

Секция «Глобалистика и геополитика»

QS University Rankings as a Global Actor

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The global expansion of access to higher education has increased demand for information on academic quality and has led to the development of university ranking systems in many countries of the world. One of the most influential agencies is QS Symonds University Rankings, a world-recognized ranking system. Other two global rankings are Times Higher Education World Rankings and the Academic Ranking of World Universities [4]. University rankings like other rankings of cities, companies and even countries are in very demand. They provide the public with information purported to assess huge amount of information. Indeed, rankings can be a useful source of information as higher education becomes globalized and students around the world seek a high-quality education. The rankings compare universities on a variety of indicators, attempting to hold them accountable to global publics.

Recognition and Geographical spread. Quacquarelli Symonds is a British company specializing in consulting services in the sphere of international education. QS operates in fifty countries, working with prestigious educational institutions and employers. The most important point is that QS assesses universities basing on the information universities provide themselves. Thus, it is recognized by all leading world universities. Also it is recognized by governments of many countries that seeking to their universities being included in top 100.

The will and first results. In 2004 the first ranking of world universities was published on the pages of the Times Higher Education of the British organization TSL Education Ltd. The results of this study continued to be published on THE pages until 2009, and from 2010 QS continued to publish its research on the already established methodology but still in partnership with bibliometric database Scopus company Elsevier, but already on the pages of other worldwide publications. In turn created THE new methodology and began to produce its own rating. Annually QS estimates about 3000 universities, choosing the best of them. In 2013 in the General rating list it will include 800 universities, representing 76 countries of the world.

Affecting behavior of other actors. In nowadays international high competitive environment governments across the world are using rankings to measure their global impact. With these three lists of the world's best universities the competition over the world increases and the governments are paying more attention, utilizing rankings to make policy decisions.

Education has become a top priority in emerging economies and many are looking to form partnerships with world leading universities. For example, the Brazilian government's national scholarship programme, Science Without Borders, aims to send 100,000 students and researchers in primarily STEM subject areas to some of the world's best institutions [2]. These partner universities were selected based on their position in the QS and Times rankings. In an effort to ensure quality, India's University Grants Commission also requires any foreign university wanting to partner with Indian universities to be ranked among the top 500 in the world.

In Russia the picture is similar. There is a Presidential Scholarship which supports researches, who are willing to study in top 100 universities. Also trying to make Russia more attractive to international academics and expatriates, the authorities recently instituted a new legislation that will recognize degrees from foreign universities that are among the top 300 in these rankings. Russia is also taking steps to overhaul its own higher education sector as a result of its poor performance in the global university rankings. Following an independent audit of its universities, 15 were selected to receive special grants to improve their positions with rankings criteria [1].

Other countries looking to improve their standings in the rankings have also opened their borders. Countries such as Denmark and the Netherlands have changed their immigration laws to favour those who have graduated from top global universities. In points based systems, graduates from the highest ranked universities in the QS, Times and Shanghai Rankings are awarded more points. The countries such as Germany, France, Japan and Singapore have introduced similar programmes to improve their higher education systems and build world-class universities.

An apparently important contributor to the most effective university rankings is government policy. By specifying the performance indicators that will be publicly available and by subsidizing the development of measures of academic process and outputs, government can help improve the quality of information available to both student consumers and universities. Rankings, while used primarily by students, may shape public opinion about what constitutes a quality education in ways that negatively affect both student consumers and institutional behavior [3].

There are different opinions regarding rankings – both positive and critique. Usually the position in rating furthers growth of tuition costs. It is difficult to say that it promotes students' intake number. Some universities use their high position in rankings to justify annual growth of student tuition.

Conclusions. Ranking global agencies are defined by following parameters and actions:

- o Knowledge and right to assess (QS indeed proved itself as an organization which is able and have the right to assess the world best universities. This statement is supported by the fact that the universities, participating in ranking, provide QS with the data by themselves. The information is analyzed by QS and the ranking is produced).

- o *Assessment* (since 2004 the QS publishes rankings of universities they have assessed).

- o *Building expectations* (a great number of countries strive for top 100 ranking, expecting that it will improve their universities image and attract more students and researchers).

- o *Creating attitudes* (more and more often applicants and candidates judge universities basing on top 100 rankings. Number of governmental grants that applicants from variety of countries get also depends on universities rankings position which proves the UK student attraction case).

- o *Consequences* (the most evident consequence is growth of tuition costs, the amount of students intake increasing is not yet studied by me).

No doubt that the arrival of global classifications and rankings of universities has revived the world of higher education. Since the emergence of global rankings, universities have been unable to avoid national and international comparisons, and this has caused changes in the way universities function, which proves that QS University Rankings are a Global Actor.

Литература

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