


# Chapter 3

## Global Rankings and their Impact on Internationalization

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Global university rankings play a crucial role in shaping internationalisation strategies within higher education. These rankings assess institutions based on metrics such as research output, academic staff quality, global collaborations, policy decisions, funding allocations, and student recruitment. Rankings drive international engagement by encouraging institutions to expand partnerships and increase student mobility, they also present challenges. This chapter highlights disparities in resources between well-funded and underfunded institutions, along with a focus on research at the expense of teaching quality. It addresses ethical issues surrounding data manipulation and strategies driven by rankings, which tend to favour institutions from developed countries creating a competitive imbalance, particularly for the Global South. The chapter highlights how universities are increasingly implementing strategic policies aligned with ranking criteria, influencing both their approach to internationalisation and the future trajectory of higher education in a globally competitive provision.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Global rankings have become a pivotal element in shaping the internationalisation strategies of higher education institutions (HEIs) worldwide (Marginson & Van

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Der Wende, 2007). Over the past two decades, the proliferation of ranking systems such as the QS World University Rankings, Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings, and the Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU) has significantly influenced how universities position themselves in the global higher education reputation. This chapter explores the multifaceted impact of global rankings on internationalisation, focusing on key dimensions such as student mobility, academic staff recruitment, research collaboration, brand reputation, and policy development. It also highlights the challenges and criticisms associated with the influence of rankings on higher education.

One of the most immediate and visible effects of global rankings is on student mobility (Knight, 2012). Prospective international students frequently use rankings as a decision-making tool when selecting study destinations, with higher-ranked universities perceived as providing superior education and better career prospects. Rankings signal quality, prestige, and global competitiveness, making highly ranked universities more attractive to students from around the world. Countries like the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia continue to draw a significant proportion of international students due to their concentration of top-ranked institutions. However, emerging destinations such as China, Singapore, and Germany have improved their ranking performance to attract international students, often supported by government-backed scholarships and strategic marketing campaigns.

Ranking also plays a critical role in shaping academic staff recruitment and retention (Henderson et al., 2016). Highly ranked universities are better positioned to attract top-tier academic staff seeking to advance their academic careers. Prestigious universities often offer competitive salaries, robust research support, and the opportunity to work alongside world-renowned scholars, which serve as strong incentives for academic staff mobility. Conversely, academic staff from lower-ranked institutions may seek employment opportunities at higher-ranked universities to enhance their academic profile. This phenomenon has contributed to a “brain drain” in some regions, as scholars migrate from low- and middle-income countries to institutions in wealthier nations. In response, several countries have implemented initiatives to strengthen the research capacity and international visibility of their universities to retain domestic talent.

Research collaboration is another area where global rankings exert significant influence (Gunter & Raghuram, 2017). Universities aiming to boost their ranking position often prioritise partnerships with institutions that have strong reputations and high citation impact. Collaborative research projects, co-authored publications, and international research consortia contribute to citation counts, which are critical metrics in most ranking methodologies. These collaborations not only enhance institutional visibility but also enable the exchange of knowledge and resources. In some cases, HEIs strategically align with top-ranked institutions to “co-brand” their

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