

Rankings as Tools to Promote Global Education Market

Irina Efimova

OCRA-UNN Office of Cooperation with Ranking Agencies,
Lobachevsky State University of Nizhni Novgorod, Nizhni Novgorod, Russia

Submitted: Sep 25, 2013; **Accepted:** Oct 27, 2013; **Published:** Nov 3, 2013

Abstract: The results of analysis of world and Russian university rankings are presented in this article. We have identified the causes, factors and criteria that have a decisive impact on improvement of the ranking positions of a university. It has been determined that a new model of interaction between government, business, various industries-powerful, modern scientific innovation clusters-is capable of becoming that breakthrough mechanism that can lead universities to world rankings. The main breakthrough mechanisms to improve university position in the global world rankings have been determined through the example of Lobachevsky State University of Nizhni Novgorod-National Research University.

Key words: University • Competition • Rankings • National Research University • Analysis • Rating
• Research and innovation clusters

INTRODUCTION

Since our country has found itself in new economic conditions it must struggle for finding a new way for our higher education which must be reconstructed in such a way that competitiveness of Russian institutes in world scientific and educational space will increase.

One of particular features of modern development is transition of the countries to a new stage of innovative society, to reconstruction of economy that must be based on generation, transfer and use of knowledge. Ability to adapt one's skills to constantly changing conditions will become of key importance, the main source of material well-being of society.

Investments in intellectual "capital" become the most effective way of keeping and distribution of resources. Intensification of production and use of new high-tech innovative approaches will accelerate integration of science and education into world scientific and educational space. The place of Russian institutes of higher education in world rankings does not correspond to available intellectual and educational potential yet.

Today the leaders of our country have formulated main directions of development of education in Russian Federation until 2020. The tasks set forth before Russian institutes and universities were mentioned in President's

Decree " Regarding measures of realization of state policy in education and science" dated May, 7, 2012 #559, in State Program of Education Development for 2013-2020 (the program was approved by Government Order dated November, 22, 2012 #2148) and in other documents. On 7th of May 2012 the President of Russian Federation V. V.Putin set before academic society the task up to 2020 to promote at least 5 Russian universities up to the Top-100 in world rankings.

One of the important issues both for those who make rankings and for consumers of education is provision of access to the most full and accurate information, provision of transparency and openness. There is no point in independent evaluation without principle of maximum openness and transparency of institutes being evaluated, giving access to as full data as possible. And what is more, human capital is more and more demanded in the market; in this case our institutes must provide such educational services which correspond to the market conditions [1].

Universities' rankings influence the quality of educational services and affect position of Russian education in the world. Most of Russian institutes and universities already have some ranking, image and reputation but nobody pays special attention to learn what these rankings are.

Competitive advantages are now with those universities which have high intellectual potential to develop unique competences and increase asserts [2]. Every higher education institution/university must form its own values which will enable to attract the widest target audience.

Rankings allows universities to understand what they must do in order to gain better quality of education, how to manage it and improve its characteristics.

Universities are regarded as main participators of modernization processes, the result of which must be new economy of our country no more depending on raw materials and oil, re-gaining of our competitive positions in the world and maybe even increase in quality of our life level [3].

Our opinions of world rankings can be different. For example, these ratings can be perceived as changing force able to improve quality and strengthen their unique character. Rankings allow universities to understand that they need to be taken in the field of quality management education to improve their performance. However, increasing the values of the indicators does not mean a real improvement of quality of universities. To assess the quality of higher education institutions it is necessary to take into account not only scientific and academic performance, but possibly and the quality of the education as well [4].

As rankings start to act as some managing mechanisms which is to a great extent connected with globalization of higher education we can view them as tools of transnational management and global regulation by higher education. It is a cluster model of interaction between universities, the government, business-structures and society in general that must by all means live in our country and can be that breakthrough mechanism of promotion of Russian universities in rankings.

It is innovative clusters which are able to develop competitiveness of universities by means of formation of powerful centers with different specialization which will facilitate in improvement of people's life.

What does a university need to become real brand, to have an appropriate ranking? The main problem is to manage the quality of services provided. But who and in how makes up these rankings? What is purpose of them? The answer is: for international mobility, for improvement of quality of educational activity, career and as an aid for students and their parents in selection of proper higher education institution and for availability of information about the

whole range of university's work and for giving impression about advantages and disadvantages if universities.

Not only that, different methodologies of rankings are able to emphasize not quite transparent measures. For example QS ranking is often criticized because 40% of its weight depends on opinion of academic society.

Does this strategy effective and does it really reflect situation in world education-or there is obvious discrimination towards countries of non-English-speaking part of the world? The same problems are faced by developers of other leading world rankings: THE ranking is biased in the same way; ARWU ranking is biased because the most important criterion for them is the number of employees and final-year students-Noble Prize winners. and Fields medal winners.

But we agree that there exist other demands from consumers. Every consumer has its own set of requirements to universities which is used by him for making decision where to enter. Classical rankings will not provide full and true picture.

I their answer to critics the developers of rankings proposed new system of ranking universities in different spheres of knowledge. For the last 3 years 3 leading rankings (QS, THE, ARWU) have been issuing new rankings based on specializations.

There one more new ranking system - QS Stars. Participation in this ranking is voluntary and must be paid, more than 100 universities from more than 30 countries decided to join it. Algorithm of participation in QS Stars project is as follows: universities must provide data on their activity in 4 obligatory areas: education, employment of final-year students, research work and internationalization.

Ranking Agency QS on the base of these data performs audit of an university judging by different criteria. They also use open sources of information and their own data. The results of this audit-from one to five "stars". Also stars are given on each of criteria. In spite of clearly commercial character of this project the universities obtain independence audit of one of the leading agency.

If university has enough stars which confirm its high level this university will obtain a good position among other universities.

Of course, you can ask how these stars will influence life of our universities and your own life. Everything depends on what we shall do with these stars by ourselves. We must clearly understand on which areas of focus we have 5 stars and for which-1-2 stars-and we

shall work upon it, correct universities strategy. By now stars system is used by 140 universities, but among them there are only 2 Russian ones.

What is first-class university? Academic world must understand that to such question there is no simple answer. But research works of world class can be easily judged. Training process in such university will give opportunity to get good job. Because a student is an unique indicator of all our work in universities.

And we can't say that we are good but we shall never be at top-100 of world rankings. If we make analysis of QS rankings of Top-100 we observe that it became younger for 7 years in 2012 in comparison with 2010.

And Top-50 includes only 11 countries, Top-100 includes universities from 20 countries, Top-300-universities from 50 countries, Top-500 includes universities from 100 countries.

14 Russian universities are included into QS and they are not on the last place. And every university must look at educational strategy in the framework of the country and world community.

There must be a *policy* in universities. It is necessary to talk more about the role of comparative educational policy in regard to other universities. We can not take rankings as a kind of a thermometer. From our childhood we know that when body temperature is more than 36,6* C you are ill. There is no such critical measure in rankings: we can not say that this university is good and that is bad.

As an example let us analyze the position of one of the most demanded universities of Nizhni Novgorod region-Lobachevsky State University of Nizhni Novgorod (LSUNN) in leading world rankings. For the last decade this university has become one of the leading classical universities, academic, innovative, entrepreneurial and cultural center of Russian educational.

During these years the university adopted a number of underlying documents: Mission of Lobachevsky State University of Nizhni Novgorod, LSUNN knowledge transfer strategy, Program of development of state higher educational institution of professional education of LSUNN for 2009-2018 (program of development of university as national research university) and some others. In 2013 LSUNN adopted Development Strategy until 2020 in accordance with which one of the most important indicators of development is being among 300 best universities in leading world rankings.

To facilitate in providing better and more effective policy of promotion of our university in the best world rankings, they organized special sector for partnership with Russian and world ranking agencies. This sector

works with agencies by the so-called "single-window method". Agency understands very well with whom it interacts in the university, responsible person is known and contacts are defined-1 address of impersonal corporative e-mail, not 5-6 personal e-mail addresses. In their turn employees know who is responsible for rankings in their university, their responsibility for given data is increased, time for collection of information is reduced which results in more effective processing of data obtained from structural divisions of the university, verification of these data and transfer it to ranking agencies. Work in a hurry often results in mistakes and inaccuracies in information provided to ranking agencies which negatively affects the position of any university in world ranking.

The results of the analysis on inclusion of Russian and in particular, Nizhny Novgorod university into world rankings are as follows:

- In accordance with QS methods any universities' ranking depends on index of quotation (30%) and on universities reputation (50%)-it means opinion of employers and world academic society. But as we have already mentioned the opinions of experts are rather subjective and biased [5].
- Times methods are such that ranking depends on these biased estimates (33% of ranking) [6].
- ARWU: up to 30% of ranking depends on rewards (prizes) and grants and 60% of ranking is determined by quotation index (reference to the authors made in 2 leading scientific magazines of world community: Nature and Science) [7].

Ranking position of any universities depends not only on the level of education and its quality but on degree of engagement into world research and educational activity and this measure is not sufficient with Russian universities.

To have an opportunity of promotion in leading world rankings in next 6-7 years to the position among Top-200 we must first of all consider the rankings themselves in detail and clarify their methodology. At first look it is obvious that ARWU ranking is unacceptable for most number of Russian universities. It is quite impossible to answer the ARWU requirements to have Noble Prize and Fields Medal winners among employees.

In this connection LSUNN must orientate to QS and THE. These rankings have some criteria in common. For example, opinion of academic community. Well, experts can be different but criteria methodology is the

same. So strategy of gaining success in the framework of this criterion will be identical for both rankings. And it must be added, that recently QS even allowed to make proposals on the “board” of this academic community. And the position of universities will depend on the quality of experts in this board.

Having analyzed main measures of world rankings we can describe general "breakthrough" mechanisms for promotion of Russian universities in ranking and in world educational community:

- Engagement of Russian and in particular Nizhny Novgorod scientists into international cooperation must be increased, namely contacts with foreign professors and representatives of business and organizations which specialize on high-tech transfers must be enhanced.
- Increase world-wide quotation: objective academic indicators used by world rankings have decisive meaning (for example, in Scopus system), these take into consideration number of references to employees' scientific works for last 5 years as ratio to the number of the employees themselves or as a ratio to the number of all university's published works. This is against Russian universities: their employees do not publish their works abroad in English actively.
- To publish magazines in English which have index in leading systems, such as WOS, SCOPUS. This will increase impact-factor of these magazines. Obligatory condition is that these magazines must be issued not only in printed form but in electronic form as well. This will influence the number of publications made by university's teachers in index magazines.
- Increase number of foreign teachers-and not only with world names-working in Russian universities
- Increase number of foreign students (and number of educational programs in foreign languages), develop university infrastructure.
- Universities must be easily accessible through Internet. Their sites can be in English, special-doc., pdf, ppt files can be loaded on site, as well as electronic versions of scientific publications of university's employees in English.
- To improve ratio “number of teachers/number of students”.
- To organize in universities scientific and innovative clusters, members of which must be universities', government bodies' and business' representatives.

Clusters will inevitably result in powerful promotion of universities in rankings. For example big hopes are laid upon organization of a scientific and innovative bio-medical cluster on the base of LSUNN - the aim is to be among top-200 by 2020 with the help of it. Thanks to invention of high-tech equipment (tools) in cluster we shall be able to perform more informative USI-investigation, measure temperature of human inner organs, find tumors, deliver medicine to specific organ etc. This project will enable to unite the scientists from different spheres and chairs of all universities of Nizhny Novgorod region. - as well as foreign doctors, partners and so on. This project is unique because fundamental research work in our country are first steps only, while abroad this is an end in itself. Inter-disciplinary character of this cluster will enable LSUNN to become a leader in important breakthrough activity in several scientific areas simultaneously. All biggest and most successful clusters in developed and developing countries were formed on the base of prominent strong universities (Silicon valley, Stanford - USA; Ideon, Lund university - Sweden; scientific and high-tech zone Chzhunguantsun - Benjing University, China etc.)

In this regard bio-medical cluster provided effective functioning can become this breakthrough mechanism which will promote Lobachevsky State University of Nizhny Novgorod in global world rankings by 2020.

It is clear that under these conditions the active development of the global education market and increased international competition in this sector; to achieve significant results in the world of scientific and educational space is nearly impossible without meaningful participation and active role of the state, the clustering of universities and promotion in the world's global rankings.[8].

Globalization of educational services market, forming of single whole space in the framework of Bologna process, activation of international cooperation, growth of innovations market influence development of all universities in a good way [9]. And Russian universities including those of our region provided they will solve these outlined tasks will be able to have good positions in the rankings.

Determining the competitive advantage of the UNN 2020 among participants in the development of innovative knowledge society will be the preparation of highly skilled creators, possessing the qualities of innovators, entrepreneurs and the formation of a new managerial, engineering and technical generation, able to provide

innovative development of Russia, the so-called innovative person. The main direction of the training is to reveal each person's potential [10].

Strategically the aim of breakthrough mechanisms for entering of Russian universities into top number of global world rankings is achievement of such level of economic and social development which corresponds to status of Russia as a leading world state of 21st century which has advanced positions in economic competition and strictly provides national security and realization of rights of its citizens.

REFERENCES

1. Grudzinsky, A., 2004. Project-orientated university: professional, entrepreneurial organization. Publishing house of LSUNN.
2. Guskova, N. and I. Krakovskaya, 2010. Investments into human capital of higher education institution: organizational aspect. Problems of management theory and practice, 5: 53-58.
3. Guskova, N., E. Neretina and V. Makolov, 2011. Analysis of competitive positions of national research university. University management: practice and analysis, 1: 6-10.
4. Grudzinskiy, A. and A. Bednyy, 2012. Innovation Infrastructure of University as Laboratory for Training Innovators Knowledge Transfer. The New Core Responsibility of Higher Education Institutions Practice and Perspectives in Russia and Germany, Gabriele Gorska (Ed.). Kassel University press GmbH, 5: 47-60.
5. Private Ranking System, 2011. Indicator "Educational Activities of the University". National University Ranking System. Date Views 10.05.2013 URL: www.unirating.ru/txt.asp?rbr=34
6. Private Ranking System, 2011. Indicator "Research Activities of the University" National University Ranking System. Date Views 12.05.2013 URL: www.unirating.ru/txt.asp?rbr=35.
7. Private Ranking System, 2011. Criterion "University Brand" National University Ranking. Date Views 14.05.2013 URL: www.unirating.ru/txt.asp?rbr=38.
8. Avralev, N. and I. Efimova, 2013. University Rankings as a Tool to Enhance Competitiveness, Clustering and Transnational Governance of Higher Education in the Context of Globalization. Middle-East Journal of Scientific Research 16 (3): 357-361, 2013 IDOSI Publications, 2013. DOI: 10.5829/idosi.mejsr.2013.16.03.11689. C.357-361. ISSN 1990-9233.
9. Chuprunov, E., S. Gurbatov and B. Bedny, 2010. Classical research university in innovative community of knowledge. University management: practice and analysis, 1: 6-10.
10. Knowles, M., 1990. The Adult Learner. A neglected species, Houston: Gulf Publishing.