

Chapter 7

Citations, Open Access and University Rankings

Clive Baldock

University of Tasmania, Australia

ABSTRACT

The citation impact of research articles contributes to the assessment of the research performance of universities in some international university ranking systems either as the number of citations per paper, number of citations per faculty, total number of citations, number of highly cited papers or percentage of highly cited papers. Publishing research articles in Open Access (OA) journals has the potential for increasing the citation impact of research articles and in so doing improve an institutions position in university rankings. This chapter reviews the evidence for an increase in citations through publishing in Open Access publications.

INTRODUCTION

Over hundreds of years, and generally throughout their existence, the role of universities in society has continued to evolve. Many universities that were originally institutions of learning have over time, and particularly over the last century or so, evolved to undertake and promote research as a significant feature of their activities alongside both undergraduate and postgraduate teaching.

For many universities in the higher education arena, a significant tension arises from the pressure to favour research over teaching and use revenue from student fees to cross-subsidise the non-teaching activities of institutions, such as research, which includes the non-teaching, research component of academic staff salaries. To give this some context, a recently published report in Australia (Norton 2015) indicated that surpluses from the teaching enterprise significantly subsidise the research enterprise in Australian universities with the suggestion that universities earn up to \$3.2 billion more from students than they spend on teaching with, conservatively, one dollar in five that is spent on research coming from the surpluses on teaching.

Students expect to gain some benefit from investment in their education by way of small classes and more personalised teaching and assistance. However, there are significant incentives for universities to

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spend extra money on research. The argument is often made that there is the accepted understanding of synergies between teaching and research, often referred to as the teaching-research nexus with the expectation that teaching and research activities mutually support each other in that students will receive a better education for learning in a research environment and research will benefit from student input.

Regardless of whether students benefit from attending a university with synergies in the teaching-research nexus, for many, enrolling in high-prestige universities has the potential to improve social status and employment prospects. Further, for international students the level of the prestige of a specific university is often considered to be a function of the institution's performance in the various university rankings which are significantly influenced by both research performance. To this end, there is significant interest in the quality of research with regards to the global assessment of higher education institutions articulated through university rankings.

In this chapter aspects of university rankings is explored with emphasis on the role of citations resulting from research publications and more specifically on the role that Open Access publishing may play.

University Rankings

Internationally, much emphasis is given to the rankings of universities and the production of associated league tables (Hazelkorn 2007, 2008), with much anticipation each year among university administrators, funding agencies, and students when a number of international ranking agencies publish their latest ranking lists (Butler 2010). Such rankings, now a standard feature, are playing a significant role in a changing higher education landscape internationally with implications for many, whether realized or not.

The practice of university rankings may be dated back to the beginning of the 20th Century with the publication of *Where We Get Our Best Men*. The backgrounds of "England's most prominent and successful men of the time" were evaluated with particular reference to where each studied. This resulted in a listing of universities ranked by the number of distinguished alumni that the universities could claim (Myers 2009).

Subsequently, graduate programs in United States universities were ranked on the basis of peer reputation (Hughes 1925). More comprehensive rankings of universities began being published from 1983 when the US News and World Report initiated ranking college undergraduate education programs with this ranking being published annually from 1987.

Since 2003 numerous university rankings have been published with some now becoming particularly popular. Some of the most well-known include the Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU) from Shanghai Jiao Tong University in China, the QS World University Rankings, the Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings, and more recently, the Leiden University Rankings.

Despite ongoing debates about the use and validity of university rankings, they enable students as consumers to compare institutions within a country and around the world as they make decisions regarding which university to potentially attend. Further, for many university presidents and administrators rankings influence organizational missions, strategies, personnel, recruitment, and public relations (Hazelkorn, 2007, 2008). Furthermore, rankings often drive the allocation of resources with decision makers and administrators sensitive to the resulting prestige that may be associated with ranking performance (Bastedo, 2011). Internationally, governments and funding agencies are also increasingly using rankings as policy instruments to assess the performance of higher education institutions (Sponsler, 2009).

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