

The Impact of University League Tables on the Development of Non-Elite Universities. A Case Study of England

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Abstract : This article examines the impact of League Tables on non-elite universities in the English higher education system. The purpose of this study is to explore the use of rankings in strategic planning by low-ranked universities in this highly competitive higher education market. A sample of non-elite universities was selected for a content analysis based on the measures used by The Guardian rankings. Interestingly, these universities care about their rankings within a single national system. The content analysis appears to be an effective approach to investigating the presence of such influences. It is particularly noteworthy that all sampled universities use these measure terminologies in their strategic plans, missions and news coverage on their institutional web-pages. This analysis may be an example of the key challenges that many low-ranking universities in England are probably facing in the highly competitive and diversified higher education market. These universities use rankings to communicate with their stakeholders, mainly students, in order to fill places to secure their major source of funding. The study concludes with comments on the likely effects of the rankings paradigm in undermining the contributions of non-elite universities.

Keywords : League tables, measures, post-1992 universities, ranking, strategy

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