

# ***The inclusion of equality issues in university rankings***

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CHE Center for Higher Education Development

- The CHE
- The CHE Rankings
  - CHE UniversityRanking
  - CHE ExcellenceRanking
- Including equality issues in rankings
  - What is included?
  - Why other equality indicators are not included
  - What can be done?
- Discussion

- Founded 1994 by the german rectors' conference and the private bertelsmann foundation
- Work as a „think tank“:
  - Developing concepts
  - Pilot projects with universities and ministries
  - Publishing of results via press releases, papers, symposia, presentations
- Largest Project: University Rankings



<http://ranking.zeit.de>



<http://www.excellenceranking.org>

- 37 Subject areas
- national oriented, but extending internationally: Germany plus countries/universities interesting for german students
  - since 1998 universities of germany
  - since 2004 Austria
  - since 2005 Switzerland
  - since 2007 Netherlands
  - since 2008 Bozen (german speaking part of Italy)
  - 2009 „study offers interesting for german students“
    - Universität Szeged
    - maybe Semmelweis Universität
- Apart from selection by country no selection. All Universities offering a surveyed subject are included

- First released 2007
- Europe-wide, but selected departments
- Preselection by research (and internationalisation) indicators
- First round natural sciences,
- Second round economics, political science, psychology

**Ranking of single subjects / subject areas**

**Multidimensional ranking**

**Rank groups:**

**top**  **middle**  **bottom** 

**general information on studies**

**information on towns & universities**

**detailed information on departments**

**detailed information on courses and programs**

**“ranked” results  
(Research indicators, student judgements)**



Facts from departments

professors' survey

student survey

bibliometric analysis

patent analysis

alumni surveys (in few subjects)



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[...] the student body entering, participating in an completing higher education should reflect the diversity of our populations.

London Communiqué of Ministers responsible for Higher Education in the countries participating in the Bologna Process, May 2007

- CHE-Rankings:
  - no „ranked“ equality indicators
  - subject specific data:
  - proportion of women per course
  - prospectively proportion of women in
    - doctoral degrees
    - scientific staff
    - professorships
  
- Link to webpage with information for handicapped students on the universities' website

- CEWS Gender Equality Ranking (germany)
  - Proportion of women on different level of qualification (PhD, Habilitations, academic staff, professorships)...
  - ... in relation to proportion of women among students
  - Increase/decrease of women's participation to academic staff and professorships in a period of 5 years
  - rank groups
  - for different types of universities

## But:

- Not subject specific: The distribution of „girls“ and „boys“-subject of a university influences the rank.
- If you lower the proportion of female students, you do better in the ranking

- Social status
- Ethnicity
- migration background
- disability
- capability
- ...

- Proportion of members of the different groups (e.g. with a low social status) dependent on the proportion in the „catchment area“ (regions from which students are recruited)
- Thus a university in a wealthy region would have a smaller proportion of students with a lower social economic status – but can not be made „responsible“ for this.
- Thus: The university-specific „population“ would have to be taken into account
- How to measure this for all universities?

- Data not available, e.g.
  - socioeconomic status
  - ethnicity / migration background
  - degree/kind of disability/handicap
- Proportion of group members (e.g. handicapped) sometimes too small to assess equality.
  - Proportions too small
  - For judgements: Number of cases too small
  - if not subject-specific maybe better for some groups.



- The inequality already exists in the (german) school system, not so much in the transition to the universities
  - e.g. Transition quota with migration background is higher (about 75%) then without migration background (about 70%)
  - But: Only about 18% of non-germans earn a degree that qualifies for studying, but 47% of german
  - Inequality in gender distribution of subjects (e.g. physics/engineering) already exists in school.

## Thus:

- Measuring inequality at the university level seems at the wrong point.
  - Inequality is not so much influenced by the single university but by the whole education system
- Can inequality at all be attributed to a single university (which a ranking would do) or only to the whole system?
- Maybe „hidden“ discrimination by an „excluding“ way of communicating?

- Equality is an important political and societal goal
- Rankings are a powerful means of creating public attention and to transport messages

But:

- If methodically critical, the attention will „backfire“ in terms of discreditation of the ranking
- Rankings (e.g. CHE Ranking) are mainly meant to help with study decision
- For most people equality not relevant for study decision
- Maybe even contra-productive (e.g. selecting a university with a low proportion of minorities)

- Assessment of group memberships has to be improved (problems with personal data)
- Development of „fact-indicators“ apart from quotas necessary (how well are groups, e.g. handicapped students) supported.
- Measurement / identification of mechanisms of „hidden discrimination“
- Separate „Equality reports“ by experts, lobby groups seem better suiting
- If methodological problems are solved, indicators may be included into university rankings