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Research discourses surrounding global university rankings : exploring the relationship with policy and practice recommendations

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Abstract

This study examines the ways in which different research perspectives have tended to problematize global university rankings (GURs). An analytical framework is applied to help articulate four distinct research discourses that have been applied to GURs. The framework distinguishes research problems which are locally defined and 'emergent' from those which are 'a priori' and seek to test data against established bodies of knowledge. The analysis in this paper considers the contribution made from studies framed by these contrasting perspectives. The paper considers the extent to which different research approaches align with or challenge the dominant discourses within higher education internationally. The analysis shows how the research perspective adopted relates to the nature of policy and practice responses proposed; both in terms of the audience(s) they are addressed to; and the extent to which policy and practice solutions are structural and systemic or social practice oriented. The paper highlights some of the implications of the prevailing research orientation for the trajectory of GUR development. (HRK / Abstract übernommen) O'Connell, Catherine, E-Mail:

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