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Indicator and Institution Selection for a HELENA European University Efficiency Analysis^{*}

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This paper presents a comparison of 67 European universities selected from the leading rankings: Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU), Leiden, and Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings, as well as the European University Data Collection Project (EUMIDA) dataset, in order to obtain as many different reliable data as possible for evaluating universities' performance. This is combined with the budget data of these leading European universities in order to calculate a data envelopment analysis (DEA) regarding the overall efficiency of these institutions. The results help to further the discussion about the role and message of rankings in the light of efficient and effective service provided in higher education systems.

Keywords: university efficiency, data envelopment analysis (DEA), indicator selection, European universities

Introduction

University rankings, for example, the Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings, Leiden, or Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU), are a major field of discussion in academics and higher education managers alike. Most rankings do not include the efficiency perspective and lack a proper discussion of the selection algorithm (e.g., Why are colleges/universities of applied sciences/Fachhochschulen excluded?) of ranked universities as well as the indicators used in correlation with the prospective type of excellent universities depicted in the ranking. The suggested European University Efficiency Ranking is based on European University Data Collection Project (EUMIDA), THE World University Rankings, ARWU, and budget data. It clearly states the relevance of the used indicators and the threshold of included versus excluded institutions based on the data envelopment analysis (DEA) efficiency calculation method used in the German Higher Education Global Efficiency Analysis (HELENA) federal research project on higher education efficiency.

One of the major faults of the existing ranking systems is their lack of input and efficiency data leading to a "competition for size" instead of a "competition for excellence" by the universities pushing for high ranking position under the notion of world class university's concepts. As Shin and Toutkoushian (2012) put it in one of the latest books on university rankings:

Occasionally, the raters of universities and the consumers of rankings do not pay much attention to the fact that

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HELENA EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY EFFICIENCY ANALYSIS

rankings were initially conceived as a tool for measuring the effectiveness of higher education institutions. It is often assumed that highly-ranked institutions are more productive, have higher quality teaching and research, and contribute more to society than lower-ranked institutions. However, the three main dimensions of institutions—teaching, research, and service, can differ or even conflict with each other, and thus institutions that are performing well in one area may perform poorly along other dimensions. For example, a small institution may be very efficient in educating a given number of students with limited resources, but not very efficient in the production of research. On the other hand, we might find a large institution that is very efficient in knowledge production but not in teaching undergraduate students. (pp. 3-4)

As many rankings focus on output and outcome indicators, such as the number of publications and citations, the number and success of graduates, internationalization, academic awards, or industry income, in many cases, the input (e.g., budget, faculty numbers, etc.) is neglected. Therefore, the described productivity perspective usually gets lost, urging the university leaders to look out for institutional growth by the way of mergers and increasing input.

This gap in institutional research by most of the existing ranking schemes is addressed by the HELENA research project in Germany regarding higher education efficiency research. Within this approach, a new method, the already broadly used DEA (Charnes, Cooper, & Rhodes, 1978) is suggested as it exactly heals the above described deficit: As this method is a non-parametric and relative efficiency measurement calculation, it allows all calculated institutions to have individual focal points of their strategy and productivity and calculates individual weightings of these areas in the most favorable way for each single institution. Therefore, no institution gets punished for concentrating on one or several of the multi-perspective output areas in higher education have been suggesting for calculating efficiencies of universities operations (Cohn, Rhine, & Santos, 1989; Beasley, 1995; Dundar & Lewis, 1995; Glass, McKillop, & O'Rourke, 1998; Ng & Li, 2000; Korhonen, Tainio, & Wallenius, 2001; Kocher, Luptacik, & Sutter, 2006; Kao & Hung, 2008; Sarrico, 2010; Worthington & Higgs, 2011; Zangoueinezhad & Moshabaki, 2011), this contribution is combining several output indicators from different datasets (EUMIDA, THE World University Rankings, Leiden, and ARWU) as well as input budget data from about 67 leading European universities in order to show the ranking effects of such an efficiency calculation using DEA.

European Universities' Performance and Budget Data

The proposed institutional efficiency analysis is being conducted by utilizing a method from the DEA-family to calculate the relative efficiency of higher education institutions (Cooper, Seiford, & Tone, 2000; Sarrico & Dyson, 2004; Taylor & Harris, 2004). A major focus of DEA evaluations is the question of viable objectives and performance data, especially if universities from different countries are involved (Ramsden, 1994; Stahl, Leap, & Wei, 1998; Worthington & Lee, 2008; Sarrico, Teixeira, Rosa, & Cardoso, 2009). In this case, the following performance indicators have been selected in order to allow for a broad and comprehensive evaluation band for all universities included into the efficiency measurement:

1. The THE World University Rankings total score (O1);

2. The Shanghai Ranking ARWU total score (O2)—in the cases of ranking places 101-150 and 151-200 replaced with assumed scores of 20 and 10;

3. The Leiden Ranking total publication number score (Thomson Reuters) (O3);

4. The number of Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) graduates and Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) students from the

EUMIDA dataset (O4 and O5);

5. The university budget (2011).

Table 1 represents the complete dataset used for the DEA efficiency analysis. Interestingly, the THE World University Rankings and the Leiden Ranking provide the most comprehensive listing of European universities among the top 200 (with THE a slight "focus" on the UK institutions), or in other words, in the ARWU, there are the least European universities represented.

Table 1

Dataset for 6/ Universitie	01	02	03	O4	05	D 1 (2011(0)
Unit name	THE score	ARWU score	Leiden score	Ph.D. graduates	B.A. students	Budget 2011 (€)
U Oxford, UK	93.7	55.9	12,208	850	19,583	1,093,538,183
U Cambridge, UK	92.6	69.6	11,742	950	17,837	942,019,645
Imperial C, London, UK	90.6	41.6	10,098	725	11,027	837,396,247
ETH Zürich, CH	87.8	43.5	7,257	581	10,364	1,189,794,717
University C, London, UK	85.5	43.0	11,208	610	17,181	953,219,017
U Edinburgh, UK	76.1	30.5	6,320	520	20,823	773,930,364
ETH Lausanne, CH	73.0	20.0	4,139	266	4,749	646,111,066
Karolinska Inst., SE	72.4	32.7	6,920	352	6,416	604,377,426
LMU München, DE	70.4	29.5	6,896	1,270	39,297	488,600,000
U Manchester, UK	70.1	0.0	8,531	830	33,640	962,018,693
King's C, London, UK	66.2	28.8	5,964	305	19,215	623,243,038
KU Leuven, BE	66.1	20.0	8,909	529	26,226	720,631,780
U Leiden, NL	65.1	27.8	5,524	302	17,736	514,700,000
U Utrecht, NL	64.1	30.4	8,179	438	29,276	767,354,000
U Göttingen, DE	63.2	20.0	4,131	758	20,529	412,101,313
U Wageningen, NL	63.2	20.0	3,951	210	5,161	710,000,000
EU Rotterdam, NL	62.9	10.0	6,036	265	19,584	542,000,000
U Bristol, UK	62.5	29.2	5,502	355	15,807	486,122,672
TU Delft, NL	61.6	0.0	3,957	236	15,461	520,600,000
U Heidelberg, DE	61.4	30.2	6,359	1,039	22,922	316,700,000
U Durham, UK	60.7	0.0	2,533	200	14,928	295,978,310
U Lund, SE	60.3	20.0	6,507	425	29,090	700,000,000
U Amsterdam, NL	60.1	20.0	7,128	353	28,325	600,000,000
U Groningen, NL	58.8	24.9	6,268	306	24,814	576,000,000
U Zürich, CH	58.8	29.7	6,345	670	20,330	1,008,015,049
U Ghent, BE	58.4	25.5	7,630	389	24,806	410,000,000
HU Berlin, DE	57.5	0.0	4,955	455	24,925	339,400,000
U York, UK	57.1	0.0	2,488	250	12,070	303,579,328
TU München, DE	56.8	30.6	5,408	708	22,612	1,095,000,000
U Uppsala, SE	56.6	28.0	5,545	364	23,311	596,410,285
U St Andrews, UK	56.5	0.0	1,999	145	7,421	199,550,503
U Helsinki, FI	56.4	27.2	6,428	466	30,092	643,056,100
Trinity C, Dublin, IR	56.2	0.0	2,619	269	13,581	265,745,000
U Sussex, UK	56.2	20.0	1,712	175	11,476	197,160,321
U Sheffield, UK	56.2	20.0	5,002	430	22,453	511,332,556
TU Eindhoven, NL	55.6	0.0	2,943	191	7,066	312,600,000
U Maastricht, NL	55.5	0.0	3,730	185	12,990	343,421,000

Dataset for 67 Universities Plus Five Residuals

(Table 1 to be continued)						
U Nottingham, UK	54.8	25.6	5,905	540	29,185	607,653,340
U Warwick, UK	54.4	0.0	3,153	275	26,995	498,251,956
RU Nijmegen, NL	54.0	20.0	5,727	260	17,706	500,250,000
FU Berlin, DE	53.7	0.0	5,177	574	28,010	392,500,000
U Lausanne, CH	53.6	0.0	2,955	186	9,494	333,360,595
U Southampton, UK	53.6	0.0	4,977	480	21,851	519,585,226
U Geneva, CH	53.5	28.7	4,118	272	10,256	604,511,700
U Glasgow, UK	53.0	10.0	4,243	340	22,138	535,347,349
VU Amsterdam, NL	52.9	20.0	5,825	264	21,045	459,700,000
KTH Royal Inst. of Techn., SE	52.9	0.0	3,320	235	14,120	443,481,686
U Basel, CH	52.8	25.6	3,464	365	9,150	366,100,074
U Leeds, UK	52.8	10.0	5,377	460	30,185	575,339,501
U Freiburg, DE	52.3	24.3	4,123	716	18,640	280,900,000
Queen Mary, U London, UK	52.1	0.0	2,099	195	12,571	356,743,644
U Lancaster, UK	52.1	0.0	1,586	215	12,320	214,902,371
KIT Karlsruhe, DE	51.5	0.0	3,941	351	17,737	397,000,000
U Bern, CH	51.5	10.0	4,086	496	11,152	603,582,236
U Exeter, UK	51.3	0.0	1,941	175	13,356	292,767,617
RWTH Aachen, DE	51.1	0.0	4,070	725	27,337	605,130,013
U Vienna, AU	50.2	10.0	3,128	594	61,788	509,700,000
U Liverpool, UK	49.0	20.0	4,028	260	17,946	475,658,192
U Bonn, DE	49.0	20.0	4,152	651	23,273	534,400,000
U Reading, UK	48.8	0.0	1,871	190	13,613	258,880,538
U East Anglia, UK	48.8	0.0	1,834	205	14,783	229,546,698
U Aberdeen, UK	48.8	0.0	2,637	135	13,193	261,612,006
U Newcastle, UK	48.6	0.0	3,595	300	17,228	454,491,402
U Twente, NL	47.9	0.0	2,409	160	8,135	279,400,000
U Col, Dublin, IR	47.9	0.0	3,728	255	19,236	442,000,000
U Leicester, UK	46.7	0.0	2,639	220	14,040	416,200,918
U Frankfurt, DE	46.4	20.0	3,869	589	30,511	489,500,000
U Catholique de Louvain, BE	50.0	20.0	2,779	-	-	370,000,000
TU Denmark, DK	51.7	10.0	3,876	-	-	558,000,000
U Copenhagen, DK	53.6	33.8	9,241	-	-	1,047,874,149
U Aarhus, DK	55.3	26.0	6,167	-	-	789,599,000
U Paris-Sud, FR	58.6	34.5	4,940		-	450,000,000

(Table 1 to be continued)

Note. Bold italic: assumed scores.

Results

The efficiency results with the DEA methodology were calculated with the Charnes, Cooper, and Rhodes (CCR) input-oriented model (assuming constant returns to scale). Table 2 outlines the results here. The efficiency leaders include (if all outputs are taken into account) the UK universities, such as St. Andrews, Sussex, as well as Heidelberg and Vienna. The lowest efficiency score is realized by the universities of Zurich, the TU Munich, and Wageningen. The further discussion section and detailed figures regarding the different combinations of the included five output measures are shown in order to analyze the DEA results further. This may lead to further organization and management insights for higher education management concepts.

Table 2

Efficiency Results

Unit name	Score
U St Andrews, UK	100.00%
U Sussex, UK	100.00%
U Heidelberg, DE	100.00%
U Vienna, AU	100.00%
LMU München, DE	94.80%
U Ghent, BE	92.70%
U Freiburg, DE	92.10%
HU Berlin, DE	91.30%
U Lancaster, UK	90.90%
U East Anglia, UK	88.90%
FU Berlin, DE	82.40%
Trinity C, Dublin, IR	81.90%
U Durham, UK	79.20%
U Aberdeen, UK	76.70%
U Reading, UK	76.10%
U Cambridge, UK	75.90%
U Göttingen, DE	71.20%
U York, UK	71.10%
U Basel, CH	70.70%
TU Eindhoven, NL	70.30%
U Maastricht, NL	69.30%
U Exeter, UK	68.60%
U Twente, NL	66.60%
U Frankfurt, DE	66.20%
U Lausanne, CH	64.40%
VU Amsterdam, NL	63.20%
U Bristol, UK	62.30%
U Amsterdam, NL	62.20%
KIT Karlsruhe, DE	61.70%
KU Leuven, BE	61.60%
U Warwick, UK	60.60%
Imperial C, London, UK	60.10%
U Leiden, NL	59.80%
U Leeds, UK	59.70%
Karolinska Inst,, SE	59.60%
University C, London, UK	58.60%
EU Rotterdam, NL	57.80%
U Nottingham, UK	57.50%
U Helsinki, FI	57.30%
U Sheffield, UK	57.20%
RU Nijmegen, NL	57.00%
U Groningen, NL	56.90%
Queen Mary, U London, UK	55.80%
U Oxford, UK	55.60%
U Col, Dublin, IR	55.50%
U Southampton, UK	54.50%

(Table 2 to be continued)	
U Utrecht, NL	53.10%
U Lund, SE	51.90%
U Glasgow, UK	51.90%
U Uppsala, SE	51.80%
U Bonn, DE	51.70%
King's C, London, UK	51.50%
U Newcastle, UK	51.30%
U Liverpool, UK	50.90%
RWTH Aachen, DE	50.80%
KTH Royal Inst. of Techn., SE	50.40%
TU Delft, NL	50.10%
U Leicester, UK	48.50%
U Geneva, CH	48.20%
U Manchester, UK	46.30%
U Edinburgh, UK	46.00%
ETH Lausanne, CH	46.00%
U Bern, CH	39.10%
ETH Zürich, CH	37.50%
U Wageningen, NL	37.50%
U Zürich, CH	31.30%
TU München, DE	29.10%

DEA Results in Details

Figures 1-5 outline the detailed dual combinations of two output or performance measures in order to compare them graphically as follows:

1. The first combination of the outputs of THE scores and ARWU scores (per input budget) analyzes the University of Sussex (UK) to be the most efficient one in this regard, followed by the German universities of Heidelberg and Freiburg. For all the three cases, it can be stated that the institutions are mid-sized (see Figure 1);

2. Figure 2 depicts the output combination of ARWU and Leiden Ranking scores. In this comparison, Susses, St. Andrews, and Heidelberg universities are the most efficient in a DEA model as described—with St. Andrews being a very small but prestigious university;

3. Figure 3 uses the outputs of THE ranking scores and Ph.D. graduates (according to the EUMIDA dataset) with the most efficient universities in Heidelberg and Sussex again, followed by St. Andrews and Freiburg. In Figure 3, it is obvious that there is a distinctive German-UK profile characteristics as most UK universities are very prodictive regarding the output measure THE ranking scores (lower half of the grouped institutions), whereas the German universities are populating the upper half of the figure, representing a relatively productive characteristic in terms of Ph.D. graduates;

4. Figure 4 featuring the frontier comparison of university efficiency according to DEA describes the combined outputs of B.A. graduates (EUMIDA) and THE ranking scores, with the universities of Vienna (B.A. graduates) and Sussex (THE ranking scores) being the most efficient;

5. Figure 5 outlines the output combination of Leiden Ranking scores with Ph.D. graduates—therein, the University of Heidelberg is the efficiency leader, followed by Ghent, Freiburg, and Munich.

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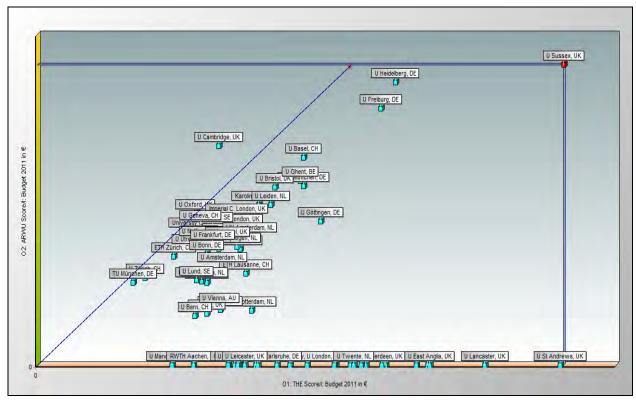


Figure 1. Frontier plot for university efficiency—Outputs of THE (X) and ARWU scores (Y).

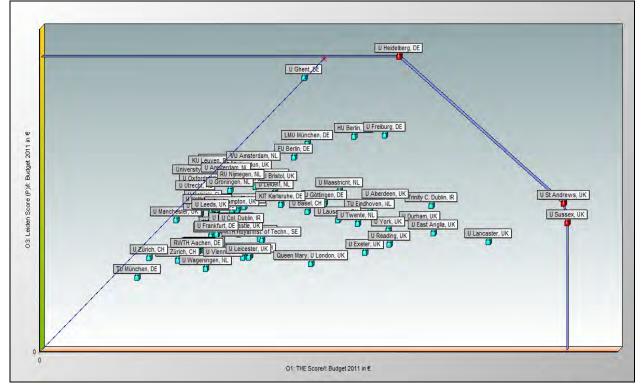


Figure 2. Frontier plot for university efficiency—Outputs of THE (X) and Leiden scores (Y).

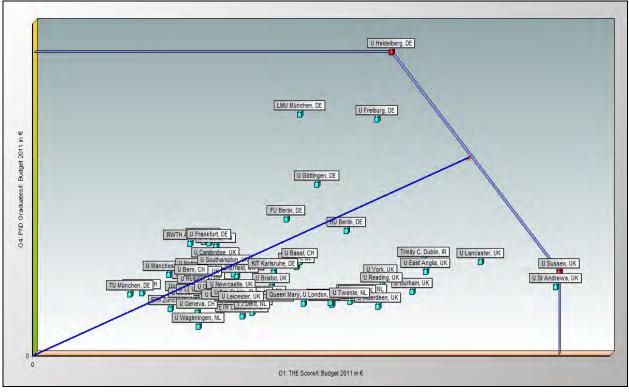


Figure 3. Frontier plot for university efficiency—Outputs of THE (X) and Ph.D. graduates EUMIDA (Y).

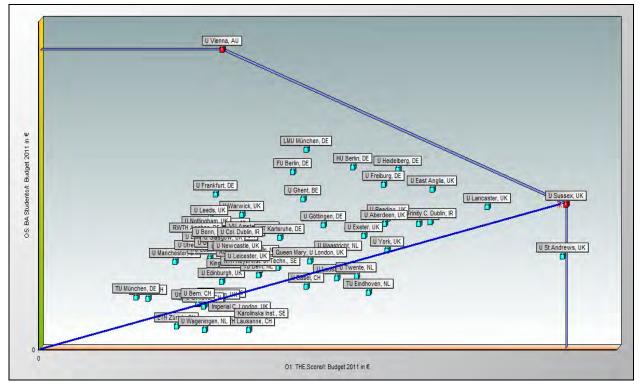


Figure 4. Frontier plot for university efficiency—Outputs of THE (X) and B.A. students EUMIDA (Y).

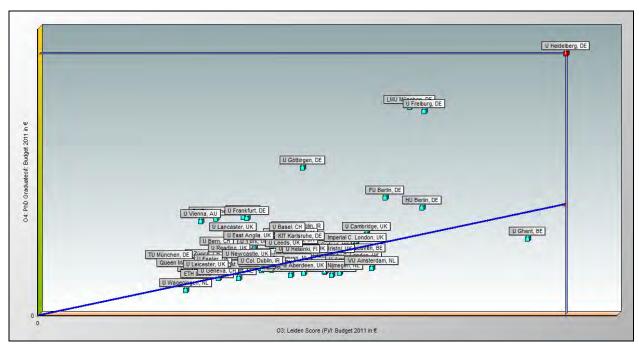


Figure 5. Frontier plot for university efficiency—Outputs of Leiden scores (X) and Ph.D. graduates (Y).

Conclusions

The different perspectives of different ranking endeavours provide for a much differentiated view towards university efficiency. Interestingly, the budget size-efficiency correlation over all those output perspectives is negative (r = -0.65), indicating that smaller universities are more efficient in the light of several different performance disciplines and areas (see Figure 6).

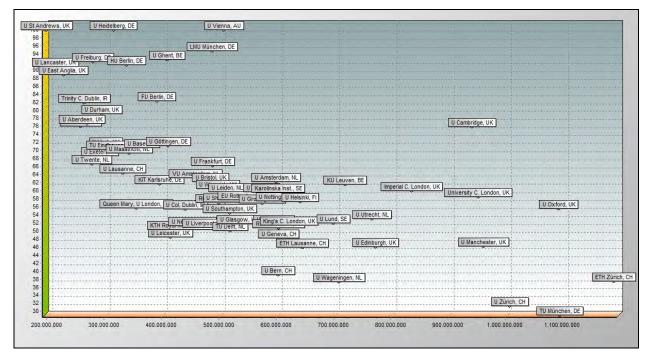


Figure 6. The correlation between budget size (*X*) and efficiency (*Y*) (N = 67).

On the other hand, different ranking scores also feature a very high correlation regarding the compared university dataset—the highest one for the THE World University Rankings, with the Leiden Ranking (r = 0.80) as depicted below (see Figure 7). This indicates that ranking results are largely comparable and stable across different measurements and indicator concepts—though not including the selection bias question, as the institutions compared here are all included in the rankings compared.

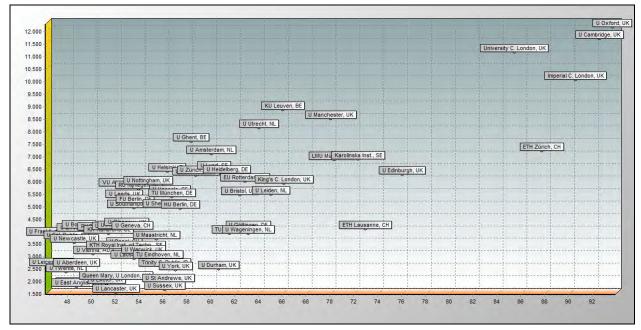


Figure 7. The correlation between Leiden scores (Y) and THE scores (X) (N = 67; r = 0.80).

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