### ӘЛ ФАРАБИ АТЫНДАҒЫ ҚАЗАҚ ҰЛТТЫҚ УНИВЕРСИТЕТІ КАЗАХСКИЙ НАЦИОНАЛЬНЫЙ УНИВЕРСИТЕТ ИМ. АЛЬ-ФАРАБИ AL-FARABI KAZAKH NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

### ЭКОНОМИКА ЖӘНЕ БИЗНЕС ЖОҒАРЫ МЕКТЕБІ ВЫСШАЯ ШКОЛА ЭКОНОМИКИ И БИЗНЕСА HIGHER SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS

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### XXI ВЕК: ПЕРСПЕКТИВЫ РАЗВИТИЯ НАЦИОНАЛЬНЫХ ЭКОНОМИК В МИРОВОМПРОСТРАНСТВЕ

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## WORLD UNIVERSITY RANKINGS IN THE CONTEXT OF EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE: CRITICAL ASSESSMENT

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Аннотация. Жаһандану, білімге негізделген қоғам және ақпараттық технологиялардың қарқынды дамуы университеттер арасында жаһандық рейтингтің танымал болуына әкелді. Жаһандық рейтингтік провайдерлер университеттің жоғары сапалы көрсеткіштерінің және жаһандық кеңістіктегі беделінің басты көрсеткіштерінің бірі болып танылды. Дегенмен, сапа кепілдігі тұрғысынан олардың жарамдылығы, объективтілігі мен салыстыру сипаттамалары бойынша жаһандық рейтингті қолданудың белгілі бір әдіснамалық шектеулері бар. Осылайша, біз осы мақалада сыртқы сапа кепілдігі тұрғысынан әлемдік рейтингтердің тиімділігі мен ашықтығы бойынша әдеби зерттеулер жүргізуге тырысамыз.

Түйін сөздер: жаһандық рейтинг, сапаны қамтамасыз ету, орындау, жоғары оқу орындары

Аннотация. Глобализация, общество знаний и быстрое развитие информационных технологий привели к популярности глобальных рейтингов среди университетов. Глобальные рейтинговые провайдеры стали одним из ключевых показателей превосходной успеваемости университетов и высокой репутации на мировом пространстве. Тем не менее, существуют определенные методологические ограничения глобальных рейтингов в отношении их достоверности, объективности и сопоставимости с точки зрения обеспечения качества. Таким образом, в этой статье мы пытаемся провести литературное исследование эффективности и прозрачности мировых рейтингов в контексте внешней гарантии качества.

Ключевые слова: глобальный рейтинг, обеспечение качества, результативность, высшие учебные заведения

Annotation. Globalization, knowledge-driven society and rapid development of information technologies have led to popularity of global rankings among universities. Global ranking providers have become one of the key indicators of university performance excellence and high reputation at global space. However, there are certain methodological limitations of global rankings regarding their validity, objectivity and comparability in terms of quality assurance. Thus, in this paper, we attempt to make a literature research on effectiveness and transparency of world rankings in the context of external quality assurance.

Key words: global ranking, quality assurance, performance, higher education institutions

Currently, highly ranked universities in global rankings are considered to be symbols of prestige, high reputation and drivers of the knowledge economy at the national level. "Rankings" being labeled as one of the tools of external quality assurance of higher education, since its first appearance in 2003, there has been many discussions and debates whether national or global ranking in fact reflect the highest quality performance or excellence of universities in a fair manner.

There are enough arguments in the literature regarding the role of international rankings in defining the excellence of HEIs. The study carried out by quality experts and scholars on "University quality indicators: critical assessment" [1] has pointed out the fundamental focus of rankings as an attempt to define "excellence" and to earn financial profit. In this article, we attempted to make a short literature overview on existing research, viewpoints of quality experts, academics, scholars, and figure out the reason why universities are eager to participate in quantity indicator rankings.

Actually, some scholars believe that global rankings do not contribute so much on quality assurance of learning, as it is based mostly on already availabledata; consequently, there is no space in regards to usefulness of rankings in assessing quality. Director of the Department for Institutional Development of the European University Association - Tia Loukkola pointed out that there are still continuous arguments and objections regarding effectiveness of global rankings in quality measurement of higher education. The research conducted among key managers of universities has outlined, that supporters of rankings are leaders of HEIs, which are highly ranked and opponents are so called "losers" of rankings [2].

There is a wide range of studies on university rankings [3], however, there is little research conducted regarding approaches and methods applied in rankings. The reasons why HEIs strive for global rankings have been indicated in the study conducted in 2015 by a research team\*: the results of the study encompassed impact of rankings on student attraction [4], impacts on enrollment and admission [5], as well as marketing purposes. In the same manner, Hazelkorn (2008) pointed out the role of rankings, its effect on leaders of HEIs and their reactions.

If to look back at historical background of global rankings, the first ranking body appeared in 2003. A group of researchers from Chinese university (Shanghai Jiaotong University) set up the Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU) to compare Chinese universities with top world universities. Later, there was a rise of other scholars' interest to produce another tool of quality measurement.

As a result, Times Higher Education World University Rankings (THE) and QS World University Rankings (QS) appeared in 2010, both of them had been originally split from "Times Higher Education—QS World University Rankings" (THEQS) appeared in 2004, as well as U-Multirank, funded by the European Union since 2009. In total, there are ten global rankings (Hazelkorn, 2015b in Study). The latest added ranking is US News & World Report's Best Global Universities (BGU).

Basically, common reasons why national and global rankings have become so popular among HEIs are globalization, acknowledgement of significance of higher education for economy and welfare of the country, marketing of higher education, attraction of talented students and academics in the global competition at labour markets, a rise of academic mobility, internationalization of universities, and development of technology and digital media.

Higher education institutions in Kazakhstan attempt to catch up at the top positions of global and national rankings in order to demonstrate their outstanding role in attracting local and international students and academics as well as to show their value to the government, research funding bodies and private investors.

However, there is a little room left for quality assurance of education, as global rankings mostly concentrate on research and staff-related indicators, while national rankings mainly focus on student-related indicators. The idea telling that, universities ranked 200<sup>th</sup> are significantly better than 500<sup>th</sup> is not verifiable, as national policy, economy, culture, population, research and resource capabilities and differences in GDP per capita of each country is underestimated. In this regard, single world ranking instrument "U-Multirank" avoids classifying world universities by ordinal numbers in accordance with the provided data, instead an alphabetical rank is presented, where interested parties find out positions of universities by themselves.

Obviously many scholars believe that results of rankings can only cause some confusions of public perception rather than reflection of real quality [6]. Some universities ranked at the highest position tend to claim their high quality at their websites or at the press, in order to increase student recruitment, government funding, sponsorship, partnership with universities and with research institutions, while others ranked at the lowest positions have to fight with damaged reputation [2, 5, 6, 7]. In other words, this approach can negatively affect the real quality performance of some higher education institutions, as differences in ranking scores might not be enough to show real quality performance indicators [8].

Results of literature research whether ranking is reliable and valid method to measure quality of education, has led to acknowledging that there are many articles criticizing methodological background of rankings. According to Daraio C. and et al, the main criticism for rankings stems from monodimensionality of ranking, which means that rankings do not count various institutional performances of universities, discourages the diversity of university missions. Another line of criticism argues that rankings are not objective, since they account only old and large universities as well as favour universities with scientific, technical and medical disciplines. In the same manner, researchers argue, that rankings simply do not count amount of resources allocated by governments based on student / staff ratio and cost per student [9]. Some experts believe that despite political influence of rankings, there are not enough fair foundations in terms of quality indicators and their construction [10].

In a like manner the author of an article "University rankings need improvement" believes that <u>university rankings</u> leads to misunderstandings of public perceptions and has no deal in terms of positive effect on the improvement of education quality. Moreover, Davis notes that rankings, overall, discourage the diversity of institutional missions.

Nevertheless, despite some arguments and debates regarding objectiveness and validity of global ranking providers, students' choice of universities comes from results of rankings[11]. Based on universities' academic research and reputation, students have opportunity to compare universities around the world and to explore higher education options that exist beyond their own countries' borders. The important point subject to acknowledgement is not being misled in selecting definite area of study. Moreover, in recent past decades, global ranking bodies attempted to make some improvements in regards to criticisms of their methodologies and a quality approach to improve quality of world rankings has been developed in 2011 by IREG\*.

\*Staff members of DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service, Bonn, Germany) and ACA (Cooperation Association, Brussels, Belgium) and director of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education

To conclude, attraction of mobile talents, international staff, construction of partnership and collaboration with stakeholders and investors should not be a single objective of higher education institutions. Quality assurance of education is a key high performance and mission of universities, thus leaders and managers of tertiary education should not be satisfied by their outputs at national or global rankings; it is of utmost

significant to administrators of HEIs to acknowledge limitations of rankings; efforts must be focused on both inputs and outputs.

\*IREG Observatory on Academic Ranking and Excellence is an international institutional non-profit association of ranking organizations, universities and other bodies interested in university rankings and academic excellence. Its purpose is strengthening of public awareness and understanding of range of issues related to university rankings and academic excellence. The experience acquired by a group of rankers and ranking analysts, who met first in 2002, led to creation of an International Ranking Expert Group (IREG). In 2009 this informal group was transformed into IREG Observatory as a non-profit organization. It is registered in Brussels, Belgium, and its Secretariat is located in Warsaw, Poland. <a href="http://ireg-observatory.org/en/about-us">http://ireg-observatory.org/en/about-us</a>

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## CHANGES IN EDUCATION SYSTEM AS A TOOL FOR LABOR MARKET GAP REDUCTION

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**Аннотация.** Әлемдегі еңбек нарығының құрылымына әсер ететін тұрақты технологиялық революцияның арқасында, тиісті жұмыс орындарын табудағы білім берудің рөлі артты. Шынында да, жасанды интеллект сияқты соңғы оқиғалар көптеген операциялық үдерістерді автоматтандыруға, еңбек өнімділігін арттыруға және шығындарды қысқартуға алып келді. Сондықтан жұмыс орындарын жоғалту алаңдаушылық халық арасында кеңінен танымал болды. Технологиялық және басқа да әлеуметтік-экономикалық факторларды ескере отырып, жоғары оқу орындарында алған дәрежелер әр экономикада еңбек экономикасы қалыптасады. Осылайша, кәсіптер мен нарықтағы сұраныс арасында бар әлеуетті кемшіліктерді жою үшін

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