

Peer Review

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

Maryna Lakhno¹

1. Eawag: Das Wasserforschungs-Institut des ETH-Bereichs, Dübendorf, Switzerland

A very interesting paper to read, also a very relevant topic. Great work!

The general aim is clear: to explore how international rankings influence French public universities at national, organisational, and individual levels, focusing particularly on academics' perceptions.

The design is described clearly, a case study of three universities (science-focused; multidisciplinary; humanities/social-science-focused), with different ranking positions, using semi-structured interviews and document analysis. The interview sample is transparently presented in a table, which is helpful.

However, some elements require more detail to support replicability:

1) Case selection logic

The criteria are sensible, but the manuscript should justify why three cases are sufficient to support the proposed three-level model and how disciplinary profile and ranking position are analytically disentangled (they may be correlated).

2) The limitations section

Two limitations deserve more explicit emphasis because they directly affect the validity of some claims:

- The overrepresentation of senior/middle management and administrators shapes what "academics' perception" means in this paper and should be explicitly addressed as a potential bias in the interpretation of professional-level effects.
- Rankings are entangled with broader reforms and performance regimes. The paper should be clearer that, in many places, it identifies *perceived ranking influence* rather than isolating rankings as an independent causal driver.

Declarations

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.