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# Institutional, Research, and Publication Networks of Knowledge Control through Global University Rankings: A Marxist Analysis

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**Abstract:** This study aimed to reveal the link of the World Economic Forum (WEF) to the international university ranking organizations, namely, QS World University Rankings, Times Higher Education World University Rankings, and the Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU), that set the criteria for quality higher educational management in the world. This was done by elucidating the institutional, research, and publication networks that help build the knowledge control network of the WEF. Data about the people, ranking criteria, and organizational connections of the three ranking organizations to WEF were extracted from the Google Search engine and connections to the WEF were determined through a search of the WEF website ([weforum.org](http://weforum.org)). Through this online literature review, connections to the WEF were established by identifying the founders and/or heads of the organizations behind the three international university ranking programs (via Google search engine), their direct affiliation or membership in the WEF (via the WEF website), their educational affiliations (via Google search engine), and the link of said educational affiliations to the WEF (via the WEF website). Using the data, the institutional, research, and publication networks of knowledge control were discussed through the perspectives of Marxist Theory, hegemony, and ideological state apparatuses.

**Keywords:** Global University Ranking, QS, Times Higher Education, Shanghai Ranking, Networks of Knowledge Control

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## I. Introduction

The internationalization of education has required higher education in many countries to make necessary changes to adapt. Because it is believed that greater internationalization in higher education leads to economic growth (Finardi and Rojo, 2015), internationalization has become an economic imperative, especially for emerging economic superpowers. China has seen the internationalization of higher education as gateway for furthering their economic standing; hence, it has been sending Chinese graduate students to the Philippines, leading to the further intensification of internationalization efforts in the latter, even among Catholic universities and colleges (Bantugan 2022). This internationalization has intensified competition among said learning organizations within and between countries. This brought forth the value of international university rankings.

International university rankings evaluate higher education institutions worldwide using diverse criteria, intending to furnish prospective students, academics, policymakers, and stakeholders with insights into global university quality and performance. Various organizations and publications develop these rankings, each employing unique methodologies and criteria for university assessment. Prominent examples of such international university ranking systems include the QS World University Rankings (QS Quacquarelli Symonds Limited., 2024), the Times Higher Education World University Rankings (Times Higher Education, 2024), and the Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU) (Shanghai Ranking, 2024) commonly referred to as the Shanghai Rankings.

**International University Rankings.** Wilbers and Brankovic (2021) wrote that university rankings may be considered a social mechanism anchored on the concept of organizational performance and built on the assertion that institutional improvements “is only possible in relation to the performance of other organizations” (Brankovic et al., 2018, in Wilbers and Brankovic, 2021, para. 2). The evolving discursive and institutional landscape within US higher education throughout the twentieth century, especially during the postwar period, provided the backdrop that influenced its evolution. Within this context, university rankings gained significant prominence and impact domestically before attaining international recognition, notably with the inception of the renowned U.S. News & World Report ranking in 1983 (Myers & Robe, 2009; Sauder, 2008). Prior to the emergence of the USN ranking, there is evidence suggesting that scholars, administrators, national associations, and even federal authorities frequently utilized ranking systems to assess and compare departments, colleges, and universities for various purposes, albeit with differing levels of effectiveness (Hammarfelt et al., 2017; Webster, 1986).

The nature of rankings inherently involves comparison, establishing a zero-sum hierarchy wherein advancement for one institution corresponds to regression for another (Espeland & Stevens, 1998). Unlike alternative evaluation techniques like ratings or benchmarks, rankings prioritize ongoing competition among universities, a concept deeply rooted in nineteenth-century sports culture (Eichberg, 1974; Parry, 2006). This temporal dimension, involving the continuous tracking of performances over time, has become essential in modern rankings (Landahl, 2020; Ringel & Werron, 2021). The idea of universities engaged in perpetual competition resonates with the prevalent perception of higher education as a stratified system (Cantwell & Taylor, 2013; Marginson, 2008).

**Factors Facilitating Integration of International University Rankings in Educational Systems.** The factors facilitating the legitimization and increased utilization of rankings as a means to compare higher education institutions in the United States constitute a crucial chain of influence in the history of rankings (Abend, 2020). Firstly, university performance becomes intertwined with the national higher education "system," highlighting interconnectedness (Heyck, 2015). Secondly, university performance is contextualized relative to other institutions within the system, fostering a culture of competition (Heyck, 2015). Thirdly, university performance is perceived as continually evolving, necessitating recurrent quantitative assessments conducted by third parties (Heyck, 2015).

The dominance of functionalism post-World War II significantly shaped academic and policy discussions, influencing the trajectory of rankings (Cohen-Cole, 2014; Gilman, 2003; Heyck, 2015; Jardim, 2000). Federal planning, underpinned by functionalist principles, drove heightened data collection and analysis across various sectors, including higher education (Astin, 2003; Hutt, 2017). During this era, the notion of higher education as a coherent "system" gained prominence, with functionalist ideologies informing policy dialogues (Heyck, 2015). Influential figures such as Clark Kerr and Martin Trow advocated for systemic approaches, shaping institutional perceptions (Marginson, 2016; Wittrock, 1993). Additionally, there is a noticeable shift towards esteeming performance excellence, propelled by functionalist and modernization theories (Gilman, 2003; Knöbl, 2003). This fosters a strategic pursuit of excellence among universities, aligning current endeavors with future achievements (Berelson, 1960).

**Critical Understanding of International University Rankings.** Despite their significant impact, international rankings encounter criticisms and obstacles, particularly within the framework of manufacturing collusion among knowledge producers. These rankings serve as knowledge organization systems, but their structures from various sources like Times, QS, Shanghai, and the like may not fully capture the complexities of manufacturing such collusions (Jardim-Goncalves et al., 2011). Detractors argue that rankings oversimplify (Regele & Zhang, 2022) the intricate landscape of knowledge production, often privileging specific metrics while neglecting others, and exacerbating disparities among knowledge producers and regions (Iñiguez et al., 2021). Moreover, rankings may inadvertently contribute to the reinforcement of ideological state apparatuses, wherein certain institutions or countries are systematically favored or disadvantaged (Bellantuono et al., 2020).

In essence, the political economy underlying international university rankings reflects a complex interplay of interests at the global, national, and institutional levels, which shapes the dynamics within knowledge production systems globally (Shahjahan & Baizhanov, 2021). These rankings are intertwined with the internationalization of higher education, impacting universities' value co-creation and their positioning in the global economy (Panigrahi, 2018). While rankings may offer valuable insights and stimulate competition and innovation, they also prompt questions regarding equity, accountability, and the broader objectives of knowledge production, while potentially perpetuating ideological biases inherent within state apparatuses (Brankovic et al., 2023).

**The WEF's Influence over Knowledge Construction.** This paper is built on three preceding papers looking into the connection of the World Economic Forum (WEF) on knowledge construction on COVID-19, particularly through a massive open online course platform like *Coursera* (Bantugan, 2022), a top tier health science journal titled *The Lancet* (Bantugan, 2022), and a crowd-sourced online encyclopedia known as *Wikipedia* (Bantugan, 2023).

The synthesis of the findings from the three research articles suggests a comprehensive understanding of the role of the WEF in shaping knowledge production and dissemination related to COVID-19. Firstly, the research on Coursera indicates that universities associated with the WEF, particularly those offering massive open online courses on COVID-19, COVID-19 vaccines, and vaccines, in general, serve the interests of the WEF and its partners, including major pharmaceutical companies. These top-tier universities, primarily from developed countries, play a crucial role in promoting narratives that align with WEF interests, potentially influencing public opinion and policy decisions regarding issues such as mandatory COVID-19 vaccination. Secondly, the paper on *The Lancet* revealed that the WEF's influence extends to knowledge institutions involved in COVID-19 research, particularly in promoting the natural origins hypothesis of the virus and suppressing alternative perspectives, such as the lab leak narrative. The research highlights how the WEF's presence permeates scientific journal gatekeeping, as evidenced by its impact on publications like *The Lancet*. Lastly, the paper on *Wikipedia* underscores the significant role played by the United States in shaping the discourse around COVID-19, with institutions like the US National Institutes of Health, ivy league universities, and mainstream media outlets all having direct or indirect connections with the WEF. This interconnected network, with the WEF at its core, promotes a narrative of scientism surrounding COVID-19, with the US serving as a key agent in disseminating this perspective globally. Thus, the findings suggest that the WEF operates as a central node in a network of influence shaping knowledge production and dissemination related to COVID-19, with universities, research institutions, and media outlets all playing roles in advancing narratives aligned with WEF interests.

In a recent lecture to a higher education institution that is intent on undergoing an international ranking application, the author deemed it important to gain a deeper understanding as to how research publications figure into the criteria used by the top three international ranking organizations. Through the process of finding out the connections between said ranking organizations and citation indexes they prescribe, a seeming link to the WEF was established. To further crystallize and formalize the said link and systematize the process to do so, this study was conducted.

## II. Study Framework

Marxist theory (Choudhury, 2022), particularly Gramsci's concepts of hegemony and ISAs (Ramos, 1982), offers a framework for comprehending how university rankings contribute to the construction and perpetuation of ideological state apparatuses. These mechanisms reinforce the dominance of specific actors and ideologies within higher education, shaping the broader discourse and power dynamics within the field. Marxist theory, specifically Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony, offers insight into how ideological state apparatuses (ISAs) are formed through university rankings. Hegemony, as defined by Gramsci, signifies the

dominance of a particular group's worldview or ideology over society, facilitated by institutions and practices that propagate and bolster these beliefs. In the realm of university rankings, Marxist theory can shed light on how rankings function as a tool for perpetuating hegemonic ideologies. Often controlled by influential institutions or nations, rankings reflect and amplify the values and agendas of these entities. By endorsing specific metrics and standards as hallmarks of excellence, rankings perpetuate the hegemonic worldview of dominant players in the higher education sphere.

Additionally, Marxist theory underscores how institutions involved in producing and disseminating rankings operate as ISAs. ISAs, according to Gramsci's framework, are institutions like schools, media, and other influential bodies like the university world ranking organizations that disseminate the dominant ideology of the ruling class. In the context of university rankings, entities responsible for ranking creation and dissemination—such as ranking agencies and media outlets—act as ISAs that reinforce the prevailing worldview within academia. Furthermore, Marxist theory underscores the significance of power dynamics and inequality in hegemonic formation. Within the realm of university rankings, the influence of certain institutions or nations in shaping ranking criteria and methodologies reflects imbalances of power within the global higher education landscape. This unequal distribution of power enables dominant actors to perpetuate their hegemonic ideology through rankings, consolidating their authority and influence.

### **Statement of the Problem**

This study aimed to reveal the link of the WEF to the international university ranking organizations, namely, Times, QS, Shanghai, that set the criteria for quality higher educational management in the world. This was done by elucidating the institutional, research, and publication networks that help build the covert knowledge control network of the WEF.

## **III. Methodology**

Three major international university ranking organizations were selected as case samples for this multiple case study, namely, (1) Quacquarelli Symonds of QS World University Rankings, (2) Inflexion Private Equity Partners of Times Higher Education World University Rankings, and (3) Shanghai Ranking Consultancy. Data about their people, ranking criteria, and organizational connections to WEF were extracted from the Google Search engine and connections to the WEF were determined through a search of the WEF website ([weforum.org](http://weforum.org)). Through this online literature review, connections to the WEF were established by identifying the founders and/or heads of the organizations behind the three university ranking programs (via Google search engine), their direct affiliation or membership in the WEF (via the WEF website), their educational affiliations (via Google search engine), and the link of said educational affiliations to the WEF (via the WEF website). Correspondences between the founders/heads of ranking organizations and the university ranking of their respective universities were also analyzed vis-à-vis the research criteria of each ranking program. Finally, all data were interpreted through the perspectives of Marxist Theory, hegemony, and ideological state apparatuses.

## **IV. Results**

### **WEF Connections to Ranking Organization Heads and their Educational Affiliations**

**QS.** Nunzio Quacquarelli, founder of QS, is connected to the WEF in three ways. He is an agenda contributor of the WEF and his two schools are both publicly declared WEF organizations. His schools rank high in all global ranking organizations, especially in QS, which he founded. The lowest ranks being 5 and 16 under its closest competitor ranking organization Times, for University of Cambridge and University of Pennsylvania, respectively.

Table 1  
 Head of QS and his educational affiliations

Head and educational affiliations	WEF Affiliation	QS Global Rank (as of March 12, 2024)	Times Global Rank	Shanghai Global Rank (as of 2023)
Founder: Nunzio Quacquarelli (UK)	WEF Agenda Contributor <sup>a</sup>			
University of Cambridge (UK)	WEF Organization <sup>b</sup>	2 <sup>c</sup>	5 <sup>e</sup>	4 <sup>f</sup>
Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania (US)	WEF Organization <sup>b</sup>	12 <sup>d</sup>	16 <sup>e</sup>	14 <sup>f</sup>

<sup>a</sup><https://www.weforum.org/search/?query=Nunzio+Quacquarelli>

<sup>b</sup><https://www.weforum.org/organizations/university-of-cambridge/>

<sup>c</sup><https://www.topuniversities.com/university-rankings-articles/world-university-rankings/top-universities-uk>

<sup>d</sup><https://www.topuniversities.com/universities/university-pennsylvania>

<sup>e</sup><https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings/2024/world-ranking>

<sup>f</sup><https://www.shanghairanking.com/rankings/arwu/2023>

**Times** (owned by Inflexion Private Equity Partners). John Hartz and Simon Turner, both top managers of Times are affiliated with UK universities, Imperial College London and University of Oxford, respectively. The latter school ranks 1 in Times, which he co-owns. Imperial College London, meanwhile, ranks 8 in Times (but ranks higher in QS). Regardless, both their schools are top tier ones, meaning, within the 10 highest-ranked in the world (except in Shanghai where Imperial College London is placed at 23). University of Oxford, the highest ranking in Times is only a mere Top 7 in Shanghai. It should be noted that Shanghai ranked both their schools the lowest among the three ranking organizations.

Table 2  
 Head of QS and his educational affiliations

Head and educational affiliations	WEF Affiliation	QS Global Rank (as of March 12, 2024)	Times Global Rank	Shanghai Global Rank (as of 2023)
Top Managers: John Hartz <sup>a</sup> and Simon Turner <sup>b</sup>	(Not available online)			
Imperial College London <sup>a</sup> (UK)	WEF Organization <sup>a</sup>	6 <sup>c</sup>	8 <sup>d</sup>	23 <sup>e</sup>
University of Oxford <sup>b</sup> (UK)	WEF Organization <sup>b</sup>	3 <sup>c</sup>	1 <sup>d</sup>	7 <sup>e</sup>

<sup>a</sup><https://www.weforum.org/organizations/imperial-college-london/>

<sup>b</sup><https://www.weforum.org/organizations/university-of-oxford/>

<sup>c</sup><https://www.topuniversities.com/university-rankings-articles/world-university-rankings/top-universities-uk>

<sup>d</sup><https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings/2024/world-ranking>

<sup>e</sup><https://www.shanghairanking.com/rankings/arwu/2023>

**Shanghai.** Headed by Liu Niancai, Shanghai is considered the third player, following only QS and Times. Niancai is affiliated with Queen's University at Kingston, Canada, where many WEF individual authors graduated. Unlike University of Cambridge, University of Pennsylvania, Imperial College London, and University of Oxford, it is not publicly declared as a WEF organization; hence, its alumni who write for the WEF are its more direct links to it. Queen's University at Kingston ranks lowest compared to the other four schools (within the 200s range). It should be noted that it ranks highest in Shanghai, where Niancai graduated, vis-à-vis QS and Times.

Table 3  
 Head of Shanghai Global Rank and his educational affiliations

Head and educational affiliations	WEF Affiliation	QS Global Rank (as of March 12, 2024)	Times Global Rank	Shanghai Global Rank (as of 2023)
Top Manager: Liu Niancai	(Not available online)			
Queen's University at Kingston, Canada <sup>a</sup>	WEF Individual Authors <sup>a</sup>	209 <sup>b</sup>	251 <sup>c</sup>	201 <sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup><https://www.weforum.org/agenda/authors/claudio-cocorocchia-9ec267ea-0ce0-47a5-88cb-fdcbb2160e34/>

<sup>b</sup><https://www.shiksha.com/studyabroad/canada/universities/queen-s-university/ranking#:~:text=In%20the%20QS%20World%20University,placed%20at%20the%20240%20position>

<sup>c</sup><https://www.mastersportal.com/rankings-reviews/12324/queens-university.html>

While Tables 1 to 3 only looked at the 2023 and 2024 ranking results, and, as a consequence, do not reflect a mean rank across a specific period, they show that the schools of their top leader/s are considered as global benchmarks. The schools represent the Western educational system, influenced by the UK, that are presented as worth emulating or models of excellence. Regardless of particular ranks given to the schools above, the data show that their alumni have become agents of extending their prominence in the world. Hartz, Turner, and Niancai, not officially reported as a WEF agenda contributor like Quacquarelli, are essentially part of the WEF network of knowledge gatekeepers, nevertheless.

#### WEF Knowledge Production and Dissemination Network through Ranking Criteria

**Research-related Criteria.** Table 4 shows that research plays a key role in the ranking of higher education institutions. At the very least, 25% is allotted by QS for research. Times mandates majority (60%) of the accomplishments presented for ranking by schools are research-related. Shanghai, meanwhile, requires a potential 90% for research. Knowing the weights given to research, one can surmise that schools that are qualified for inclusion and ranking by the three organizations must produce and disseminate new knowledge from research. Shanghai has the highest barrier to entry in that only the most research-intensive and (Nobel-) awarded schools can be at the top tier, most of which are in the inner circles or top one percent of the knowledge production network. As such, the schools that have been at the forefront of higher education globally will continue to reign at the highest ranks, globally. Being early in the race and part of networks of academic prestige poses a high barrier to entry for those who are just attempting to be ranked.

Table 4  
 Research-related Criteria Weights per International Ranking Organization

Research-related Criteria	Weight of Research		
	QS (%)	Times (%)	Shanghai (%)
Citations per Faculty	20	30	20
International Research Framework	5	-	-
Reputation Survey	-	18	-
Income	-	6	-
Research Productivity	-	6	-
Published Research (in preferred journals)	-	-	20
Indexed Research (in preferred indexes)	-	-	20
Nobel Prize Winners	-	-	(30)*
Total	25	60	90

\*May be related to research



**Research-related Conditions for Inclusion in Ranking.** For QS, under the term “Research Threshold”, a school must have at least 100 papers indexed by **Scopus** and published over a five-year window. It further qualified that “Only papers of relevant paper types and after affiliation cap is applied are considered” (QS Quacquarelli Symonds Limited, 2024). This publication number is relatively low compared to the requirements of Times as discussed below. Nevertheless, while 100 papers are already a challenge for some schools, indexing the same number in Scopus is another layer of difficulty that only larger, well-funded, and most established schools can overcome.

Times mandates that schools “must not be focused on a single narrow subject area (or more than 80% of their publication output is from one subject area)”. It also declared preferred knowledge areas, namely, (1) Clinical and Health, (2) Computer Science, (3) Engineering, (4) Life Sciences, (5) Physical Sciences (high volume publications) [at least 500 publications over 2018 – 2022]; (6) Arts and (7) Humanities (lower volume publications) [at least 250 publications over 2018 – 2022], (8) Business and Economics, (9) Social Sciences [at least 200 publications over 2018 – 2022], (10) Psychology [at least 150 publications over 2018 – 2022], and (11) Education and Law [at least 100 publications over 2018 – 2022]. Clearly, schools without staffing that can produce the indicated number of publications will not have the chance to be included in the rankings. This points to an institutional size bias.

In terms of research productivity, Times asserted that productivity is computed by “dividing the total subject weighted number of papers published in the academic journals indexed by **Elsevier’s Scopus** database per scholar, divided by the sum of the total subject weighted number of FTE research staff and FTE academic staff”. With regards to research citations, Times looks at the academic journals indexed by Elsevier’s Scopus database and all indexed publications between 2018 and 2022. Citations to these publications made in the six years from 2018 to 2023 are also collected and is normalized by **Elsevier** to reflect variations in citation volume between different subject areas. In terms of research strength, Times measures the representative research quality based on the Field-Weighted Citation Impact (FWCI) of all Scopus-indexed publications between 2018 and 2022. The involvement of Scopus in the computation of research strength implicates a bias for a specific publisher, Elsevier, and not others. Elsevier is owned by **RELX Group** that is also attached to **LexisNexis Risk Solutions**, a WEF organization (WEF, 2024).

Shanghai, meanwhile, ranks schools through academic or research performance (including alumni and staff winning Nobel Prizes and Fields Medals, highly cited research papers, those published in *Nature* and *Science* journals, and those indexed in Science Citation Index-Expanded and Social Science Citation Index. It should be underscored that *Nature*, is produced by a UK publisher, Springer Nature (2024) that is owned by the **Holtzbrink Publishing Group**, a WEF organization (WEF, 2024). In the same light, *Science* journal is published by the American Association for the Advancement of Science, headed as of this writing by Gerald Fink, a Margaret and Herman Sokol Professor at Whitehead Institute, **Massachusetts Institute of Technology** (MIT). The MIT is a WEF agenda contributor and a member of the WEF-established **Global University Leaders Forum** (GULF). The Science Citation Index-Expanded and the Social Science Citation Indexes belong to Clarivate of **Thomson Reuters Foundation**, a WEF author (WEF, 2024).

## V. Discussion

### Institutional Network

From a Marxist perspective, knowledge gatekeeping can be understood as a mechanism through which the ruling class maintains control over the means of knowledge production and dissemination. In this scenario, Nunzio Quacquarelli, as the founder of QS, holds significant influence over global university rankings, thus wielding considerable power in determining which institutions are perceived as prestigious and worthy of emulation. Quacquarelli’s connections to the WEF further highlight the interplay between economic power and

knowledge. By being an agenda contributor to the WEF and having his schools publicly declared as WEF organizations, Quacquarelli consolidates his influence not only in the realm of education but also within broader economic and political spheres.

The high rankings of Quacquarelli's schools in QS, as well as their prominence in other global ranking organizations, reinforce the capitalist ideology of competition and meritocracy. This perpetuates the notion that certain institutions, often those aligned with Western educational systems, are inherently superior, thus maintaining the hegemony of Western knowledge over alternative perspectives. Marxist theory provides a framework for understanding power dynamics and class struggle within society. In this context, the ownership and control of media outlets like Times by entities such as Inflexion Private Equity Partners represent the capitalist class exerting control over the means of production, in this case, the dissemination of knowledge and information.

The Times managers, Hartz and Turner, who are affiliated with prestigious UK universities, Imperial College London and University of Oxford, respectively, represent the bourgeoisie, or the ruling class, who hold positions of power and influence within the capitalist system. Their affiliation with these elite institutions reinforces their social status and reinforces the hierarchical structure of society. The ranking systems utilized by these universities, serve to reinforce the notion that certain institutions and individuals are superior to others based on arbitrary criteria determined by those in power.

Hegemony refers to the dominance of one social group's ideology over others, achieved through consent rather than coercion. In this scenario, Quacquarelli's influence over global university rankings allows him to shape perceptions of academic excellence and legitimacy, thus, reinforcing the hegemonic power of Western knowledge systems. The close relationship between Quacquarelli's schools and the WEF further solidifies this hegemony by aligning academic success with participation in global economic and political networks. This serves to perpetuate existing power structures by marginalizing alternative knowledge systems and reinforcing the dominance of Western institutions.

The promotion of these institutions as global benchmarks reinforces the hegemonic power of Western knowledge systems and perpetuates the idea that Western models of education are superior to others. This hegemony serves to maintain the status quo and perpetuate existing power structures, benefiting the ruling class while marginalizing alternative perspectives and knowledge systems. Shanghai also plays a role in legitimizing and reinforcing existing power structures within academia through its emphasis on Nobel awardees. Institutions that rank highly in the Shanghai Ranking system are often those with significant financial resources and political connections, further consolidating the influence of the ruling class and perpetuating the status quo.

Ideological state apparatuses, as described by Marxist theory, are institutions within society that disseminate the dominant ideology of the ruling class. In this scenario, QS operates as an ideological state apparatus by promoting the values and worldview of the capitalist class through its university rankings. Quacquarelli's affiliation with the WEF and the high rankings of his schools serve to legitimize and reinforce the existing social order, thereby maintaining the status quo. By positioning certain institutions as global benchmarks of excellence, QS contributes to the reproduction of social inequalities and the consolidation of power among the ruling class. In this scenario, universities like Imperial College London and University of Oxford serve as ideological state apparatuses by promoting the values and worldview of the ruling class. Through their affiliation with these prestigious institutions, individuals like Hartz and Turner become agents of the ruling class, perpetuating the dominant ideology and reinforcing existing power structures. Similarly, ranking organizations like Times and Shanghai further legitimize the dominance of Western knowledge systems by promoting certain institutions over others.



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### **Research Network**

From a Marxist perspective, the emphasis on research in the ranking criteria reflects the capitalist imperative for innovation and productivity. Research, particularly in fields with commercial applications, generates new knowledge and technologies that can be commodified and exploited for profit. Institutions that excel in research are thus rewarded within the capitalist system, reinforcing the dominance of the ruling class and perpetuating existing power structures.

The high barriers to entry imposed by Shanghai further illustrate the capitalist logic of competition and exclusion. By prioritizing research-intensive institutions, Shanghai effectively consolidates power among a select group of elite institutions, relegating others to the margins and reinforcing social inequalities.

The emphasis on research in the ranking criteria of QS, Times, and Shanghai serves to perpetuate the hegemony of Western knowledge systems. Institutions from Western countries, which often have greater resources and infrastructure for research, are disproportionately rewarded within these ranking systems, reinforcing the dominance of Western educational models and marginalizing alternative perspectives. Moreover, the high barriers to entry imposed by Shanghai contribute to the consolidation of power among established institutions. Institutions that have historically been at the forefront of higher education globally continue to maintain their dominance, further entrenching existing power structures and reinforcing the hegemony of academic prestige.

As ideological state apparatuses, ranking organizations like QS, Times, and Shanghai disseminate the dominant ideology of the ruling class by promoting certain criteria for success within higher education. By prioritizing research output and academic prestige, these ranking systems reinforce the perception that success and legitimacy are inherently linked to participation in Western-dominated knowledge networks. The high barriers to entry imposed by Shanghai also serve to shape the behavior and priorities of academic institutions. Institutions that seek to improve their ranking must prioritize research activities and align themselves with the interests of the ruling class, further consolidating the hegemony of Western knowledge systems and perpetuating the status quo.

Thus, the emphasis on research in the ranking criteria of QS, Times, and Shanghai reflects the capitalist logic of competition and exclusion, perpetuating existing power structures and reinforcing the hegemony of Western knowledge systems within higher education.

### **Publication Network**

From a Marxist perspective, the ranking criteria established by QS, Times, and Shanghai reflect the capitalist imperative for productivity and profit. Institutions that excel in research productivity and citation impact are rewarded within these ranking systems, reinforcing the dominance of the ruling class and perpetuating existing power structures. The emphasis on productivity metrics such as the number of publications and citations serves to commodify knowledge production within academia. Institutions that can afford larger research budgets and staff numbers are disproportionately rewarded, consolidating power among elite institutions and perpetuating social inequalities.

The ranking criteria set by QS, Times, and Shanghai contribute to the hegemony of Western knowledge systems and publishers. Institutions from Western countries, which often have greater resources and infrastructure for research, are disproportionately rewarded within these ranking systems, reinforcing the dominance of Western educational models and marginalizing alternative perspectives. Moreover, the involvement of specific publishers such as Elsevier, Springer Nature, and Clarivate in the computation of research metrics underscores their hegemonic influence within the academic publishing industry. These

publishers, many of which are associated with the WEF and its network, further consolidate their power by shaping the criteria used to evaluate academic excellence.

By prioritizing research productivity and citation impact, these ranking systems reinforce the perception that success and legitimacy are inherently linked to participation in Western-dominated knowledge networks and publishing platforms. The involvement of specific publishers like Elsevier, Springer Nature, and Clarivate in the computation of research metrics further reinforces the ideological dominance of certain actors within the academic realm. By aligning themselves with the interests of the ruling class and the WEF network, these publishers shape the dissemination of knowledge and reinforce existing power structures within academia.

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