THE IMPACT RANKING
a new set of indicators for universities

GUNi GLOBAL UNIVERSITY NETWORK FOR INNOVATION

Flávia S. O. Colus - Department of Science and Technology Policy (University of Campinas) & Erasmus Mundus Master in Research and Innovation in Higher Education (MARIHE) flaviacolus@hotmail.com
Daniela Atães - Department of Science and Technology Policy (University of Campinas) daniela.ataes@gmail.com
Rafael Locci - School of Education (University of Campinas) rafael.locci@gmail.com

Introduction and Objectives

International university rankings are relatively recent, but highly utilized mechanism for assessing university's performance. Most of the existing rankings, however, utilize the same narrow set of indicators for that assessment: "global rankings suggest that there is in fact only one model that can have global standing: the large comprehensive research university" (van der Wende & Westerheijden, 2009, p.71).

This idea of a single model of university has been highly contested recently, and this is acknowledged by the rankings' providers: "there is no 'one size fits all' methodology, and no single group of metrics should be used to judge all institutions" (Baty, 2014, p.3).

Seeking to promote a more diverse definition of World Class University, the new Impact Ranking (IR) released by Times Higher Education (THE) in 2019 brings a whole new set of indicators to classify universities. With the Sustainable Development Goals as the benchmark for universities, the IR has completely changed the list of the world's best universities.

This research analysed the change in the position of countries and universities between the new IR and the more traditional World University Ranking (WUR), both by THE.

Development

IR Methodology

Research

Outreach

Stewardship

Final Score = Top 3 SDGs + [17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS]

- Different universities are scored based on a different set of SDGs.
- Universities that submit data in at least 4 SDGs are included in the final ranking.

WUR   IR

TOP 25

TOP 200

Source: Elaborated by the authors with data from THE Impact Ranking

Geographical diversity

WUR	IR	
6	11	**Countries in the TOP 25**

WUR	IR	
17	1	**Universities from USA in the TOP 25**

- The top ranked countries are still mostly the developed ones, but the geographical focus shifts from the U.S. to Canada, Europe (including nordic countries) and Australia.
- The top 200 of the IR also shows regions like Africa and South America.
- The IR features almost twice as many countries when compared to WUR.

Institutional dispersion

The new Impact Ranking not only brings different countries to the top positions worldwide, but also new institutions.

- The most excellent universities in social impact are not always the most excellent in research (or vice versa).

17 **Universities in the TOP 100 of both rankings**

If we consider the top 25 universities in the IR, we can see that they are not necessarily well ranked in the WUR, even though they are all featured in the top 400 positions.

- Some of the top ranked institutions in the WUR might not have submitted data for the IR.

Out of the 21 top 100 institutions in the WUR that participated in both rankings, 17 are also in the top 100 on the Impact Ranking. This shows that the well-performing institutions in the WUR are actually performing relatively well on the IR.

Key Facts & Conclusion

- IR is easy to understand, it maintains the logic of traditional rankings, but changes the indicators
- Completely different results, bringing new countries and new institutions
- Still needs more participation from universities
- Can excellence in research be combined with excellence in social impact?

The Impact Ranking is bringing a new value for universities' social impact and broadening the possibilities of world class universities by considering the Sustainable Development Goals as the measure for excellence. This new ranking comes in a moment when the "social contract" between science and society has shifted to a new concept.

Science is now seen as a public enterprise working for a sustainable and just world, covering the need for transformative research oriented towards finding solutions to the global challenges (Hackmann & Boulton, 2015).

References: Hackmann, H. & Boulton, G. (2015). Science for a sustainable and just world: A new framework for global science policy? UNESCO Science Report: towards 2030 (pp. 12–14). Paris: UNESCO. Van der Wende, M., & Don, W. (2009). Rankings and classifications: The need for a multidimensional approach. In Mapping the higher education landscape (pp. 71-86). Springer, Dordrecht. Baty, P. (2014). The times higher education world university rankings, 2004-2012. Ethics in Science and Environmental Politics.