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THE rankings - a country view

Research Trends Editorial Board

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at the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC) in Madrid have studied the effects of gender on scientific and technological activity in their own institution.

In Mauleón and Bordons' recent study in Life Sciences (3), no differences by gender were found in productivity, impact factor of publication journals or number of citations received. According to Bordons, "productivity of both men and women increased with professional rank, and inter-gender differences within each rank were not observed.

"Interestingly, among the youngest scientists with less than ten years at CSIC, women were more productive than their male counterparts, whilst the inverse relation holds for intermediate levels of seniority. Further longitudinal studies will tell us if this means that new generations of women are more competitive or if women change their publication strategy over the years as a response to personal, social or economic reasons."

While there is clearly a long road ahead until we begin to see

truly proportional gender representation in science, it may be that with the aid of objective bibliometric tools, it is already possible to demonstrate that the reality is moving further away from perception all the time.

Useful links

[European Commission research: Women and science – Gender difference, gender equality](#)

[European Commission: Women and Science. Statistics and Indicators. She Figures 2006](#)

[UK Resource Centre for Women in Science, Engineering and Technology](#)

[Athena SWAN](#)

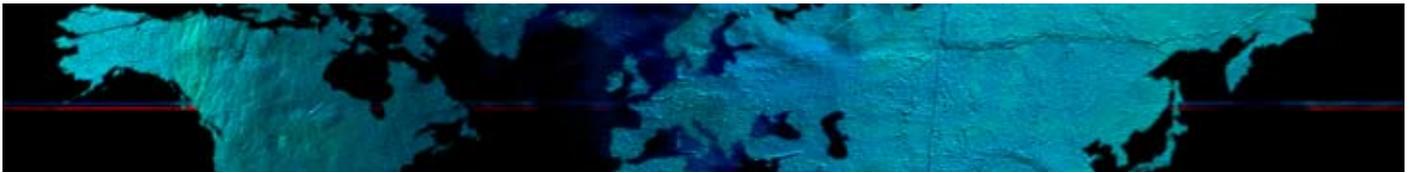
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(1) EU report (2003) "[Gender and Excellence in the Making](#)".

(2) Borrego, A.; Barrios, M.; Villarroya, A.; Frías, A. and Ollé, C. [2008] "Research Output of Spanish Postdoctoral Scientists: Does Gender Matter?", in: Kretschmer H. and Havemann F. (Eds.): *Proceedings of WIS* (Fourth International Conference on Webometrics, Informetrics and Scientometrics & Ninth COLLNET Meeting). [Berlin: Creative Commons](#)

(3) Mauleón, E.; Bordons, M.; Oppenheim, C. [2008]. "The effect of gender of research staff success in life sciences in the Spanish National Research Council", *Research Evaluation*, Vol 17, Issue 3, pp 213-225.

Country trends



THE rankings – a country view

Last year, we discussed the annual Times Higher Education (THE) rankings and their relevance to [UK institutions](#). In October 2008, the updated 2008 THE rankings were published and show that many institutions have increased their performance and, consequently, their ranking. This year, we focus on the countries where the institutions are based to try to identify potential reasons for good performance.

If data for the institutions in the top 200 places is collected and grouped by country, some interesting facts emerge. Table 1 illustrates the positive net change in position for all institutions within countries, along with the total number of institutions from that country that appear in the rankings.

As expected, in terms of institutions in the Top 200, the rankings continue to be dominated by the global leaders in research performance: the United States, Germany, the United Kingdom, Japan and Australia. The US has an impressive 58 institutes in the rankings, which have seen an overall net increase of 158 places. The

Country	Net change in rank*	Number of institutions in top 200
India	248	2
Netherlands	230	11
Switzerland	217	7
Israel	194	3
United States	158	58
South Korea	83	3
Sweden	80	4
Denmark	75	3
Ireland	73	2
Argentina	67	1
Thailand	57	1
Greece	48	1
Russia	48	1
Mexico	42	1
South Africa	21	1
Norway	11	1
Finland	9	1
Spain	8	1
Hong Kong	4	4

Table 1 – Country analysis of THE rankings 2008

*Institutes that had no position or were outside of the top 200 in 2007 have not been analyzed in the net change in rank data.

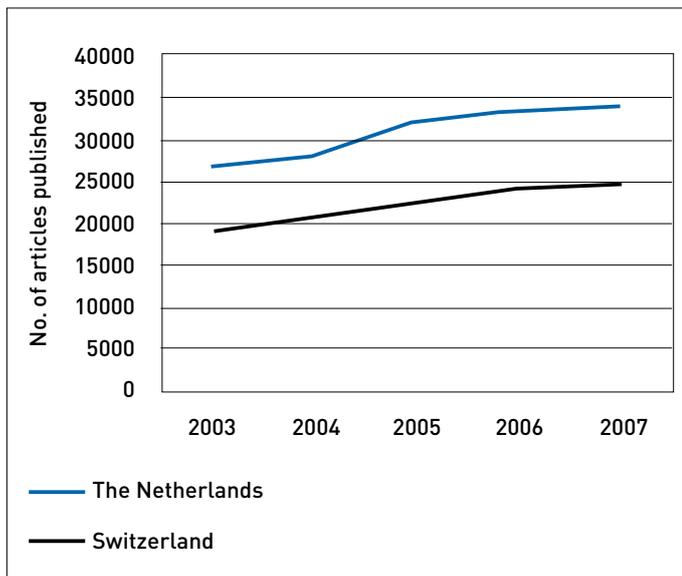
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overall increase of the other countries listed demonstrates the strong performance of the research in their institutions.

Two Indian universities, the Indian Institute of Technology in Delhi and in Bombay, have experienced the greatest increase in ranking – an astonishing 248 places – which is testament to the continued development of research in India.

The two countries following India, the Netherlands and Switzerland have also shown impressive results in the 2008 rankings, with substantial increases in their institutions' positions. Analysis of these two countries in Scopus shows a very similar growth in published articles, as illustrated in Figure 1.



The impact of individual institutions

So what is behind these countries' increase in rankings? When we analyze the data on a national level, it appears that individual institutions can make a huge impact on the ranking of their home country.

In the Netherlands, the VU University Amsterdam attained a rise of 149 positions in rank – an impressive achievement that makes a positive impact on the overall ranking for the Netherlands. In Switzerland, the Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne and the University of Lausanne each rose by 67 and 56 net changes respectively. Together, these rankings make a strong contribution to Switzerland's overall change in rank.

This suggests that national improvements in ranking may be at least partially the result of individual universities taking a more strategic approach: targeting international publications, aided by bibliometric tools and building and promoting library collections.

This is not surprising – research institutes the world over are coming to realize that a dedicated effort towards improving strategy can bring significant improvements to the institution. In fact, using bibliometric and other input data to better understand strengths and weaknesses is helping universities compete more successfully against their peers, resulting in impressive improvements for those who are successful.

Figure 1 (left) - Publication output (articles and reviews) of the Netherlands and Switzerland, 2003-2007.

Expert opinion

Using data to drive performance

Daniel Calto



Grants are the lifeblood of all research universities in the United States. Grants support research and defray some of the many indirect research costs across the institute. Yet identifying, applying for and winning funding is becoming increasingly challenging. Research administrators are facing numerous obstacles, including competition for grants, growing compliance requirements – especially in biomedical research – and funding international collaborations.

Daniel Calto recently joined Elsevier and, prior to that, was Director of Research Strategy and Senior Director of Research Administration at Columbia University in New York, where he was using grants data to drive improvements in research revenue.

To help research administrators manage this increasing complexity while still being able to respond accurately and rapidly to funding opportunities, Calto worked on benchmarking,

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