based research. It also challenged the unidimensional approach of rankings by stating that there is "no single set of indicators capable of capturing the complexity of research and research assessment" (AUBR 2010, 12). In order to value the full breadth of research across all disciplines, assessment should (1) combine peer assessment and bibliometric indicators, in other words, qualitative and quantitative process; (2) include information on the impact of research on teaching; (3) embrace self-evaluation as a key component in the assessment process; (4) measure societal impact and benefit; and (5) adopt a multi-level approach focusing on "units of assessment positioned somewhere between the individual researcher and the entire institution" (AUBR 2010, 13). Finally, any assessment process should *a priori* consider possible unintended consequences and guard against perverse incentives.
- E3M/EUROPEAN INDICATORS AND RANKING METHODOLOGY FOR UNIVERSITY THIRD MISSION sought to demonstrate the breadth of European higher education by highlighting continuing education, technology transfer and innovation, and social engagement activity. By validating basic indicators, the objective is "to create a ranking methodology to benchmark European Third Mission Services providers of HEI" to "allow funding bodies and industry to better understand the Third Mission and assess institutions based on performance" (E3M 2011).
- U-MULTIRANK, the sister of U-Map, was conceived to directly challenge the dominance of global rankings at a conceptual and concrete level; by demonstrating the full diversity of higher education missions and activities, European HEIs might perform better against peers and students can "make informed study

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choices" (European Commission 2011, 10). Using techniques developed by the Centre for Higher Education (CHE) for its own ranking, U-Multirank is based on four design principles: (1) user-driven whereby each individual or stakeholder group can rank according to his/her own preferences, (2) multi-dimensional with information collected according to five different characteristics, (3) peer-group comparability whereby HEIs of similar mission are compared, and (4) multi-level analysis whereby HEIs can be examined at the whole institutional level but also at disciplinary or department level. It plans to link with the OECD AHELO project which is a systematic attempt to measure student learning outcomes – a higher education sister of PISA.

19.3.2 Discussion

The intention of European initiatives is to challenge the narrow conceptual framework and methodology of global rankings in which older, well-endowed (US) universities with big-lab bio-medical research tend to dominate. Imposing a single set of criteria, a "one-size-fits-all" approach, has led to a growing perception among policymakers and HEIs, and broader society, of a single model of "world class" university based on a narrow concept of excellence. This has encouraged downgrading of teaching, ignoring the diversity of higher education activity and institutional missions, and underestimating the extent of Europe's research. From a methodological standpoint, the objective has been to highlight the diversity of European higher education and research, clustering and classifying institutions – for use by students, higher education, policymakers, and other stakeholders. This involved identifying the different dimensions of HEIs (U-Map), the breadth of research (AUBR), and "third mission (E3M), and ultimately linking these results to a ranking system (U-Multirank). [AU6]

The projects were launched with great fanfare, but the ultimate ambition that U-Multirank would be the alternative global ranking has been tempered. The number of HEIs and countries volunteering has been fewer and more restricted than hoped (van Vught 2011). Enough progress has been made to underwrite phase 2, but the limitations of the choice indicators and the absence of meaningful internationally comparative data means it will suffer from many of the same problems afflicting other rankings. Indeed, by the time it overcomes these difficulties, the wind may have gone from its sails. Moreover, while U-Multirank says it will not produce an ordinal ranking, this role could be undertaken by others once the data becomes manifest. Thus, it may be shrewd to retake the advantage by asserting itself as a benchmarking or information tool – and making a bold statement by renaming itself accordingly.

The link between the different projects is potentially more profound, and fits with the overarching drive to fundamentally restructure European higher education under the rubric of "modernisation". While there are many statements applauding the diversity of European higher education, there is on-going criticism

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that too many mediocre universities are responsible for Europe's poor showing in global rankings.

> …higher education institutions too often seek to compete in too many areas, while comparatively few have the capacity to excel cross the board. As a consequence, too few European higher education institutions are recognised as world class in the current, research-oriented global university rankings… (European Commission 2011, 2; Butler 2007)

Linking U-Multirank with U-Map may provide sustenance to both groups; it will enable different institutional missions to be profiled, but it will also facilitate greater demarcation between and within categories. Likely policy implications include greater system differentiation but also institutional stratification and targeted resource allocation, at the national and European level. However, given the uneven distribution of capability and capacity across the EU's 32 member and candidate countries and HEIs, it is not clear if the full implications for individual institutions and member states are understood. There is likely to be greater hierarchical differentiation, with increasing concentration of resources in a handful of institutions and countries – in other words, more peaks. While global rankings may be riddled with methodological and definitional problems, they have unquestionably commanded significant policy attention.

19.4 Transparency Instruments Driving Modernisation

What started as small-scale nationally-focused college guides for students and their parents has been transformed into a rapidly expanding global intelligence information business providing some transparency about higher education for a wide range of stakeholders and the basis for the modernisation and restructuring of European HEIs and systems. This is undoubtedly a far cry from the initial intentions of these initiatives, but is reflective of the forces now shaping higher education. The adage "it's too important a matter to be left to the…" comes to mind.

To what extent do these different transparency instruments uphold the principles of the Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué (2009) to "fully recognize the value of various missions of higher education, ranging from teaching and research to community services and engagement in social cohesion and cultural development"? Do they provide the quality of information required for different stakeholders to make real decisions? The basic answer is: it depends upon the purpose and the individual user.

19.4.1 Using Instruments Cautiously

"Which university is best" can be asked differently depending upon who is asking the question and which question is being asked. Is the user a student choosing a college/university in his/her own country or abroad or a government agency seeking to

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make decisions about resource allocation? The multi-user perspective adopted by both U-Map and U-Multirank seek to overcome some of these difficulties by empowering the user to select those indicators most appropriate for their purpose, whether the user is a student, peer HEI or policymaker. But the choice is still from a pre-selected set of indicators determined by the provider. In contrast, most QA and benchmarking processes are sui-generis, e.g. they are custom designed for the purpose. This enables a significant degree of flexibility but it also makes cross-jurisdictional comparison more difficult.

In moving away from self-regulation, policymakers, and the public, have become obsessed with quantitative indicators such as those presented by rankings on the basis that "perfect" information exists. Is it possible to measure higher education quality through measurements of quantification? While data collection at the national level is relatively easy, the international situation is complex. National contexts defy simple comparisons. HEIs are complex institutions; they provide education from undergraduate to PhD level, conduct research, participate in outreach initiatives, and are a source of innovation and entrepreneurship. As a group, they sit within vastly different national context, underpinned by different value systems, meeting the needs of demographically, ethnically and culturally diverse populations, and responding to complex and challenging political-economic environments. In such circumstances, it is difficult to imagine a single methodology that can transcribe complex institutional activities into a wealth of quantitative information.

Because these instruments incentivize behaviour, the choice of indicators is critical. Yet, there is no objective or universal set of meaningful indicators for measuring higher education quality. The most common focus is: students' entry level, acceptance/selectivity ratio, completion/graduation rates and employability of graduates; quality of faculty and PhD students; research capacity and infrastructure: quality of facilities; and alumni contributions, which, in turn, influence an institution's financial resources, per-student expenditures, faculty/student ratios, faculty compensations, etc. Care needs to be taken that the results do not disproportionately benefit older well-endowed universities rather than newer public institutions. To paraphrase Einstein, are we measuring what counts or counting what can be easily measured (Hazelkorn 2011, 59–77; Martin and Sauvageot 2011)?

Measuring student entry level or the proportion of students admitted at a particular level may perversely discourage widening participation. Entry scores and standardized testing often simply reflect socio-economic advantage, and unintentionally discriminate against students from culturally or ethnically diverse backgrounds (Hazelkorn 2012). Undoubtedly, having lots of bright students around makes for a more challenging academic environment, but as Hawkins (2008) remarks, "many colleges recruit great students and then graduate great students [but is] that because of the institution, or the students?" If the

> criterion of success is "value added," it may be better to admit students who are academically very weak, rather than those with a strong record, since presumably it will be easier to raise the performance of those who start low than of those who are already performing well (Trow 2006, 579; see also AHELO).

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Completion and graduation rates can skew assessment processes, while measuring employability can be difficult during a recession. Many instruments seek to measure the quality of teaching or the student experience through proxies, such as faculty/student ratio, on the basis that the smaller the ratio, the better. But, in reality this may say more about the funding or efficiency level of the institution and system.

There are more fundamental difficulties with the way different instruments consider teaching and research. By counting students or research outputs, teaching and research are portrayed as homogeneous blocks of activity. Yet, there is important variation in educational provision, pedagogy, curriculum and disciplinary approaches ignored by this method. The critique of how bibliometric practices privilege basic big-lab bio/medical science research (Hazelkorn 2011, 70–74) still ignores the fact that using citations to measure research impact overlooks impact and benefit to society and the economy. To get around this deficit, some instruments count patents and licenses, but this is a very limited interpretation of knowledge transfer as the E3M project revealed. Focusing only on research which can be easily measured disregards the diversity of research fields and methods of inquiry across the full spectrum of discovery, integration, application and engagement (Boyer 1990, 1996). At a time when society's challenges require multi- and interdisciplinary solutions, these instruments reinforce a traditional ivory-tower form of inquiry (Hazelkorn 2009). Rather than promoting diverse missions, this approach perpetuates a crude binary between research and teaching, and world-class and regional institutions – whereby these characteristics are seen as oppositional when in reality they may be compatible.

Correcting for these conceptual and methodological shortcomings is vital to establishing a process appropriate to the twenty-first century. A multi-tool approach is important but can/should the different instruments be used in tandem, e.g. can rankings be linked with classification or accreditation or benchmarking? One of the main criticisms of rankings is that they compare different types of HEIs using a single set of criteria, e.g. one-size-fits-all. In response, governments see merit in linking rankings with classification. For example, U-Multirank is linked with U-Map so that only peer institutions are ranked, e.g. apples with apples rather than apples with pears. But, there can be dangers with this process. Classification systems tend

> to be retrospective, based on observations from the past. And it is static rather than dynamic: the fixed categories of a classification or fixed classifications of individual entities may not keep up with phenomena that are subject to change over time (McCormick and Zhao 2005, 53).

Some governments are also linking accreditation with ranking; in other words, using ranking to assess quality and then utilizing the result to decide whether particular HEIs should/should not be accredited. In some instances, governments have invited ranking organisations to undertake an assessment of their HEIs (CHE 2011; Anon 2011). This process raises alarm bells because, as discussed above, rankings do not assess of the higher education quality. Because it's a hierarchical system, rankings effectively signal that some institutions or disciplines are more important not necessarily better than others.

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Finally, governments and institutions may see virtue in using rankings to drive improved performance at a national level, particularly in the circumstances of a burgeoning number of institutions. Ranking indicators are often rolled-into performance indicators used for resource allocation (Hazelkorn 2011, 163). HEIs have used rankings in a similar fashion (Hazelkorn 2011, chapt. 4), and as the basis for benchmarking, primarily as the basis for identifying a basket of comparable institutions (Proulx 2011). However, rankings are too limited to conduct a meaningful analysis – the indicators are not appropriate and the level of granularity insufficient to provide real usefulness and comparability. Ultimately, it's not evident that the various rankings, despite modifications, "effectively address information deficiencies in the higher education market in socially beneficial ways" (Dill and Beerkens 2010, 318).

19.4.2 Recommendations and Conclusions

What is the best way forward? Usually transparency, accountability, comparability and information are linked together – but there are differences between them, and poorly conceived and operated instruments (whether self-regulation, market or government) can produce perverse and unintended consequences.

More information is certainly needed – but this must be in a format that stakeholders find useful and meaningful. The EU's efforts in this regard are admirable but it's not evident that either *U-Map* or *U-Multirank*, in their current formats, are instruments that students or other stakeholder will easily use. Would more indicators solve these problems? Yes and no. There is certainly a need to identify more appropriate ways to assess and showcase higher education performance. Both AUBR and E3M identify a wide range of indicators, but the multiplicity of indicators and methodologies may only serve to highlight the complexity (and cost) of transparency. And, simply publishing QA reports which may be jargon-laded and impenetrable for students and other stakeholders fools no-one. Ultimately, new media technologies and formats, such as social media, consumer websites (see Boffey 2011) and the internet, and the use of search engines and open source facilities, will dramatically transform the debate over the coming years – and put more control into the hands of users.

What actions might be helpful?

1. Engage a wider public discussion around "socially valued" higher education outcomes in order to establish rigorous criteria and standards of quality. It should identify valid indicators for what matters, including improvements in performance not just absolute performance, and accord parity of esteem across the system to diverse institutional profiles in order to facilitate public comparability, democratic decision-making and institutional benchmarking (Hazelkorn 2011, 202–206; Dill and Beerkens 2010, 321, 333). There are limits to existing data and data collection, but it's important to measure what's important not

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what's easy. To be meaningful, any comparison should be conducted at, say, 5 year intervals.

2. Establish common guidelines and/or format setting out minimum information which all HEIs must provide – as a public good – about the quality of the total student experience. This should be qualitative and quantitative of value and importance to domestic and international students and parents.
3. Benchmarking is a more appropriate instrument because the range of indicators can be better tied to strategic and public objectives and institutional mission, and it puts the onus on HEIs to develop a culture of continuous improvement, autonomous strategic management and leadership capability. These attributes are necessary to meet the objectives of *Europe 2020*.
4. Recognize, incentivize and reward the full spectrum of higher education's endeavours across teaching, research and engagement at the institutional and individual academic level. This is key. For example, while political and institutional leaders proclaim the value of teaching, favour collaborative interdisciplinary research or encourage third-mission and regional engagement, recruitment, tenure and promotional policies reward research or traditional academic activity. This applies to incentives for Vice-Chancellors/Presidents, who are often hired and rewarded on the basis of making their institutions more elite.

Ultimately the purpose is to develop instruments which can help policymakers, HEIs, students and other stakeholders better understand the system, and make clearer judgements. But aligning systems and institutions to indicators set by others for commercial or other purposes threatens the very foundations of national sovereignty and society. There are also lessons for higher education. It must respond in a constructive manner to the need for greater transparency, and identify smarter ways to assess and demonstrate impact and benefit. Good data collection provides the basis for autonomous strategic leadership and evidence-based decision-making, and underpins quality assurance and discussions about what constitutes success. Benchmarking enables HEIs to identify peer institutions and programmes, and share good practice. Students need confidence in the information, so that they can make informed judgements about their studies and future life-chances and opportunities. Ultimately, political and societal support for higher education, for systems dependent upon public funding and on tuition fees, can only be maintained by quality profiling, performance enhancement and value-for-money which provides (public) investor confidence.

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[AU8]

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Author Queries

Chapter No.: 19 0001494944

Queries	Details Required	Author's Response
AU1	Please check affiliation details for the author "Ellen Hazelkorn" for appropriateness.	
AU2	The citations Europa (2000), Maassen and Stensaker (2010), and E3M (2001) have been changed into European Commission (2000), Maassen and Stensaker (2011), and E3M (2011), respectively. Please check if appropriate.	
AU3	Please check the inserted section cross-references.	
AU4	This should be (,) delete from here. Please check.	
AU5	Usher and Savino (2006) and EU Presidency (2008) are not listed in the references list. Please provide.	
AU6	Please provide corresponding closing quotes in the sentence starting with "This involved identifying the…".	
AU7	Footnote 1 has been set as "Acknowledgements". Please check if this is fine.	
AU8	Please provide in-text citation for the following references: Deem and Brehony (2005), and van Vug et al. (2010).	
AU9	Please provide page range in the reference Boffey (2011).	
AU10	Please provide volume number in the reference Butler (2007), if appropriate.	
AU11	Please provide article title in the reference Dempsey (2004).	
AU12	Please provide page range in the reference Ehrenberg (2001).	
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