

Peer Review

Review of: "Influence of International Rankings on Public Universities: Exploratory Research"

Bing Liu¹

1. The University of Manchester, Manchester, United Kingdom

This manuscript provides a thoughtful and empirically rich account of how the international rankings influence French public universities. Its main strength lies in its grounded qualitative case study approach, contributing to the growing literature on the effect of international university rankings at the national, organizational, and faculty dimensions.

While the article addresses an important and underexplored topic with strong data and a sound framework, it currently falls short in critical analysis and theoretical engagement. I recommend a revision prior to publication. With thoughtful revisions, this paper has the potential to make a meaningful contribution to international scholarship on French higher education and globalization.

Specific Suggestions for Revision:

1. Findings Require Deeper Interpretation

Much of the empirical section consists of summarising or quoting participant remarks. While this grounds the study in faculty voices, it lacks sufficient interpretive synthesis. The authors present an extensive body of literature critiquing and expressing concerns about the use of rankings, along with accounts from faculty at three universities regarding teaching quality and publication pressure, yet fail to conduct an in-depth exploration of these issues.

Recommendation: Move beyond thematic labelling to explore underlying logics, contradictions, or patterns. For example, how do faculty reconcile national and organizational pressures impacted by international rankings with individual real demands?

2. Limited Theoretical Engagement in Analysis

While introducing the national, organizational, and individual levels as the primary analytical lenses, and despite the fact that university development is closely linked to national public policies, organizational strategic plans, and the perceptions of faculty working within these universities, the authors fail to incorporate these interactive relationships among the three levels into the analysis of the findings. The discussion remains largely descriptive and misses the opportunity to use the framework to categorize, compare, and interpret the interactive relationships between these levels.

Recommendation: Go beyond these levels to incorporate critical policy theory or theories of academic capitalism.

Declarations

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.