WCUs are a vital element of a competitive higher education system. Supporting élite universities creates a wider set of societal benefits and returns.

- Stemming from this belief a policy rhetoric has emerged across very different countries, leading to WCUPs worldwide (see next slide).

The notion of WCU is focused on a limited range of variables emulating the so-called "Stepford University.

- Stemming from this belief critiques against global rankings have emerged, attempts to develop better rankings.

"Which" is a WCU?
Normative Positions in Fact

-but we are not the U.S!

The WCU Policy Rhetoric

- Building world-class universities has been the dream of generations of Chinese [...] not only for pride, but also for the future of China
- The government wants a national innovation system in which universities and research organizations attract the best minds to conduct world-class research, fuelling the innovation system with new knowledge and ideas
- Top-level research to make Germany a more attractive research location
- Aalto University is born to be one of the leading institutions in the world [...] by 2020
- Place France among the highest ranking international universities

This Presentation

An objective framework by which the public benefits of WCUPs can be understood, and against which the claims by interested parties may be tested, is needed. The presentations covers:

- The public value of HE
- Possible system effects of WCUPs
- Example of France
- Inherent problems and attempted solutions: what role for WCUPs?
- Conclusions
Higher education deserves a public subsidy because it creates public benefits beyond the benefits which accrue to individual recipients. Although higher education does create private benefits, it is the public benefits that justify subsidy. Need for increased collaboration between universities to collective societal ends.

Table 1: The array of higher education benefits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Economic</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>Private</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increased tax revenues</td>
<td>Higher salaries and benefits</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decreased inactivity</td>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>Employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased consumption</td>
<td>Higher earning levels</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased workman flexibility</td>
<td>Improved working conditions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decreased reliance on government financial support</td>
<td>Personal/professional mobility</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased research and innovation</td>
<td>Improved innovation resulting from research outputs</td>
<td>Financial benefits resulting from research outputs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Social

| Reduced crime rates   | Improved health life expectancy |                             |
| Increased charitable giving | Community service |                             |
| Increased quality of civic life | Better consumer decision making |                             |
| Social cohesion, appreciation for diversity | Increased personal status |                             |
| Improved ability to adapt to and use technology | More hobbies, leisure activities |                             |


Figure 1: A systems model of investment in the higher education sector.
### The System Effects of a WCUP (I)

- Increased exogenous resources
  - Additional staff, students and research funding from outside the country's higher education system which spill-over to other higher education institutions
- Increased private endogenous resources
  - Resources that would have either not been spent in the country's universities, or gone to other universities, go into the sector, which spill-over to other higher education institutions

### The System Effects of a WCUP (II)

- More efficient use of public resources
- New products (e.g. Graduate School trajectories)
- Reputational benefits
  - All national universities benefit from a higher external awareness/reputation from the presence of one or more world-class institutions in the system
The Tensions of WCUPs: from Individual to System Benefits

- WCUP must demonstrate WCUP’s aggregate public benefit if they are to become a tool used by public investment
- For each of the five variables, “world-class” might get stronger at the expense of the system, e.g.
  - Create barriers between the “haves” and the “have-nots”
  - Act as a kind of enclave for global actors exploiting the best of the country’s resources
  - Beggar-thy-neighbour effect

Can World Class University Programmes Produce Clear Public Benefits for National Higher Ed?

We look at how one WCUP attempted to solve an identified systemic problem, i.e. the segmentation between the élite Grandes Écoles and the mass university system in French higher education

Values in French Higher Education

- Unselective University Sector
- Grandes Écoles cater for an élite minority
  - Research intensive HEIs (universities) are less prestigious than vocational ones (Grandes Écoles)
- Equality vs. equity
The French Higher Education System: an Overview

The Mass-Élite Split in French Higher Ed

- “Élite républicain” through meritocratic selection
- Attempts to introduce university selection led to opposition from secondary pupils and university students and “sélection par l’échec”
- Poor infrastructure at university system
- While universities have tried to create prestigious and market-facing “professional” Licences and Masters it has been higher education in the Grandes Écoles sector which has provided the most prestigious diplomas
  - Similar duality in research

Long-Term Effects of the Mass-Élite Split

- Grandes Écoles’ minimal contribution to social mobility
  - Not about equity
  - “Grand mérite” vs. “petite mérite”
  - Need for reforms of the 2000s
  - Resulting in WCUP
Reforms for Financial Efficiency and Equity

- CEP/"Science Po." : widening participation
- LMD: Bologna – more international competitiveness
- The "Shanghai Crisis" (2003): great expectations
- LRU (2007) : market and competition for public funds
- New research policy (concentration, profiling, refurbishment)
  - PRES (2006)
  - Operation Campus and Saclay (2008)
  - IDEX (2010)

System Benefits of France's WCUPs?

- More exogenous resources
  - Increased private resources that would not have been spent in the HE sector on research
  - The French WCUP – IDEX and the PRES – has become a part of the new strategy to invest in research and innovation.
  - In 2005, ANR awarded research funding to universities through direct competition.

- System improvements and more efficient use of public resources
  - The biggest challenge for French higher education is enriching the quality of the education that higher education students in publicly funded universities receive. The reforms (especially the PRESs) led to the creation of AERES. In its synthetic evaluation of French research in 2010, AERES was keen to conclude that the reforms, including Operation Campus and the Grand Emprunt, had succeeded.

- New products which increased the overall attractiveness of France as a location for study

- Reputation (improving the public profile for all universities)

Praise and Critiques in French Higher Education Reform

- WCUPs to:
  - Improve resource efficiency
  - Symbolical deployment to legitimise domestic higher education policy

- Free-market vision
  - Policy transfer that France has previously opposed in other fields

- Critique: too many initiatives leading to fragmentation?
Conclusions (I)

- Part of wider transformation process in French public governance
- ARWU crisis did have key effects:
  - Government could advance a new administrative paradigm into the French Higher Education sector
  - Expectations of transformation
- Some system improvement, e.g.
  - Widening participation
  - Internationalization
  - More investments

Conclusions (II)

- Role of WCUP not straightforward
  - Emerging at the end of a wider shift
- Key challenges remain
  - Revitalizing the university sector
  - Reconciling the tension between resource-rich Grandes Écoles and the underfunded universities
  - System improvements must involve improving student experience in a mass university system very different from the Anglo-American university model

Conclusions (III)

- Apparently no intrinsic benefits of WCUPs
  - Advantages have come where WCUP activities have played to existing strengths in the system or concentrated resources on achieving difficult changes
  - There seems to have been a sincere effort to address the system's problems rather than concentrating resources on the Grandes Écoles to increase the number of French universities in the rankings
  - WCUPs have been one element of those efforts
Cautionary Remarks on WCUPs

- Useful in persuading governments of the value of:
  - Investing in Higher Education
  - Profiling their nations more aggressively internationally

- Nuance needed in (at least) three areas:
  - Definition of WCUP should include excellence in national impact
  - Outcome over volume and resource metrics
  - More nuanced understanding of national higher education system conditions

A World-Class Higher Ed System?

We need an “all encompassing quality”

- About horizontal diversity and pathways within the system
- Access and permeability
- Composition of student body
- Antecedent conditions
- How well are they doing?

Does reputation do it all?

- About aligning optimally private and public returns of higher education

A World-Class Higher Ed System?

Different but Equal

Worth – less?
Thank You For Your Attention

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