Paradigms of "Quality university" and of academic rankings

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Abstract
During the last two decades, world's prevailing reactions to the practice of ranking universities have evolved from disdain, unsubstantiated arguments about their contribution to 'academic drift', the negative impact of rankings on institutional diversification, or the 'turning of trust into commodity', to a more balanced view of accepting stake-holders' demands for a type of information rankings that can provide and even recognizing the value of rankings. During the last decade, the conversation of many informed observers has shifted to focus on how the methods behind rankings can be as clear and reliable as possible as well as to go beyond reflecting foremost research-based institutional performance. Although a positive view of rankings is not unanimously shared, it is likely that the naysayers are fighting a losing battle. The number of meetings and references to ranking of higher education confirms a wide interest and attention to this phenomenon. There is now increasing evidence that ranking systems are here to stay, and are having a growing effect on global dialogues about higher education quality and accountability. In recent years, this effect is beginning to be seen at a policy level and not just as a matter of curiosity for students and university leaders. This paper is presenting - comparatively and critically - the worldwide most important systems of academic rankings, and implicitly, the evolution of their "quality university" models.

Keywords: educaţie, calitate, universitate, evaluarea calităţii, clasamente academice, modele.

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