World Society and the University as Formal Organization

Francisco O. Ramirez
ramirez@stanford.edu | Stanford University, USA

abstract

This paper describes and interprets the worldwide transformation of universities with respect to how they account for excellence. It first reflects on the rationalized university as an organizational ideal and the implications of rationalization on standardizing university practices. The paper then focuses on two interrelated phenomena: the assessment of faculty and the assessment of universities, as illustrations of accounting-for-excellence. Examining the annual faculty report and tenure protocol as examples of common organizational practices within American universities, it argues that these practices facilitate American university participation in national and international university rankings. Finally, it is argued that American universities underwent earlier organizational rationalization and differentiation than universities in other countries in part because they were less differentiated from other social institutions. In the absence of the buffering authority of the state and the professoriate, American universities early on became organizational actors dealing with multiple stakeholders in search of resources and legitimacy.

key words

World society; Rationalized organizations; Socially embedded universities.

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout the world, universities are increasingly engaged in activities that commit them to the pursuit of excellence and to accounting for progress toward excellence. Much of this accounting involves formalizing faculty assessments and standardizing university assessments. These assessments emerged earlier in the United States than in Western Europe, but accounting for excellence is now a worldwide university development. A crucial dynamic that facilitates this development is the transformation of universities from historically grounded, nation-specific institutions to organizational actors influenced by universalistic, rationalizing models. As organizational actors, universities are expected to have goals, plans to attain them and mechanisms for evaluating their progress. Universities are also expected to act as if they can learn from other universities and from expertise on how to become better universities. More universities today adhere to these expectations than at the beginning of the 20th century.

This paper seeks to interpret the worldwide transformation of universities with respect to how they account for excellence. The first part of the

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paper reflects on the rationalized university as an organizational ideal and its implications for accounting-for-excellence practices. Next, the paper focuses on faculty assessments by looking at the annual faculty report and tenure protocol in a case study designed to illustrate common organizational practices within American universities. I argue that these practices facilitate American university participation in national, and later, international university rankings. In the last section of this paper, I shall argue that American universities underwent earlier organizational rationalization and differentiation in part because they were less differentiated from other social institutions. In the absence of the buffering authority of the state and the professoriate, American universities early on became organizational actors dealing with multiple stakeholders in search of resources and legitimacy. This earlier development paved the way for more current practices to account for excellence.

These accounting-for-excellence exercises have now surfaced within Western European universities, but they have encountered greater resistance. Nevertheless, the rationalized university as an organizational ideal continues to spread within Western Europe. This paper concludes by reflecting on why the current globalization differs from earlier educational «borrowing» practices and is more difficult to resist.

Throughout the 19th century, European universities crystallized as national institutions, linked to both territorially bounded nation-states and distinctively nationalizing cultures. Transcending their ironically more cosmopolitan medieval roots, universities became laboratories of nationalism, editing national histories, constructing national languages and pursuing national agendas. The nation-state as a recipe for progress and the university as a core ingredient in that recipe became widely diffused in the 19th and 20th centuries (Anderson, 1991). In new country after new country, the university as a national institution was adopted, and this manifestation of commitment to modernity clearly contributed to both the legitimacy of the new country and to the time-honoured view of the university as a national institution (Riddle, 1993). But the earlier cosmopolitanism and its universalistic aspirations never totally faded. In fact, it seems to have resurfaced. Interacting with widespread models emphasizing the virtue and feasibility of better organization and superior management, these universalistic standards have given rise to the rationalized university as an organizational ideal that now commands worldwide attention.

This paper is an extended reflection on the rationalized university as an organizational ideal and the accounting-for-excellence practices that are both informed by this ideal and further strengthen its taken-for-granted status. First, I briefly revisit earlier work on the rationalization of the university motivated by the neo-institutional perspective (Frank & Meyer, 2007; Meyer, Ramirez, Frank & Schofer, 2007; Ramirez, 2006). The transnationally rationalized university is endorsed for its entrepreneurial spirit (Clark, 1998), critiqued for its lack of canonical soul (Readings, 1996) and analyzed with greater nuance in the growing body of literature on universities in transition (Mazza, Quattrone & Ricacaboni, 2008). In this section, core features of the rationalized university are emphasized. Next, the paper focuses on two interrelated phenomena: the assessment of faculty and the assessment of universities. Both exercises in assessment presuppose standards that can be applied to individuals and to organizations. Both exercises may be conceptualized as efforts to account for excellence and its pursuit. Thirdly, I explore these phenomena with concrete examples from one university in the United States. This abbreviated case study will illustrate growing rationalization justified by a discourse that is designed to be both objective and progressive. In this context, the growing rationalization will centre on the annual reports faculty submit to deans, the tenure protocol and the collection and organization of material universities submit to external organizations for purposes of facilitating inter-university rankings. Lastly, I reflect on why accounting-for-excellence practices emerged earlier in the United States and why their worldwide diffusion is enhanced by the current state of globalization.

FURTHER NOTES ON THE RATIONALIZED UNIVERSITY

The medieval university could not be viewed as a national institution for the simple reason that its emergence and expansion preceded the formation of nation-states by centuries. Very early on, the university was literally thought of as a highly portable institution. Consider, for example, the following letter written by King Henry of England (1229):

> The King (Henry II of England) to the Masters and University Scholars (at Paris).
> Greetings to the masters and the whole body of scholars at Paris, Humbly sympathizing with the exceeding tribulations and distresses which you have

> suffered at Paris under an unjust law, we wish by our pious aid, with reverence to God and His holy Church to restore your status to its proper condition of liberty. Wherefore we have concluded to make known to your entire body that if it shall be your pleasure to transfer yourselves to our kingdom of England and to remain there to study, we will for this purpose assign to you cities, boroughs, town, whatsoever you wish to select, and in every fitting way cause you to rejoice in a state of liberty and tranquillity which should please God and fully meet your needs (Daly, 1961, pp. 168-169).

To be sure, this audacious effort to «abscond with» not a single scholar but an entire university was facilitated by the low level of physical capital associated with the university. In the 13th century, the University of Paris was made up of masters and scholars and not much else. But the point to bear in mind is that the «French» character of the universitas did not pose problems for the «English» King. Truth be told, neither University nor King were especially French or English. Contrast this medieval cosmopolitanism with the provincial nationalism of the university in the 19th century. Consider, for example, an 1891 letter from future University of Chicago president Harry Judson to then president William Harper:

> I dislike the idea of a foreigner at the head of such a department in an American university. It seems to me that departments involving American history, American literature and American politics should be under the charge of Americans… I must confess that I don't fancy having to work under a German. I doubt if many American professors would (Boyer, 2003, p. 41).

In the late 20th century, the same University of Chicago would welcome Gerhard Casper, a German, as first the dean of its Law School and then as its provost. American professors at the University of Chicago and later at Stanford (where Casper served as president between 1992 and 2000) were most unlikely to think of themselves as working under a German. Though clearly less welcoming, medieval-cum-19th century, nationalist Oxford would see a New Zealander as its vice-chancellor in the 21st century.

The university as a national institution is a fairly recent, though in some ways well entrenched, phenomenon. For as long as national historical legacies held sway, the national university could invoke and embellish its unique national character to buffer itself from invidious, international comparisons (see Flexner, 1930 for an early cross-national assessment of universities). International comparisons, as we shall later see, presuppose standards, comparability and even the portability of «best practices» determined by professional experts. While announcing the eclipse of the nation-state may be premature, there is ample evidence of a decline in its charisma. Models of progress and justice now embodied in theories of human capital and doctrines of human rights are increasingly worldwide in their reach and clearly universalistic in substance. The Education for All regime is motivated by the optimistic premises that all children everywhere are capable of learning, that all societies stand to gain from having their people learn more and that the world itself would benefit from the triumph of the learning society perspective.

An earlier phase of this development emphasized access to schooling, and national report cards were mostly about showing enrolment levels and enrolment growth. The more recent phase stresses the importance of achievement across a wide range of subject matters, from mathematics and science to reading and civics. International tests like TIMSS and PISA have proliferated, and the number of countries that use these tests has also increased. National reform talk is replete with references to how well one's students did in comparison to other students from other countries taking these tests. The complex ways in which these tests are produced are discussed within academia; but in the world of policy talk, the country rankings discussions obscure methodological controversies. National economic growth, it is argued, is driven by educational quality reflected in these achievement tests (Hanushek & Kimko, 2000; but see Ramirez *et al.*, 2006, for a re-analysis and rebuttal). The conflicting evidence notwithstanding, there is a widespread faith in the tie between educational quality and national economic growth. Many calls for educational reforms are grounded in this faith.

The massification of lower levels of schooling has extended to higher education (Schofer & Meyer, 2005). Not surprisingly, the same shift in focus is taking place in higher education, a shift from issues of access and enrolments to one about quality and achievement. Inquiring minds seek to know what the contemporary monks and their acolytes are really learning. How does this learning contribute to the betterment of society? Who is doing it right? How can we learn from the winners? If these questions seem farfetched, consider the following e-mail queries from the world's best-known, international consulting firm to the author of this paper:

> I am part of a team supporting the Kingdom of Bahrain on a comprehensive education reform (spanning all levels: primary, secondary, tertiary and vocational). As I have been researching international comparative systems of higher education, I came across your name. I would be most obliged if we could spend a bit of time discussing your perspective on international systems of higher education. Specifically, I would appreciate your insights on:
>
> – What major trends are occurring in education internationally, particularly related to university institutions?
>
> – What are the factors that make an educational system most successful, particularly in a small, developing nation?
>
> – What nations are achieving the most success in their educational reforms? From whom can Bahrain learn?
>
> These questions are very broad, as we are in the early stage of our study. I am particularly interested in these questions as they relate to higher education, but I am grateful for any thoughts that might be applied more generally to an educational system. I would be most appreciative of your guidance. Would it be possible to set up a 30-60 minute phone interview? I look forward to speaking with you; thank you in advance for your insight and help.

It is important to note that I do not have country (Bahrain) or even region-specific (Middle East) expertise. Nor do I have a track record of studying successful educational policy implementation. But I have studied international educational trends and written widely about these developments. From a neo-institutional perspective, these studies emphasize the growth of educational isomorphism, despite much cross-national variation with respect to economy, polity and culture. These studies have also emphasized the role of experts in promoting the diffusion of favoured educational blueprints that they helped to forge in the first place. Major consulting firms clearly assume that their clients and their plans for higher educational development need to take into account international trends and what factors contribute to higher educational success in other countries. The query «From whom can Bahrain learn» presupposes a capacity for learning from others, and thus, the portability of success stories. The learning may require some translation, but the communication is open-ended and does not bias one in favour of this or that reference group of countries or educational systems. In this respect, the communication in 2006 is more in line with the 13th century cosmopolitan effort to attract the Parisian masters to England than the late 19th concern about Germans in positions of authority in an American university.

From a realist perspective, all of this is just plain good sense. Why should a country or a university not learn from political and educational winners? Why should those seeking to upgrade themselves not figure out the efficacious technology others have utilized to thrive? The problem, of course, is that the relationship between means and ends is more complex and uncertain when looking at higher education and national development goals than when examining mousetraps and the demise or the continued prevalence of mice. Notwithstanding other influences on their demise, dead mice are undeniably a better testimonial to the efficiency of a mousetrap than a mousetrap surrounded by cheese-nibbling mice. But what exactly does one point to by way of showing the relative superiority of a system of higher education? The most obvious and most widely accepted national outcome of higher educational development is national economic growth. But there is little systematic evidence to support this presumed relationship. In general, expanded systems of higher education do not promote economic growth (see Chabbott & Ramirez, 2000 for a review of the literature; see Schofer *et al.*, 2000 for data analysis and evidence directly bearing on this issue).

From a neo-institutional perspective, it is precisely this lack of evidence regarding efficaciousness that subjects national educational systems and universities to the influence of rationalizing external models to «get it right» and to success stories that presumably illustrate the main assumptions of these models. What these rationalizing models achieve is greater isomorphism, though not necessarily greater efficacy. Through mimetic and normative dynamics, universities begin to resemble each other, especially as regards those dimensions that reformers identify as organizational in character. Each university can continue to assert some symbolic distinctiveness as in the institutional sagas connected to its founding moments, for example (Clark, 1972), even as its curricula and faculty cease to be distinctive (See Soares, 1999, for the case of Oxford). In earlier eras, the mimetic and normative dynamics were mainly contained within the national domain. University rankings within the United States, for instance, predate the international Shanghai and Times rankings by decades. But the permeability of national boundaries, the decline of national state charisma and the sense that states and organizations are embedded within a world society, not merely a national one, trigger international comparisons based on transnational standards.

The rationalization of the university is influenced by its transformation into an «organizational actor», and this transformation in turn facilitates further rationalization. Krücken (2011) uses the term «organizational actor» to refer to «an integrated goal-oriented entity that is deliberately choosing its own actions and that can thus can be held responsible for what it does» (p. 4). It is perhaps now commonplace to imagine universities as organizations and indeed higher educational management is emerging as an area of research and practice. It is a recognized specialization within organizational studies at the Norwegian School of Management and in many other universities. But universities *qua* national institutions often lacked organizational backbone or formal administrative structure (Musselin, 2004). Older universities were instituted as communities with tradition (and its frequent re-inventions) as a guiding light. Newer universities were established to look more like deliberate associations, but even these were insufficiently rationalized as organizational actors.

Today, however, universities are expected to function as organizations. Universities are expected to have goals and plans for attaining these goals. Universities are expected to have specialized personnel and smart systems to bring these plans to fruition. And lastly, universities are expected to collect and analyze data to determine how well they are performing. Performance assessments in turn lead to refining goals, targets, resource allocation decisions and strategies for more effectively attaining these goals. These circular processes enhance the sense that universities are organizational actors and indeed acting like a rational actor has become the bottom line (Ramirez, 2006). The intensification of rationalization is examined more directly in the next section. In what follows, I briefly consider the worldwide scope of the rationalization of the university with respect to university rankings.

Universities as national institutions are more difficult to rank than schools because each university can more persuasively claim unique legacies or distinctive styles. The age of the university, of course, increases the likelihood that it can evoke an image of itself as a core feature of a national tradition. The more the national tradition is insulated from transnational expertise on how to function as a university, the more the university as a national institution persists. In practice, this means that universities as distinctive national institutions are increasingly «at risk» of veering toward more model-driven, formal organizations. Diffuse goals such as broad accessibility and social usefulness are on the rise in national educational agendas everywhere. Frank and Gabler (2006) convincingly demonstrate patterns of curricular change and isomorphism that are much attuned to the imperatives of broad accessibility and social usefulness. A third general idea is that the university should become more organizationally flexible and effective. This idea often goes hand in hand with the notion that universities should be «free» to seek multiple sources of funding. This in turn blurs the boundaries between universities and a range of organizations and associations in civil society and industry.

The university *qua firm* has led to a critical discourse on academic capitalism (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997) or managerialism (Gumport, 2000). One can indeed point to material that supports the premise that it is the global market or global capitalism that is the visible hand that steers universities as national institutions. The search for new revenue streams, for example, has led to new programs to attract students from outside national borders. University industry ties are also frequently discussed in these terms (but see Colyvas, 2007 for a broader institutional perspective on the commercialization of university research).

However, there are many changes in the organization of universities that make little sense if profit is the bottom line. Cost efficiency does not drive the efforts to create a more diverse student and faculty body, efforts well underway in the United States and increasingly elsewhere. Neither the relative triumph of the social sciences in university curricula worldwide (Frank & Gabler, 2006) nor the global diffusion of women's studies as a distinctive innovation in higher education (Wotipka & Ramirez, 2008) is a by-product of the global economy. Instead, we find that the global cultural emphasis on accessibility invites diversity just as the social usefulness theme underlies the rise of the social sciences. The university as an upper-class institution or as an institution for men is delegitimized on universalistic, cultural grounds. In varying degrees, universities have changed to appear to be more inclusive, more student-centred, more socially useful and more organizationally flexible and effective. To monitor progress along these different fronts, universities collect the relevant statistical data, create specialized offices that both monitor and signal commitment to progress, expand curricular offerings, advertise the relevance of the university and its services and engage in both faculty and university assessments. The latter increasingly involve international benchmarks by situating universities in the hierarchies or rankings generated via the Shanghai or Times university rankings.

Universities have frequently promoted and protected themselves but only recently have these activities been explicitly framed by transnational standards and international rankings (Engwall, 2008). Much of the literature on how universities and governments utilize these rankings is limited to the

First World. Not only is it evident that universities in less developed countries are unlikely to be «competitive», it is further assumed that the obvious resource gaps between universities in the rich and in the poor countries will make the rankings less relevant to the latter. But this turns out to be untrue. Universities in poor countries use the rankings to symbolically communicate high aspirations. Furthermore, the rankings allow them to make not only within-world but also within-region and even within-country comparisons. Depending on the reference group of countries, the rankings can be used to promote an image of the university as a high-quality establishment or as one striving to attain high international standards. This organizational presentation of self can be aimed at governments, at other universities, at potential funding sources and at alumni.

To illustrate how the rankings can be used to promote the university, consider the case of De La Salle University in the Philippines. In a 2007 letter to alumni across the world, this university informs its graduates that it landed 392nd in the Times Higher Education Supplement, and was thus one of the top 500 universities in the world. The letter goes on to report that De La Salle was ranked 89th in the Asia-Pacific region and second within the Philippines. The latter makes it the top-rated private university in the Philippines, ahead of its perennial competitor, the Ateneo de Manila University (484th). A partial reproduction of the rankings table situates this university between the 380th and the 500th ranked universities, that is, between the University of Bremen in Germany and Carleton University in Canada. This partial reproduction identifies the criteria that were used to arrive at the overall rank and the university scores on each of the criteria: peer review, recruiter review, international faculty, international students, faculty-student ratios, citations per faculty and an overall score.

In a simple page, De La Salle University communicates to its alumni that it is a university that counts in a «world of standards». There will be times and places to mobilize alumni sentiment via the familiar trek through memory lane. But this page is deemed to be about objective assessment and a rationalized presentation of organizational self. Excerpting from the THES-QS-2006, this English language university acknowledges that the rankings favour universities that teach in English, but that future efforts will be made to level the playing field. Further excerpting leads to the conclusion that while ranking universities will remain controversial in the near future, there is broad acceptance that cross-national comparisons in higher education are here to stay.

This example suggests that the scope of the rationalized university is truly worldwide in character. In a similar mode, Kruecken and Meier (2006) report that the website of the University of Botswana is loaded with the familiar descriptors of the rationalized university: centre of excellence, international orientation, quality management, lifelong learning, public accountability and interdisciplinarity. Resource-limited universities may be even more eager to link to the wider world and to world standards and international comparisons that legitimize the university as an organizational actor. Just as resource-limited countries often rely on external sources of legitimizing, membership in the United Nations for example, so too resource-limited universities may be especially inclined to invoke their external ranking to validate themselves as real universities recognized by the wider world. Resistance may be more evident in older and more resource-rich universities but these too undergo some organizational changes that align them with current visions of the effective university (See Soares, 1999 for an interesting depiction of organizational changes in Oxford).

To summarize, nation-states are increasingly embedded in world society and influenced by world models of progress and justice. International organizations and epistemic communities both help construct these models and disseminate them worldwide. These models rationalize nation-states and the national institutions therein. Universities as national institutions are increasingly rationalized as organizational actors expected to commit themselves to the broad goals of greater accessibility/diversity and social usefulness/ relevance. Universities are further expected to function as effective and flexible organizations. Without an efficacious technology to produce higher educational quality, certain universities with a strong interest in becoming good, better or even world-class institutions are subjected to normative and mimetic pressures. These pressures expose universities to world standards and to their heroic exemplars. These standards are set forth as portable goals and so too are the strategies for change and upgrading. Cross-border diffusion is thus made sensible, that is, the object of much sense-making effort. The standards diffuse, as do accounts of their efficaciousness, somewhat in spite of the evidence. These pressures situate universities within hierarchies based on international rankings. A transnational benchmarking discourse emerges and expands, often corroding the historically-grounded and nationally distinctive university. All of this involves world cultural rationalization, and its net effect on universities is to move them along a path that leads to the university as a more rationalized organization. There is evidence of resistance here and there, but the resistance appears to be limited, symbolic and often involves appropriating some core elements of the rationalizing models. It appears that no university is officially opposed to diversity or formally dismissive of higher quality management. A full-fledged return to the university as a laboratory to breed counter-attacks of nationalism is not evident (See Strang & Macy, 2001 for a more general discussion of sense-making in «searches for excellence»).

THE INTENSIFICATION OF RATIONALIZATION: A CASE STUDY

American universities are often held up as exemplars of universities that are broadly accessible, socially useful and organizationally flexible. Their success in international rankings and in bibliometric contests is often attributed to their superior organization and management. Reforms in higher education in other countries, directly or indirectly, are influenced by American success stories and the principles and assumptions these stories are supposed to illustrate. A lot of these stories involve distortions, underestimating the role of federal and state governments in fostering and maintaining universities and overestimating the differences between public and private universities. Most importantly, the causal tie between better organization and management and university success is based on anecdotal evidence at best.

But it is true that some forms of rationalization and accounting for excellence took place earlier in American universities. American professors were subjected to student evaluations of their courses long before this practice took root in some European universities. Earlier controversies about the competence of students to assess faculty quality are deader than a doornail. The American professor is not expected to simply profess but to teach. The teenagers whose evaluations are recorded do not assess the professors' mastery of theory or research methods but whether the course material was well-organized and effectively communicated by a professor that truly engaged them.

The actual content of the evaluation protocol varies between and even within universities. But the commonalities clearly outweigh the differences. Though elite universities clearly value scholarly achievements more than teaching assessments, the latter are routinely utilized in both elite and non-elite universities. Furthermore, as professors are recruited from one university to another, they are often asked to display some evidence of teaching effectiveness. Testimonials from former students count, but the more formal and scientized evaluation ratings are often displayed as well. The portability of these ratings is grounded in the belief that good teaching is good teaching, regardless of the local university context.

Of course, there are many other factors that go into the overall assessment of professors. In what follows, I first examine two dimensions of faculty assessment, the annual report and the tenure case. I do so using materials from one school in one university, the School of Education at Stanford University. I highlight both what is expected and in what ways these expectations have become more formalized and elaborated. Next I examine what goes into an assessment for tenure. There is less variance across the University as regards the tenure protocol than with respect to the annual report.

The annual report is a common practice across American universities. It is produced by individual professors and sent to school deans, department chairs or departmental colleagues. In some universities, these reports are cited as the basis for determining the magnitude of salary rises. But these reports are undertaken even in universities where salary rises are more or less standardized, at the California State University system, for example. Even in those where the magnitude of salary rises fluctuates, the degree of fluctuation within a year is modestly related to the variation in the quality of professorial profiles, as revealed in these annual reports. In universities where big annual rises are possible, academic market processes mostly trigger these rises. External offers from prestigious competitors are by far better leverage than unusually attractive annual reports. External offers, of course, are influenced by judgments of quality based on performance. But if one is not movable for spousal or other reasons, one is likely to face more modest salary bumps.

Before we delve into the contents of an annual report to consider what makes for an attractive faculty profile, let us briefly reflect on why these annual reports take place. Since both the tenured and the untenured faculty issue these reports, we know these are not instruments designed to weed out the weak or the unproductive. Since the reports are not strongly linked to a system of rewards, monetary incentives are not the core drivers for report writing. More importantly, it is misleading to think that universities seek this information to rationally reward the more productive.

The annual report, I contend, is first and foremost a symbolic affirmation of the university as an organization. More concretely, annual reports activate the idea that professors are accountable to those who play managerial or administrative roles within the university, and furthermore, that accountability displays are orderly, standardized and universalistic. Within the appropriate academic unit, the department, the school or the university as whole, every professor faces the same annual report criteria.

Taking this imagery one step further, the annual report generates data, thereby creating the impression that the university is a data-driven organization in its assessment of faculty. However inconsequential these performance assessments may be in some universities, in all universities the idea that the organization is engaged in a fair and objective assessment of its personnel contributes to the sense that the university is a rationalized organization. The alternative to the rationalized organization is imagined to reek with subjectivity, arbitrariness, favouritism and other organizational shortcomings.

Thus, while the innovation called performance assessments produces «fear and trembling» in some European universities, annual reports do not generate the same adverse reaction among American professors. The practice is so common and so routine, that it rarely evokes much criticism or even commentary.

So, what goes into an annual report? Not surprisingly, these reports cover familiar grounds: scholarship and research on the one hand and teaching on the other. In earlier eras, a loosely-structured narrative sufficed as an account of scholarship and research activities for the year. The standardized teaching evaluations, however, have been a staple in these reports for a long time. This paper has previously identified some dimensions of student evaluation of teaching: course organization, communication effectiveness and engagement with students, among others. For each of these dimensions, an average assessment score can be computed that can then be compared to the department or school average. Overall scores can also be computed and compared. More qualitative comments are solicited from students and this feedback presumably will help professors upgrade the quality of their teaching. Student anonymity is taken for granted in this process.

The scope of annual reports has expanded, providing professors with opportunities to demonstrate virtue across more varied dimensions. In *Appendix A* (*cf.* p. 153), we find the current annual report format, used within the School of Education at Stanford University. There are seven types of data solicited: publications, courses, committees, funding, service to the school and to the university, service outside the university, professional activities and honours and awards. The first thing to keep in mind is that the narrative on scholarship is now boiled down to a specification of research products. The underlying message is a simple one: a good scholar generates research products. These in turn are differentiated into books, refereed articles and chapters. Earlier versions of this format did not call for further specifications. But in this format, one is asked to specify whether the product is single-authored or involves multiple authors. In the case of multiple-authored papers, one is further expected to indicate the order of authorship, not merely to identify the co-authors by name. Both of these more recent developments are exercises that facilitate partitioning the credit due to the authors. These developments may seem out of line with an educational climate that celebrates collaborative endeavours. But both developments make sense as indicators of more precise accounts of excellence. Knowledge of the relative status of the collaborators is no doubt factored into assessments of an individual's scholarship. One's relative standing in the authorship line may be weighted differently depending on one's relative standing in the discipline or profession. Alternatively, to avoid this ranking of authors' contributions, co-authors increasingly state in print that they really are co-responsible for the product.

A related issue has to do with products that have yet to materialize. Here a sharp line is drawn between work in progress (which may or may not result in a product or even exist as a product candidate) and work that has already been accepted but has yet to materialize. The former is an inevitable part of the process but only the latter counts in the annual report. The closer the accepted product is to publication, the greater the likelihood that pagination will already be known. Thus, professors are encouraged to cite pages when these are known. This too is a recent further specification and one that gauges proximity of materialization with the more proximate, perhaps, counting more. Papers under review count because they have materialized and can be viewed as product candidates.

The sections on teaching and student committees are revealing because these include more than the standard student evaluation of teaching forms. They remind the faculty that other standardized data gathered and organized by academic services – data on the kinds and number of courses taught, on the different kinds of committees served, on the different roles played within these committees – could contain error.

Professors are expected to have their own, presumably more accurate, records regarding the relevant materials sought. These also indicate that faculty should explain why they taught fewer courses than the norm and why course evaluations are not available for some courses. None of this is as draconian as it may sound, as there are well-established grounds to justify a course under-load in a given year or not having a course evaluated. For the latter, new courses and courses with very few students are exempt. For the former, administrative responsibilities or grant-supported «time buy outs» are acceptable accounts.

Again, it is not clear what sanctions would be applied to those who deviate from these norms. What is clear is that the annual report activates norms regarding the value of teaching and does so in greater detail than a simple «we care about teaching» statement. The annual report also activates norms regarding the quest for funding. In this domain though, both submitted and received grants count. The former may be grant proposals that are pending or even grant proposals that have been rejected. It may seem odd that the latter count whereas work in progress does not. Perhaps the issue is that even a failed research proposal is more of a concrete product than a work in progress. Or, perhaps, the main point is that research proposals are more aligned with a collective good, the support of doctoral students, than work in progress. Even a failed research proposal communicates that one at least tried!

The last four sections of the annual report focus on service, professional activities and honours and awards. The service category distinguishes between service to school, to university and to the wider society. In a highly rationalized university, there are all sorts of committees, and hence, all sorts of opportunities to display service. There are university and school-wide standing and *ad hoc* committees. Committee membership may be brought about through an election or an appointment or even via the old fashioned volunteer route. The School of Education alone is involved in ten faculty searches, each of which will require three or four professors who either express an interest in serving on the search committee or are persuaded to do so. Service outside the university could range from local to state to national and even to international organizations or associations. Membership in a board of the National Academy of Sciences or in a committee of the Ford Foundation or in some international counterpart counts. So do multiple other venues in which service can be undertaken and recorded.

It is equally easy to identify an array of professional activities from presentations of papers in conferences (not to be confused with research products), to reviewing papers for journals to serving on editorial boards, etc. Some of these activities could be classified as service as well, evaluating research proposals for a foundation, for example. Further rationalization down the road may facilitate more precise classification of one's activities. For present purposes, the simple rule is not to double count the same service or professional activity.

Lastly, the section on honours and awards has a dual purpose. First, it explicitly provides faculty with an opportunity to shine. Secondly, it allows the School to garner the kind of information that then makes the School shine in the aggregate. This will become clearer when we turn to the question of university assessment and rankings. Before we do so, however, we take a brief detour to better understand tenure protocols, as another domain within which there has been intensified rationalization. Unlike annual reports, tenure protocols are more standardized within universities but more varied across universities in the United States. There is an obvious reason for the greater variability and that is the greater variability in tenure rates across universities. The tenure bar radically differs across universities. The American universities that dominate the top twenty lists in international rankings are in no way representative of the population of American universities. Though assistant professors everywhere worry about tenure, their concerns are more realistic if they are employed in one of these elite universities. Most professors in most universities get tenure when they come up for tenure. So, why does it appear that tenure anxieties are on the rise everywhere? In good part, the answer lies in the triumph of the rationalized university model. Despite obvious differences in resources, reputations and actual tenure rates, universities begin to resemble one another with respect to the formal processes associated with the tenure decision. That is, while tenure bars clearly vary, tenure protocols are increasingly similar.

Let me briefly illustrate this point. In a growing number of universities, the tenure protocol formally emphasizes the same criteria. The terms «major scholar» and «future leader in the field» are now commonplace. Even in places where teaching excellence is given greater weight, some display of scholarship and research productivity is expected. But who is to assess whether the display suffices to warrant tenure? Reviewers external to the university are increasingly asked to evaluate tenure candidates. Reviewers from the more prestigious universities are often solicited because they are imagined to add gravitas to the assessment process. The number of external reviewers sought is also on the rise. Reviewers who decline the offer to serve in this capacity often indicate that their refusal should not be held against the candidate. At times they explicitly endorse the candidate while simply indicating that they do not have the time to participate in what has become a very time consuming form of assessment. The increased use of external reviewers signals the triumph of diffuse professional norms over organizationally specific ones as regards the important issue of faculty tenure. Or, to put it differently, external reviewers make sense because the university is increasingly re-imagined as a professionalized organization instead of a historically grounded one.

The tenure protocol in the major universities has been rationalized along different dimensions. First, as already implied, a greater number of reviewers are sought. The less a field is dominated by a single paradigm, the greater the number of external reviewers solicited. In education at Stanford, for example, it would be risky to proceed with less than eight external letters of assessment. Secondly, the form of the review letter has undergone further rationalization. Reviewers are now asked to compare the candidate with other typically tenured scholars in similar fields in other universities, often referred to as the «comparison set». This expectation presupposes that comparisons make sense and that reviewers have sufficient knowledge to make sensible comparisons. Not all reviewers comply. Reviewers that both comply and rate the candidate at the top of the list, though, make the case for tenure easier. The toughness of the comparison set, of course, varies across universities. But the formal process is now in place in many universities and the formal process creates the impression that all are engaged in a serious, high-stakes assessment. Thus, even a candidate in a university in which no one can remember the last person who failed to get tenure, is caught up in this sober accounting-for-excellence exercise.

The formal process creates work for the candidate, for the tenure committee, for academic services and for the external reviewers. The candidate puts together a dossier, a package essentially made up of publications plus the material compiled in the annual reports. The tenure committee identifies the external reviewers and the comparison set. Academic services reproduce all the relevant materials and send these to the external referees. All of these activities take place within a standardized framework that is mindful of issues of confidentiality and fairness in a culture that tends to be litigious.

It may be hard to imagine that the process can be further rationalized but it has. At Stanford University guidelines have been established to further structure the report from the tenure committee. First, the tenure narrative is organized around specific predetermined and differentiated sections deemed important. The result is not quite as standardized as the annual report but a greater degree of formal standardization is attained. All tenure reports contain a section on scholarship that is differentiated from a section summarizing reviewer views and both sections are differentiated from the sections on teaching quality and service contributions. Second, the length of the report is standardized. No candidate should be favoured or undercut because the length of a report gives the case for tenure greater or less weight. Third, reviewers are now identified, not only by their current university affiliation, but also by the university from which they obtained their degree and the date of degree conferral. No rationale for this further rationalization has been explicitly provided, but one can imagine that some degree-granting universities may command more respect than others. This in turn may lead tenure committee members to reflect on which experts they should rely on for assessment. Lastly, a concern for transparency is formally translated into the expectation that any negative letter must be explicitly addressed in the report. It will not do to merely say that nine out of ten referees wrote very favourable comments appropriately summarized in the report. The non-favourable tenth one must be made visible and its reservations or critiques of the candidate's work must be addressed.

So far this paper has discussed annual reports and tenure protocols as indicators of how the rationalized university engages in faculty assessment. It has also more concretely focused on the annual report (Appendix A) within the School of Education at Stanford and the tenure protocol for Stanford University as a whole to get a better sense of what is involved and in which ways these documents have been further formalized. I turn now to external rankings and the assessment of universities (Ramirez & Christensen, forthcoming).

RANKING UNIVERSITIES: A CASE STUDY

A world of universalistic standards co-varies with a world of international comparisons. Still not all phenomena in this world are subjected to comparisons and rankings. We do not engage in ranking exercises as applied to races, religions, civilizations, etc. So, why are universities now ranked? And why are they ranked across national borders? This paper suggests that the key to this puzzle lies in the movement from national, historical institutions to rationalized organizations. The general idea is that the more any entity is imagined as a rationalized organization, the more it is at risk of being compared to other entities. Or, to be more precise, the rationalized organization image undermines the historicity and distinctiveness of the entities by dangling portable «best practices» before them. What are then compared are aspects of the entities rather than the entities as a whole. Phrased differently, for as long as universities could claim to be deeply rooted in national fabrics and essentially indivisible wholes, they were fairly immune from comparisons. Obviously, the older and more successful universities were better buffered from broader standards and inter-university comparisons, not to say international rankings. These universities could turn down proposals for change by simply observing, «things are not done that way here». The invocation of distinctive, institutional identity provided the rationale and justification for «why we do what we do». A rich, historical «we are» is the *sine qua non* for «what we do».

A world of universalistic standards and international comparisons though is one in which universities can not only be compared across national boundaries but universities-qua-organizations can be compared with other non-educational organizations as well. So, for example, the Entrepreneurship Research and Policy Network has recently generated a top ten list of organizations in which universities such as Harvard, Chicago, Stanford and Yale make it to the top ten list along with the National Bureau of Economic Research, the World Bank, the European Corporate Governance Institute, the Centre for Economic Policy Research and the Institute for the Study of Labour (http://hq.srn.com/Group Processes). This list illustrates the ascent of the professionalized organization as an abstract standard applied very broadly and with little respect for historical tradition. A world of universalistic standards and international comparisons is one where diffuse professional norms override specific organizational ones. Phrased differently, the professionalized organization as an ideal trumps the historically grounded legacy.

Most American universities have neither had the burden nor the advantage of historical richness and local roots. Moreover, American universities are embedded in a relatively new national landscape. It is therefore not surprising that American universities have always been more inclined to think about their 'competitors' and to favour inter-university comparisons. An optimistic belief in progress and in science for progress has made American universities more inclined to imagine that there was something to be learned from inter-university comparisons. Greater faculty mobility across universities is enhanced by this optimistic belief and by relatively low levels of university historicity and local roots. These factors provide some of the foundation for the earlier rise of the rationalized university as an organizational ideal in the United States. This point is revisited in the concluding remarks.

University rankings within the United States appeared much earlier than the international rankings that now command worldwide attention. Much of this comparative effort predates the highly publicized annual rankings found in the *US News and World Report*. Within the National Science Foundation, for example, there are serious efforts to ascertain whether some universities are better than others in promoting learning. One question currently explored is whether one can deal with selection bias and demonstrate that there is learning «value added» to attending universities. So, in addition to earlier popular horse race rankings of universities, schools and departments, there is now a more scientized quest to figure out what works best in the promotion of learning in universities. This quest is designed to hold higher education accountable (Shavelson, 2008).

It is indisputably true though that the *US News and World Report* has had a significant impact on colleges and universities in the United States (Sauder & Espeland, 2009). On the dark side, there is a sense that some of these places of higher learning are actively working their numbers to show improvement. There is also an excessive focus on such things as yields (what percent of accepted applicants come to you instead of to your competitors) and standards (what percent of applications you accept). Kirp (2003), among others, suggests that some admissions offices encourage weak applicants to apply in order to increase the applicant pool.

Furthermore, these offices turn down some worthy applicants who are likely to reject their offers of admission to go to more prestigious universities. The trouble, of course, is that admissions offices in earlier «in house» studies utilized these notions of standards and yields. This earlier experience gives these measures some face validity in admissions offices. But the public at large was less directly and less dramatically informed as to who the winners were, who was accepting and who was declining. Thus, the *Report* impacted universities directly and also indirectly through increased public awareness of the university rankings. How much the rankings actually influence student choice is unclear. But it is clear that many universities invoke their rank in their organizational presentation of self. It is clear that many universities pay attention to the rankings and dedicate time and energy to upgrading their standing.

But surely the many methodological problems involved with ranking are known and are a source of scepticism as to their value (see Welden, 2006 on business school rankings). There are indeed grounds for scepticism. From the assessment of schools of education in the United States, several illustrations come to mind. First, an assembly line, productivity imagery underlying the rankings has favoured schools that have produced a large number of graduates per faculty. In practice, the schools favoured have been those with large classes and, more often than not, a high student-to-professor classroom ratio. Though no school advertises itself as a place you should go to because you will be one out of a hundred instead of one out of forty in a classroom, less individualized attention ironically becomes a plus in this ranking dimension. Secondly, reputations, once achieved, have exerted an inordinate influence on the rankings. A once, top-rated program within my school continued to be rated the best in its field long after the program had come to an end. When the program was revitalized, it slipped in the rankings!

Scepticism abounds but scepticism does not stop universities and schools from participating. Efforts to boycott the *Report* have failed in large part because elite universities have not successfully formed a coalition to do so. This e-mail from the Associate Dean for Administrative Affairs at Stanford is instructive:

> It's the time of year when we send the *US News and World Report* our data for their annual rankings of graduate schools of Education. Although we don't approve of such rankings and scoff somewhat at their methodology, we have to play the game. One of the questions asks: How many full-time, tenured or tenure track faculty have received the following awards or have been an editor of the following journals in the last two calendar years (2006 and 2007)? These are the awards and journals they include in their list. Please let me know if these apply to you.

This brief request starts with the assumption that we all understand that this is a routine practice. There is a time for giving lectures, a time for presenting papers at professional conferences, a time for faculty meetings and a time for responding to the questions from the *US News and World Report*. This request comes to us now because now is the time to comply. Notice, though, the awareness of methodological problems in the production of the rankings and yet the incontrovertible imperative that «we must play the game».

The scepticism is authentic. A former president of the university sought (unsuccessfully) to establish a coalition of elite universities that would visibly boycott the rankings game. The present dean chooses to not celebrate the schools' 2008 number 1 rank, lest a subsequent change in our rank require an account for our diminished excellence. But the scepticism does not derail the rankings.

Why? The answer in part is because much of the information sought is already contained within the annual reports and tenure protocols that are increasingly standardized in form. Awards and journal editorships are already established data entries under the honours and awards and professional activities or services categories in the annual reports. Tenure protocols make use of the same kind of information. Not only are the questions relatively easy to answer but also both the questions and the answers are taken for granted in the everyday life of many American university professors. Methodologically flawed as the rankings may be, the familiarity of the questions lends an aura of legitimacy to the data-gathering operation. The same aura of legitimacy is less than evident in other national systems of higher education where standardized annual reports have not been common practice. In these systems assessments, rankings are often critiqued as features of a rising audit culture that undercuts professorial conviviality.

To summarize, this abbreviated case study looks at annual reports and tenure protocols as university artefacts that illustrate the rationalization of faculty assessment. Upon close examination, it is evident that rationalization has intensified. Narrative accounts of scholarly pursuits have given way to standardized formats that identify products that count. The tenure bar is higher in elite universities but the tenure protocol diffuses across a wide range of universities. Formal standardization invites inter-university comparisons, as many universities can pretend that they are formally similar, and thus, comparable.

This case study also suggests that earlier experience with rationalized faculty assessment paves the way for compliance with university assessments. These take the form of national rankings that cover familiar ground for most American universities. These rankings in turn open the doors to international comparisons, and thus, to international university rankings.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The rationalized university as an organizational ideal that emerged earlier in the United States. Both the national experience and the experience of universities within the United States have made them less historically rich and locally-grounded, national institutions. American universities look like «organized anarchies» only because the organizational yardstick was easier to apply to them than to the older and more organizationally hollow but institutionally rich European universities. American universities have had more experience playing the organizational game, acting as if there were portable lessons to be gleaned from blithely comparing themselves with other universities. These comparisons presuppose standards and a widespread belief in progress.

But what was it about American universities that moved them in this direction earlier? Ben-David and Zloczower (1962) provide us with the useful insight that relative to their European counterparts, American universities were less buffered from other social institutions. Neither the authority of the state nor the authority of the professoriate shielded the university from a range of pressures emanating from different groups and interests. For the sake of legitimacy and funding, American universities coped with these different, and at times, competing demands by more carefully managing and properly displaying socially respectable identities. A distinctive and more powerful administrative strata emerged earlier in American universities. Other forms of organizational differentiation would ensue, paving the way for today's distinctive, fund-raising and public relations organizational units. Thus, an unintended consequence of the university being less differentiated from other institutions is the proclivity for greater organizational differentiation and accounting-for-excellence exercises.

Belief in progress and organizing to attain progress has evolved in two ways that interact with each other to produce the rationalized university as an organizational ideal. First, the belief is linked to models that attribute success to better organization and management. Since the university is imagined as an organization, it is more «at risk» of being rationalized. That is, the university is more likely to be attuned and receptive to theories of «best practices» and heroic stories of achievements in other universities or systems of higher education. Secondly, this belief is no longer constrained in its application by national boundaries. Medieval cosmopolitanism has resurfaced and contemporary cultural globalization is on the rise. Not surprisingly, universities now face world standards of excellence and pressures to adapt to international benchmarks via rationalized strategies. These pressures increase both the extensiveness and intensiveness of rationalization.

To be sure, transnational models interact with historical legacies. In countries with well-entrenched, historical legacies, one is more likely to observe hybridization or decoupling between formal policy and informal practice. In Germany, for instance, the habilitation prerequisite for becoming a professor is no longer legally mandated and junior professorships have been created. But many a junior professor writes a «second doctoral thesis» for fear that the older standard will be upheld by senior faculty in their assessments of excellence. However, in most countries, most universities are fairly new and have neither the resources nor the reputation to rely on historical legacies to maintain themselves. (It is important to keep in mind that more universities were created after World War II than in all of recorded time prior to the end of the War).

To be sure, universities influenced other universities across national boundaries in earlier eras. The influence of the German university in the late 19th and early 20th centuries is well established. But the current globalization of the model of the university differs from earlier patterns of exchange and influence in good part because the state of the globalization of the world differs. First, and perhaps obviously, communications and technological developments have given rise to a world in which models can and do diffuse more rapidly. Furthermore, the reach of these models is more extensive and not limited to the developed or Western world. The more extensive reach is facilitated by the greater ease with which higher education is theorized in abstract and universalistic terms, instead of in a nationally specific idiom reflecting a culturally distinctive canon. This leads us to our second point and that is the worldwide growth of organizational expertise in general, and more recently, of organizational expertise in higher education. This is not a historically-grounded expertise but one rooted in the triumph of the more ahistorical social sciences and one that is deeply committed to the pursuit of progress (Frank & Gabler, 2006). This expertise and the theorization it generates are more likely to celebrate the entrepreneurial, accountable and transparent university than any specific American university.

Practices to account for excellence are harder to resist if they are portrayed as rational efforts to gauge quality and progress rather than as distinctive features of an alien, national system of higher education. Lastly, the current state of globalization more directly emphasizes the world and global norms, for example, a global ecosystem, common humanity and the putative equality of all humans (Therborn, 2000). The current emphases facilitate the identification and diffusion of «best practices» across an increasing range of domains including university organization.

To summarize, cross-border diffusion of university forms and practices is not in and of itself a novel phenomenon. What is novel is that the current state of the world privileges professional expertise that facilitates cross-border diffusion by theorizing portable goals and strategies for attaining these goals and mechanisms for assessing progress toward attainment. What is novel is the technical ease and rapidity of communication flows across national borders. And lastly, what is novel is a level of world consciousness shaped in good part by the «scientization of society» and «the socialization of science» (Drori, Meyer, Ramirez & Schofer, 2003). A world in which both nature and society are increasingly imagined as subject to law-like forces is one that facilitates imagining universities as organizational actors and legitimizes structures and activities that communicate transformation.

Although scepticism abounds, it has failed to derail rationalization or undermine the rationalized university as an organizational ideal. Much of this rationalization revolves around the idea of excellence now cast in abstract, organizational terms. Universities as distinctive national institutions solely reflecting historical legacies can escape international comparisons. But the ongoing globalization of cultural models of progress makes it more difficult to cling to the national distinctiveness imagery of the 19th century. All universities are under varying degrees of pressure to generate accounts of excellence or at least accounts of commitment to excellence. Many educational reforms throughout the world are better understood if one recognizes how much accounting for excellence is a set of practices driven by the broader dynamic of transforming universities into organizational actors.

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ANNUAL REPORT

I. Publications

A. Books

B. Refereed journal articles

C. Chapters

For B and C distinguish between single and multiple authored papers and the latter are presented making clear the order of authorship.

Chapters in books (in press).

If page numbers are known these should be presented. Work in progress should not be cited.

Other publications and articles reprinted in journals or books.

D. Under Review

II. Courses taught from autumn quarter, 2006 through spring quarter, 2007 (list will be placed in your mailbox, Rm. 101, within a few days).

See attachment.

The course information in the database is not always reliable, and it is sometimes hard to interpret. Please use the information put in your mailbox, making adjustments where appropriate, to fill out the table below.

A. Please submit a syllabus for each course with your annual report.

B. If fewer than four courses per year were offered, please indicate why (leave, administrative duties, etc.).

C. If student evaluation forms were not completed, please explain why.

D. Additional teaching (e.g., independent readings).

III. Dissertation/Thesis Committees, Undergraduate Honours Students

(please insert names into the table below)

(A listing from Academic Services will be placed in your mailbox within a few days).

PhD Diss. Chair PhD Diss. Comm. Masters Advisor Undergraduate Honours Advisor

IV. Funding (for research, teaching, or professional activities)

A. Grant proposals submitted.

B. Grants received.

V. Service to SUSE and Stanford University

A. SUSE committees.

B. SU committees.

VI. Service outside the University (including participation in local schools and other Education- or community-related organizations)

VII. Professional activities

VIII. Honours and awards received during the time period, and other activities not noted above

APPENDIX A