U-Map and U-Multi rank: Measuring complexity in higher education

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Outline

• Australian context – measuring higher education & research

• The importance of validity

• Measurement as a prompt for action

• An innovative future

• The “why” of measurement
Measuring Higher Education & Research - Australia

- ERA – research output (3-8 years old), discipline specific
- Reinforced vertical hierarchy versus horizontal diversity
- Minimal focus on research impact – or outcomes
- Complex problems require interdisciplinary approaches
- Focus on measurements related to teaching (ie, TEQSA)
- Measuring something that has been taken for granted creates a healthy “meta-conversation”
The Contributions of U-Map to Questions about Validity

- Difficulties with one size fits all tools

- Value of multi-dimensional instruments

- U-Map (research involvement, regional engagement, student profile, international orientation, knowledge exchange, teaching & learning)
U-Map prompts validity questions

• What should we be measuring?
• Do tools/ ranking methods adequately index the range of universities needed to create a positive higher education system?
• Will an over-reliance on uni-dimensional sales help progress our knowledge economy?
• To what extent do current measurement systems diminish creativity, innovation and risk taking?
Measurement as a Prompt for Action

- Measurement shapes subsequent actions
- A more comprehensive indicator offers increased opportunities for improvement
- Example – pain measurement
- Measurement is not an end in itself
- Wide range of responses to measurement are possible
- Measurement can be the first step to innovation
An Innovative Future?

• What we measure shapes behaviour
• Multi-dimensional indicators prompt us to consider how we foster innovation
• What are the elements of innovative societies? (eg, risk taking; connections between innovators, researchers and mainstream business; tolerance for failure, willingness to partner and collaborate)
• Australia is 19th on Innovation index
Productivity and Higher Education

- Avoided a formal recession in 2009
- Productivity growth has flat-lined and declined
- Improved productivity is a social as well as economic issue
- Modelling by KPMG estimates that full implementation of the Bradley review recommendations would add 5.6% to national productivity by 204 and 6.4% to GDP
- Gains rely on our ability to bring more people into a sophisticated workforce
Summary

• More complete measures provide comprehensive information, avoid unintended consequences associated with narrow indicators, less likely to under-represent diverse contributions

• Allows bench-marking with similar institutions and potential for process improvements
Summary

- Use of narrow indicators runs the risk of creating a system with diminished flexibility and little incentive for innovation.

- The indicators we use must serve the wider society – not ourselves.

- Most important factor – “So what factor”

- We must remember to measure dimensions that matter to the wider community to ensure a robust higher education system for the future.