Reviewer’s report

Title: International ranking systems for universities and institutions: a critical appraisal

Version: 1 Date: 7 August 2007

Reviewer: Hans Karle

Reviewer’s report:

General

This is an interesting paper, which deals with the controversial issue of ranking universities. Ranking for institutional excellence is known to be problematic due to methodological problems. The paper illustrates this by comparing two established ranking systems, the Shanghai Jiao Tong University "Academic Ranking of World Universities" and the Times Higher Education Supplement "World Universities Ranking". As clearly demonstrated from the comparison and the discussions in the article, there are a number of problems regarding validity of the ranking.

The conclusion, that current international ranking appears as a naive wish to simplify an extremely complex matter, is solid. Also, that present attempts to ranking have negative effects and could be harmful to research and education.

The article is absolutely appropriate for the BMC Medicine as an article of importance in its field.

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

The authors should consider to include a chapter on material and methods, in which the study process could be described clearly.

The legend to figure 1 should include a little more precise description on how the graph was constructed. Especially, the Shanghai data are not clear.

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

Which journal?: Appropriate or potentially appropriate for BMC Medicine: an
article of importance in its field

**What next?**: Accept for publication in BMC Medicine after minor essential revisions

**Quality of written English**: Acceptable

**Statistical review**: No

**Declaration of competing interests**: I declare that I have no competing interests