

How can Ethics be Considered as a Criterion for Universities Ranking?

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Dear Editor,

We read Sedigh's article (2016) entitled "Ethics: An Indispensable Dimension in the University Rankings" with great interest and enjoyed it (Sedigh 2016). However, we would like to add some points to his valuable paper.

First of all, the difference between unethical conduct and misconduct should be considered. In fact, even though a misconduct may lead to an unethical conduct, we should be aware that these two are different and every misconduct should not be considered as unethical. For instance, considering Sedigh's example, although the lack of scheme for presenting a course shows the professor's weakness, it should not be considered as an unethical act. In other words, it can be considered as a meritorious performance of educational activities. Also publishing low quality papers by universities can be considered as research misconduct.

Secondly, there are some limitations to the invention of valid criteria for university rankings (Ioannidis et al. 2007). For instance, despite the situation in which we do moral judgments they are a kind of personal activity and sometimes they are related to the unique aspects of the agent, and they could not be measured by quantitative factors.

It is also important to highlight that education and research are two distinct disciplines and their evaluation has different rules in universities. For example,

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research outputs usually take long time to show their own advantages and as a result, they cannot be measured in a defined period (Sedigh 2016).

Moreover, one of the most important issues which institutions should consider as their priority is making their ethical codes. Ethical codes are able to improve an organization's ethical standards.

Meanwhile, they can be quantitatively assessed to some extent (Oladinrin and Ho 2016), but it is obvious that making the codes by themselves will not guarantee the university personnel's ethical acts.

In conclusion, considering misconduct and unethical conduct as different and the restriction of assessing ethical activities quantitatively and considering the different measures for evaluation of educational and research fields, it seems that Sedigh's recommendation has many challenges. More emphasis on making ethical codes can be considered as better solution to improve ethical issues at universities as well as the design of some methods to determine the extent to which universities live up to the codes they have adopted.

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