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The reporting of university league table employability rankings: a critical review

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Abstract

Which are the best and worst universities in the UK for getting a job when you graduate? This question attracts readers of the employability rankings in national league tables. This study critically reviews the employability measure used in the rankings and its subsequent reporting in public news and commentary sources, such as national and local media, student and advisory websites as well as universities and the publishers themselves. A debate that is constrained by a reproduction of the content and apparent neutrality of the employability measure in the tables is revealed. Universities themselves are the most frequent commentators, and echo the content of the tables fairly uncritically. Analysis leads to a consideration that participants in higher education may not be served well by a proliferation of information that can lead to simultaneous over-simplification and obfuscation that does not result in clarity or trust. I will argue that prospective students and their advisers need to review information that

is available critically, and that universities individually and collectively should facilitate the production of a more nuanced narrative about graduate career pathways that is not controlled by marketing and metrics.

Keywords:

- Employability
- rankings
- higher education
- league tables
- careers advice

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