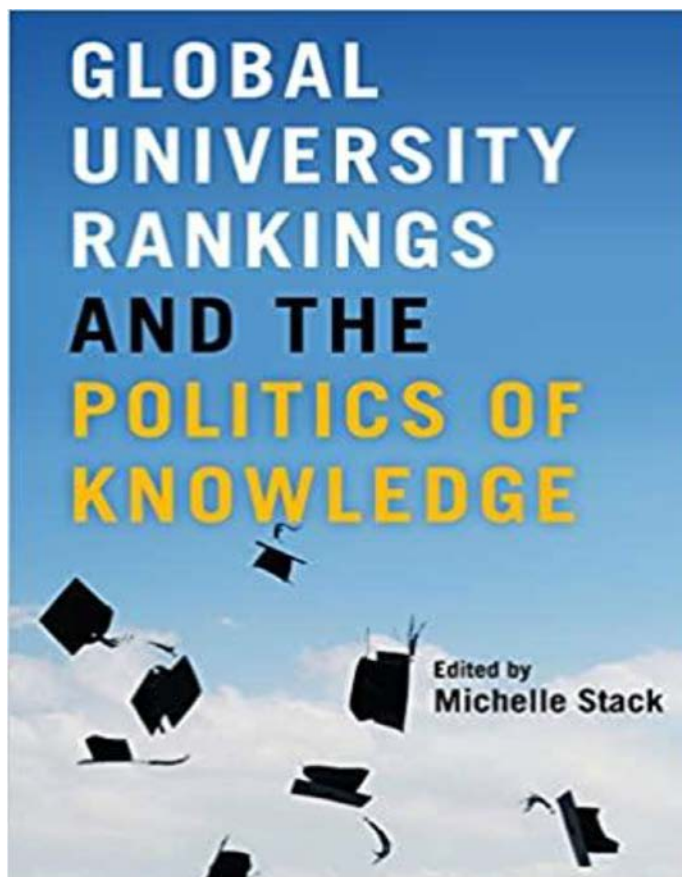


In Search of Hidden Stories behind Global University Rankings and Politicization of Universality of Knowledge



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The concept of 'Knowledge society' is precursored by the idea of 'Post-industrial society'. The remarkable transition in the societal system was initiated in the 1960s, while people were entering into a new type of society beyond the industrial and the agrarian era altogether. The first complete picture of the 'Post-industrial society' was presented by the distinguished sociologist Daniel Bell in 1973. According to Bell, 'Service occupations grow at the expense of those producing material

goods, and white-collar workers come to outnumber blue-collar workers employed in factories'. The work in the service sector requires stronger knowledge-base and intellectual ability compared to the work required in industrial occupations. The rapid growth of service-sectors was a landmark over a decade, i.e., during the late Sixties to late Seventies and continued afterwards. Bell opined that hypothetical knowledge and its application in different knowledge-domains or subject-areas create theories along with empirics that turns out as the main strategic resource of society. The concerned people involved with the creation and distribution of knowledge in the forms of theories and empirics (scientists and professionals of all kinds) had become the leading social group, replacing industrialists and entrepreneurs. As the knowledge-driven economy was the major motivating force, the name 'Knowledge Society',

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coined by Peter Drucker, gained importance over time. The knowledge became a key economic resource in course of time with the progress of science from different angles. The term 'Knowledge society' essentially describes the societies, which are economically and culturally iconized by the intensive dependence on their potential to create scientific and technological knowledge. Information and knowledge, in this way, are becoming a special type of good or strategic resource in its own right. The scientists always develop the new knowledge and discoveries contributed by others' earlier contributions that was reflected by Isaac Newton's evergreen metaphor, "If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of Giants."

This book envisages the giant from different viewpoints. It is divided into three sections. The first part (Theme 1) entitled "Geopolitics, Rankings and Journal Impact Factors" describes the ways in which global university rankings interact. In the second part (Theme 2) entitled "Cost of Knowledge, Rankings and Journal Impact Factor," the authors show how rankings connect to the education industry, in particular in journal impact factors (IF) and a monopoly of academic publishers. The third section (Theme 3) entitled "Influence of Rankings on Institutional and Individual Well-Being" shows that rankings have real impacts on the day-to-day lives of students, faculty and staff within and beyond the university. There are three articles under the first and second themes each and the Theme-3 consists of four articles resulting in ten articles in total.

The first article (Theme 1) entitled "International University Rankings as Cultural Imperialism: Implications for the Global South" by M. Lloyd and I Ordorika discussed the problematic impact of Academic Ranking of World University (ARWU) introduced by Shanghai Jiao Tong University (2003), Times Higher Education Ranking or THE (2004), QS Ranking of UK and other such ranking systems on individual institutions. There exist around twenty other ranking systems today, but ARWU, THE and QS are most significant in influencing policy-makers in many countries. The authors opined that these ranking systems basically set the yardstick on the scale of Harvard University, the typical representation of elite class education system and called it sarcastically as "Harvardometer". The authors carried out an excellent literature review to present different debates over rankings. The debates resulted actually due to underlying power politics in higher education that originated due to the US-based cultural imperialism environment. Such ranking systems actually bulldoze the cultural diversity and social pluralism under the piston of Global-North-based socio-cultural and socio-political hegemonies. The second article entitled "Unfolding National Approaches to University Rankings in Central Asia, Central and Eastern Europe and Latin America" presented a review

of national university rankings across the globe. This study revealed that the main objectives of all ranking systems are to ensure quality assurance and accountability. The rankings reduced the information gap between the HEIs and the public. The main observation of this chapter is that the national ranking systems of different countries will eventually tend towards massive educational reforms. The third article entitled "Global University Rankings' Visual Media, Cartography and Geo-politics of Knowledge" raised important questions about the role of ranking websites as new spaces of representation in the spatialization of higher education.

The fourth article (Theme 2) entitled "Academic Culture in Transition: Measuring UP for what in Taiwan" presented the HEIs scenario of Taiwan. It suggested that the current world-class university policy is not justifiable and comprehensive enough to convince many academicians in Taiwan. The Taiwanese policy-makers mostly like to follow the past-strategy of their own country. The next article entitled "What Counts in Research? Dysfunction in Knowledge Creation and Moving Beyond" at first presented a very nice history of journals, bibliometrics and rankings. The Clarivate's Web of Science and the Elsevier's Scopus are two big players in the field of citation-based ranking. The article-level metrics or altimetric is in a process of fast evolution right now. The limitations of metric-based assessments are highlighted here. The underlying basic question is how to quantify the quality of a research? The probable answer suggests that no single or even a small set of metrics can portray the complete ranking of quality in terms of an accurate numeral. The sixth article entitled "Marginalizing the Marginalized: How Rankings Fail the Global South" presented some important findings on the basis of which it was concluded that the world university rankings are of dubious value to the universities of Global South. The authors suggested that the Global South Universities are left with two options, one is to withdraw from rankings altogether and the other option is to develop their own way to demonstrate the value of their work on the basis of their fundamental concerns.

The seventh article entitled "Between Local Distinction and Global Reputation: University Rankings and Changing Employment in Japan" presented significant points of argument concerning Japan's University system's hierarchy and changes surrounding the labour market. This article presented the Japanese higher education scenario from a new angle. The next article entitled "Rankings as Surveillance Assemblage" examined three instances, i.e., academic standards of merit, university data collection and reporting, and public claims-making. This article analyzed global university ranking by actor-network theory. The basic assumption of this theory is a ubiquitous existence of relationships among the universities, professors, databases, survey respondents,

staff that produce institutional data and ranking organization employees. The ninth article entitled “Motivation and Well-being of Faculty and Graduate Students: Empirical Relations with University Rankings” proved by case study that the university rankings correspond empirically with a range of psychological variables involving motivation and well-being among both faculty and graduate students internationally. The last article entitled “Beyond Rankings and Impact Factors” synthesizes the main themes and shows the roadmap to future research considering possibilities for expanding conversations and policy alternatives beyond “Rankings”.

This book presents a comprehensive literature review on rankings in the context of production and dissemination of knowledge. It presented a wide range of discourses to establish the fact that education is a big business today. The number of students travelling abroad to study has increased by 50 per cent since 2000. In this situation, rankings play a central role to find out befitting universities for revenue earned. The Chinese government has created the C9 League and provided these institutions with US\$1.86 billion to compete with US Ivy League schools. Russia sets aside US\$152 million for students to study in a top 200 world-ranked university, and India only partners with universities in the top 500 for joint degree programs. A recent study by Stanford University surveyed 100,000 high school students, which found that rankings play a significant role in the decision-making of students and their parents. But still there exists so many questions regarding rankings from methodological and procedural aspects. The notable point is that the countries with a number of top ranked universities including the United States have been criticized for infringing on academic freedom. The pertinent questions like who decides what and who the university is for and what this means for society, have been raised in this book. This book opens up various conversations around the hooks and crooks of ranking. Like “Digital divide”, which is one of the burning issues today. The “Ranking Divide” clearly distinguishes between “Global North” and “Global South”. The majority of high-ranked elite universities are situated in Western Europe, US, Canada and Australia, whereas other lesser-known institutions are scattered over other regions. The literature review on ranking reveals that the regions of lower-ranked institutions may be in the north geographically but in the south metaphorically. The need for an understanding of global rankings in different contexts, across and within societies, are pointed out here. The point to be noted is how the media continuously reinforce top-ranked Global North universities as more desirable and of higher quality. This biasness is very clear from diverse discourses on ranking. The three chapters of the second theme pointed out how the business of rankings and journal impact factors (IF) are connected. Such IF-based rankings are used to evaluate research we exploit, directly or indirectly, to make decisions.

The third theme indicates the privileges that rankings enhance or reinforce as well as the anxieties they provoke at the level of institutions and individuals.

The one of the major components of the Global university rankings is the number of research articles produced by university members and captured largely by one of two citation indexes, i.e., Elsevier’s Scopus databases and the Clarivate-owned Web of Science (WoS). Recently, several countries and universities have pulled out of contracts with Elsevier, and academics have signed a petition in regard to Elsevier’s monopolistic business practices. The three corporate houses, viz. Elsevier, Springer Nature and Wiley-Blackwell, together own 47 per cent of academic papers, with Elsevier owning 25 percent of the academic publishing marketplace. The picture of citation monopoly imposed by two major databases, Scopus and WoS, is very picturesquely presented here. At this stage the university rankings have been compelled to reinforce the monopoly market of Elsevier and Clarivate Analytics ignoring continuously socio-cultural pluralism of higher education systems.

The authors established from various discourses that the rankings are mainly based on non-transparent, corporate proprietary algorithms for which there is currently no regulation in terms of their creation, dissemination, or use. The ranking systems follow a cumulative advantage model, where highly ranked universities continue to be among the wealthiest HEIs, and their students are overwhelmingly middle and upper class. A study revealed that the children who have parents in the top 1 percent of income earners are 77 per cent more likely to attend an Ivy League university as compared to students in the bottom-income quartile. The top-ranked institutions remain there forever while the middle or low-ranked institutions hardly find any scope for improvement. Today, the focus on metrics such as the *h*-index and rankings can lead to a focus on identity management that impacts the academic’s sense of self, research questions, and relationships with peers.

The crux of metric studies is citation, which is the key factor of ranking. The ranking plays a vital role in guiding parents, students, policy-makers and investors involved with Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). The world-class university and respective rankings are briefly introduced. The Chapter 2 describes Web of Science since its inception by Garfield in 1964 as Science Citation Index that signalled the foundation of applied bibliometrics. The theoretical bibliometrics, however, dates back to 1925 with Lotka’s Law followed by Bradford’s Law in 1934. The concept of bibliometrics, however, was imbibed in Derek De Solla Price’ milestone work entitled *Little Science, Big Science, and Science Since Babylon*. All these references are included here other than Lotka. In 2005,¹ Hjørland discussed ambiguities in the

concept of 'subject' in Bradford's approach. The limitations of the concept of "Subject" in Bradford's approach was discussed in Sengupta's Law.² Besides, there are other theoretical approaches like Garfield's Law of Concentration, Zipf's Law, Pareto's Distribution, Mandelbrot's Approach *et al.* that collectively build up the shape of the subject 'Scientometrics' or 'Bibliometrics'. Actually, all these endeavors gradually brought the concept of ranking eventually shaped in today's market-driven monopoly business model. It may be said that the subject like scientometrics or informetrics, which is fundamentally based on citation-analysis, created such rank-crazy higher education systems today globally. These references should be briefly touched to make the picture complete. The lack of these references made the historical part incomplete. The introduction to the scientometrics part needs a bit more elaboration. The entire period since Garfield to Clarivate Analytics including Thomson Reuters are very briefly covered. Another very important criteria for ranking systems is *h*-index, which is extensively used today. But the *h*-index has so many limitations besides a number of

advantages. For instance, *h*-index ignores excess citation and therefore it is an incomplete indicator. It can make logical sense only if measured together with *e*-index and *R*-index, which represent excess citation and total citation respectively. Also, *g*-index is the better option compared to *h*-index. The *a*-index, which is the ratio between total citation to *h*-index, is also another good approach. Now, the basic question is whether there is any single indicator or more than one indicator. Another pertinent question may arise, is it possible to develop a single indicator on the basis of all *h*-type indicators. This study however fully ignored the confusions and conundrums related to *h*-index and other *h*-type indicators, the inclusion of which might complete this outstanding work.

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