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**Abstract**

Business schools globally operate in a market-driven environment and rankings are very much part of that environment. Rankings have a significant impact on a school's ability to attract the top scholars, the most able students and research funding. Schools use rankings to support claims of excellence and 'world class' status. The purpose of this study is to explore whether an analysis of the historical development of business schools and business/management education in the UK, supported by reference to institutional theory, can help explain trends in rankings and the positions of different types of school. The analysis is based on a selection of undergraduate, MBA and research rankings published between 1984 and 2010. The findings of the study fit with the expectations of institutional theory: particularly regulations and normative path dependencies determined the rankings of different categories of university, e.g., ancient, plateglass, technology and post-1992. (HRK / Abstract übernommen) Wilkins, Stephen, E-Mail: S.J.K.Wilkins@bath.ac.uk