Chapter 5
The Critical Success Factors in Higher Education:
Ranking Systems and Industrial Context

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ABSTRACT

This study reviews some of the prominent ranking systems with a view to shed more light on what may constitute a critical success factor in the field of higher education. In the first part, the ranking systems are reviewed and the key principles are explained. A brief description of how institutions use ranking information is also included. In the second part of the study, the subject of internationalization in the context of ranking systems is discussed. The main challenges of competitiveness in higher education and the increasing role of internationalization are expressed. The chapter also describes threats and opportunities for the future of higher education. This section also includes suggestions for higher education administrators. In the third part, the subject of ranking with particular focus on the university-industry collaboration and its effects on the future of higher education are discussed. The role of the industry and the changing mission of the universities in the new era are explained.

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, the information age, the information society, and the knowledge economy appear to be the leading determinants of the future of higher education. The structure of higher education is changing today, where international borders are disappearing, resources are moving rapidly between borders, and especially international mobility of human resources is rising. As one of the key actors of the information

society, higher education institutions are at the heart of this change and have to optimize their resources in pursuit of international recognition while contributing to the creation of an information economy.

As part of the highly interactive and multicultural information network, higher education institutions have started to take on distinct roles as a result of increased cross-cultural interaction. Differing stakeholder expectations led higher education to take new and creative responsibilities other than the classical task definition. Faced with radical changes in the level of inputs and outputs, higher education institutions have begun to redesign their operational processes.

Higher education institutions, shaped by supply-demand relations, remained in great competition to respond to differing expectations. This competition enabled comparative and performance-based evaluations of higher education institutions. The quest for survival imposed radical changes on institutions aspiring to remain competitive. A set of criteria for success is needed helping the stakeholders of higher education positioning a university in such competition.

The measurement of success in higher education institutions has always been elusive since the missions may diverge considerably. Teaching, research and societal contributions are the commonly known objectives of universities worldwide. However, studies towards determining individual elements that are critical to the success of higher education institutions have just been emerging recently.

Ranking systems, which have gained recognition in recent years, may provide valuable references in terms of monitoring competition among higher education institutions and also as a source of information to third parties. The various and detailed measurement criteria used by these systems offer the opportunity to determine the position and status of the institution in the higher education ecosystem and compare like with like. These services, produced by various institutions, provide important contributions to all sides of higher education in line with their expectations. Funding institutions, students and faculty members, governmental authorities make extensive use of ranking data.

Today, where politics, economy, socio-cultural dynamics affect the academic world deeply, meaningful ranking criteria have positive effects on both the development and competitive performance of institutions. Actors in the field of higher education, gaining international character, determine their strategies, and take administrative measures to increase their competitiveness benefiting from some of the information generated by ranking systems.

The aim of the study is to provide an descriptive view of the critical success factors in higher education based on the some common aspects of ranking systems. To this end, first of all, some commonly known ranking institutions and their related systems worldwide will be presented. The measurement methodologies used by these institutions will be explained and compared. "Internationalization" and "development of industrial collaborations" are some of the major challenges facing universities. Their impact are much more vague in term of assessing competitiveness in comparison to conventional factors such as research outcome or teaching quality. Therefore, in the second part, the concept of internationalization and its place in the ranking systems are discussed and the crucial role of internationalization is explained with links to the emerging rules of competition in higher education. This section also addresses the issue of "organizational autonomy" as it influences many factors ranging from leadership to scientific talent pool which are also underlined by ranking systems. In the third part, university-industry collaboration is analyzed since this is a factor related to the less understood third mission of universities labelled as "contributions to society". Furthermore, the impact of university-industrial relations on the future of higher education will be discussed. In the final part, the holistic impact of ranking systems in terms of the future of higher education will be explained, and suggestions will be presented for university administrators based on the literature reviewed.

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