



Can't Get No Satisfaction? Promises and Problems of the CHE Ranking in Comparing Student Satisfaction between Germany, the Netherlands and Flanders

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Rankings and Student Information Systems (SISs)

- Rankings of higher education are ubiquitous
- Flexible aids for students to support their college choice are rare
 - ◆ CHE's *Das Ranking* is seen as international best practice
 - ◆ It is web-based, multi-dimensional, robust
 - ◆ Individuals make their own rankings of study programmes, based on their own choice of indicators
 - ◆ Fits with IREG's *Berlin Principles*
 - ◆ *Das Ranking* is not a ranking, but an SIS

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CHE EuroRanking Pilot 2006-2007

- Pilot Project to try out
 - ◆ If a European SIS is feasible
 - ◆ If a 'German' SIS can be applied in the Netherlands and Flanders
 - The Netherlands have their own SIS, www.studychoice123.nl (SK123, in Dutch)
 - ◇ Online since 2006; book version since 1986
 - For Flanders, SIS was new



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Selected programmes

- 12-15 programmes in NL BE(NL) each, to keep the pilot feasible
 - ◆ Universities and 'universities of applied science'
- Disciplinary fields chosen from among those updated in the CHE database in 2007
 - ◆ Electrical Engineering
 - ◆ English
 - ◆ Psychology
 - ◆ Business/Commercial Economics
 - To enable more participation of UAS
 - 2008 round
- No publication

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General outline of the pilot projects

Flanders

- Collect data through CHE-type questionnaires to students, faculties
- Clean & analyse data
- Try 'ranking': fit BE(NL) programmes into existing data base

Netherlands

- Use SK123 data where possible
 - ◆ 'white spots'+ different methods hinder this
- Check robustness + add data through CHE-type questionnaires to students, faculties
- Clean & analyse data
- Try 'ranking': fit NL programmes into existing data base

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Response to Student Questionnaires Low response rates

- Student response
 - ◆ 7% in NL, 10% in BE(NL), out of ca. 8500 students in total
- Study programmes analysed: 7 in NL, 10 in BE(NL)
 - ◆ Criterion is absolute size of sample

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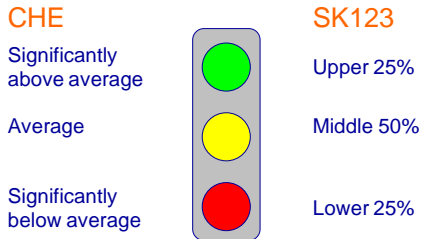
What do student satisfaction results mean?

- Average of overall judgements, generalising over all programmes and all indicators per programme, in Flanders and Netherlands is 2,39
 - ◆ On a scale of 1 (very good) to 6 (very bad)
 - ◆ Average satisfaction of customers with services in NL is 2,34
- Conclusion: in absolute sense quite satisfactory
- How does that fit into the CHE 'rankings'?

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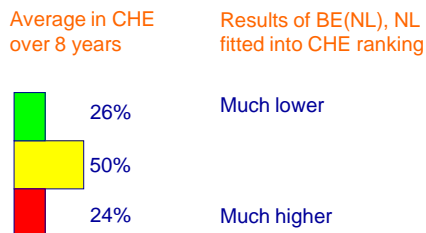
Student Questionnaires Three 'ranking groups' per indicator



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Different response patterns for Flanders and Netherlands compared with CHE average (all indicators, all programmes)



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What May Explain these Findings? Option 1: Quality

- **Option 1:** The quality of these programmes is indeed significantly worse than average
- Objective indicators look 'average' when comparing NL with DE study programmes
- More students DE → NL than the other way round
 - ◆ Even taking larger size of DE in account
- These programmes are good to average in SK123
 - ◆ Reasonable agreement between groupings in CHE and SK123 for 3 programmes, but SK123 > CHE for 4 programmes
- **Conclusion:** option 1 not true

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What May Explain these Findings? Option 2: Scale issues

- **Option 2:** The projection of the Dutch 1 to 10 scale on the German/Austrian 6 to 1 scale is not correct
 - ◆ The scales in questionnaires were:
 - DE: 1 = very good ... 6 = very bad
 - NL: 10 = very good ... 1 = very bad
- Technical matching is not a problem, but:
 - ◆ 'Grade' interpretation interfered
 - ◆ Culture: NL: '9', '10' exceptional, DE: '1' normal

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What May Explain these Findings? Option 3: Expectation levels

- **Option 3:** Dutch students are more demanding regarding their study programmes than German students
 - ◆ Well-known in Dutch student opinion surveys: most critical in Amsterdam, most satisfied in Enschede, Wageningen or Kampen
 - ◆ Might be true: foreign students judge NL studies higher

	Country	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Gesam- urteil	Dutch	258	7,48	1,188	,074
	foreign	56	8,21	1,486	,199

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Lessons for Future Student Information Systems (SISs)

- Make an international SIS only with volunteering study programmes in higher education institutions from the different countries
 - ◆ Do not try to force whole national higher education systems or SISs to become linked
- Work incrementally, with continued pilot projects
 - ◆ Add a limited number of study programmes in a limited number of knowledge areas and a limited number of countries per year
- Example: see CHE 'Excellence ranking' project

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Lessons for Future Student Information Systems (SISs)

- Minimise additional data collection
- Use the same methodology in all countries
 - ◆ Avoid 'psychologically known' scales
 - ◆ Study methods to overcome national / cultural differences in students' replies to questionnaires

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In sum

- SISs are not rankings – they're better than that ☺
- Methodology of SISs is fraught with issues of comparability
- Yet... there is a window of opportunity
 - ◆ Interest in developing common European methodologies
 - Classification of higher education institutions
 - Common questionnaires for Master studies

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