

Peer Review

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

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The study is well-written, and its multi-level analysis (national, organisational, individual) provides a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. Its strengths include its focus on the growing influence of international rankings and their implications for academic institutions. The qualitative methods, supported by NVivo, allow for rich insights into perceptions and lived experiences within French public universities. The authors effectively situate their findings within the specific national context. However, the research has some limitations: The study would benefit from a more explicit theoretical framework and a more thorough examination of the positive aspects of rankings to counterbalance the predominantly critical narrative. For instance, institutional theory and New Public Management (NPM) could help explain how universities adapt to the external pressures of rankings through strategic alignment and managerial reforms, while professional identity theory would offer deeper insight into how academics negotiate evolving expectations and evaluation criteria. Stakeholder theory and critical theory could further enhance the interpretation by clarifying differing interests among university actors and exposing the power dynamics and value tensions introduced by rankings. In addition, a more balanced discussion of the positive dimensions of rankings would enrich the narrative. The authors could elaborate on how rankings enhance institutional visibility, support benchmarking and quality improvement, promote accountability, motivate strategic planning, foster collaborations, and boost morale when performance improves. Developing these aspects would provide a more nuanced appreciation for the complex and sometimes beneficial role that international rankings play in shaping higher education.

Declarations

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.