

## University Ranking is More

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The title of Plenary Session 3 is: "University Ranking v Quality, Equity and Diversity". To make it clear from the very beginning: I believe in university rankings!

University rankings point out that our own university is not the only one in the world. In a private university they tell our students what they get for their money. In a public financed system they remind us that we are responsible to provide excellent and internationally comparable education to our students. Therefore university rankings are very important for the health of the university system. But, to quote the philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer: "Health is not everything, but without health everything is nothing."

So: "University ranking is not everything, but without university ranking, most of the effort to improve our universities may be nothing."

The problem of university rankings is that they usually concentrate on a very small aspect of knowledge only. For most rankings "university" is reduced to science, and science is reduced to teaching and research. Teaching and research have been the main goals of a modern university since Wilhelm von Humboldt. However, in my presentation I want to show that knowledge is more than science. And science is more than teaching and research.

Therefore the system of university ranking should be enlarged to be more than it is today. Ancient Greek philosophy, the root where science and philosophy came from, distinguished between six aspects of knowledge which are all still relevant to modern universities.

Scientific knowledge was known in ancient Greece as EPISTEME. This is the theoretical part of scientific knowledge. It is measured nowadays in the number of published scientific articles, in the number of lectures and in teaching hours. This kind of evaluation is state of the art in most universities and we are used to it. We fill out our "performance records" and we know that in the end this has an influence on our reputation and budget.

However, we should be aware that university ranking should be more.

It was Aristotle who distinguished EPISTEME from TECHNE, the practical side of scientific knowledge. Some rankings take TECHNE into account as well. Patents, the acquisition of research grants, the cooperation with public and economy should be part of university evaluation. This is not only important for technical universities alone. I think that also humanities, social sciences or the arts should serve the society with TECHNE, with the practical side of knowledge.

Besides research activities, universities may organize exhibitions and concerts, publish in newspapers, and play an active role in society. This is an important aspect in the

dissemination of knowledge. University evaluations and rankings should honor these activities too.

TECHNE sometimes comes close to EMPEIRIA, the third element of ancient knowledge. EMPEIRIA, the word from which empiricism, evidence from practical observation, comes from, is also an important aspect of knowledge. It is knowledge, which is gained from practical observation.

To understand an aspect of the real world, it is often necessary in science as well as in the humanities and in social sciences, to study it for a long time. This kind of research is sometimes underrepresented by evaluations and by rankings. This kind of research takes a long time with often little measurable output. University rankings have a tendency to favor a high number of small and not so important contributions instead of honoring lesser but more important findings. Of course it is not easy to accept if a scientist does not produce much for a long time, waiting for the big success, which might never come. Therefore many scientists concentrate on paper work with less risk and marginal results instead of EMPEIRIA, which takes long time and high risk, but also has the chance of important outcomes.

These three dimensions of knowledge, EPISTEME, TECHNE and EMPEIRIA belong to the classical "Humboldtarian" tradition of the university in the 19th century. Elder universities like the University of Zagreb (founded 1669) or my University, the University of Graz (founded 1585) had originally other goals.

In the 16th and 17th century universities were founded by the government or the church (Zagreb and Graz have both been established by Jesuits), in order to provide church or state with better educated personal, priests or government officials. This was clearly a reaction to the Protestant Reformation, a movement which brought more intellectual thinking into churches and towns. Therefore the emperor and the church were in search of intelligent young people to form them into educated and loyal priests or administrators. These universities were free of charge for the students. People from all classes were motivated to come to the university. In such a university not only science but other aspects of knowledge are significant - aspects which the ancient Greek taxonomy of knowledge also acknowledges to be important.

For example DOXA, opinion, belief. For the ancient Greece people this was kind of a contradiction to EPISTEME. However, DOXA is a first step towards EPISTEME. You need opinion as starting point to formulate a hypothesis and to try to verify it (or to falsify its contradiction). In science "schools" or "circles" are legitimate forms of finding new knowledge. A university should force DOXA in "scientific schools" to attract a critical mass of scholars - which is increasingly a success factor in science.

In the modern wording of university mission statements one will often find the goal of "profiling" or "focusing". This needs readiness for expressing a certain opinion and to stand for it: DOXA. But how can we value the success of profiling and focusing in university rankings? A simple count of publications is definitely not enough. University ranking should be more.

The last two aspects of knowledge belong to WISDOM:

In his book "Ethikon Nikomacheion" Aristotle distinguishes between two sorts of wisdom: PHRONESIS and SOPHIA. Sophia could be translated as "theoretical wisdom". It is (I shall quote WIKIPEDIA) "a combination of NOUS, the ability to discern reality, and EPISTEME, a type of knowledge which is logically built up, and teachable." Sophia in other words, means reasoning in respect of universal truths.

"On the one hand it requires the capability to rationally consider actions which can deliver desired effects. Aristotle says that phronesis is not simply a skill (technē), however, as it involves not only the ability to decide how to achieve a certain end, but also the ability to reflect upon and determine good ends consistent with the aim of living well overall. Aristotle points out that although sophia is higher and more serious than phronesis, the highest pursuit of wisdom and happiness requires both, because phronesis facilitates sophia. He also associates phronesis with political ability"(quotations from Wikipedia: "Phronesis").

Here we finally arrive at the most important goal of ancient and modern universities: They have the obligation to teach a large part of our society the values of science, the necessity of rational thinking and the legitimacy of intellectual dispute. Like the mission of our founders 400 years ago, universities with a local responsibility have to prepare the people of a whole region for managing the future using scientific tools and values. This is PHRONESIS and SOPHIA and this should be aspired by universities.

Of course it is prestigious to have Nobel Prize winners at our universities. But their work is usually done by a few people - which will hopefully bring benefit to millions. On the other side we must not neglect the benefit of bringing a small amount of scientific and rational thinking to a high percentage of our population. Science and rationality as guiding principles in our everyday life is by far not self evident.

The main goal of universities is the production and teaching of knowledge. But this aim has two dimensions: The level of quality and the number of people which we reach, the quantity: We should try to maximize the product of this two dimensions. A good university is like a pyramid: It needs both, a high summit and a broad basement. Both aspects have to be measured by university rankings.

But even this is not enough. Universities should always remember (and tell their students) that in addition to science and knowledge there are other legitimate ways to understand our world: The Arts, Sport, and Religion for example.

Of course science investigates into these fields with art history, sport sciences or theology. But studying the theory is different from practicing it. Universities should always keep their minds open to various approaches for their students: Sport events and competitions, art exhibitions and classes, ethical discussions should take place at universities. Such efforts should also be considered in rankings and evaluations. A university is not only a scientific organization but has to educate as well.

And finally one last but very important duty for universities – at least for public ones:

Universities are the most important instruments for social advancement, for the permeability of society, for emancipation. Other institutions which had this role in the past, let's say the military or the church do not sufficiently fulfill this role in modern societies anymore. This duty cannot be measured by the ranking within one university as such. That function can only be evaluated within society as a whole.

This is my last comment on the topic of plenary session 3: If university rankings shall contribute to quality, equity and diversity in our society, they must cover a wider field as they do today. University rankings should be regarded as a permanent process, a process which improves universities and rankings. By doing so university rankings could stimulate a continuous dialogue between universities and society.

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