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# Why not a world-class sector?

**Keynote address by  by David Watson**

**Guardian HE summit February 2009**

www.ioe.ac.uk

Centre for Higher Education Studies (CHES)

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# HE and the “credit crunch” - what will happen?

- Student choices: more or less “instrumental”?
- Public investment
- Business/industrial investment
- More or less autonomy?
- More or less government interference?
- The “for-profit” sector
- Competition for staff
- Indigenous or “transnational” development?
- Closing down or opening up?
- “World-classness”

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# What makes a university world-class?

**The objective score board**

**The subjective beauty contest**

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Our obsession with the fate of a few ‘world-class’ institutions is inhibiting the creation of a ‘world-class system’

# Corollaries

**A: the concept of the independent "world-class" institution is seductive, but unempirical.**

**B: the confusion of reputation with quality runs deep.**

**C: just as the individual institution may not be the best unit of analysis, the same may be true of the nation state**

# *Shanghai Jiao Tong: 2004 and 2005*

| | |
|---|---|
| **Alumni prizes** | **10%** |
| **Staff prizes** | **20%** |
| **Highly cited researchers** | **20%** |
| **Science citations** | **20%** |
| **Soc. Sci./Humanities citations** | **20%** |
| **Adjustment for size** | **10%** |

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# Collaborative research (Evidence Ltd.)

| Country | 1996-2000 | | 2001-2005 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Output % world | Collab % output | Output % world | Collab % output |
| UK | 9.39 | 28.84 | 8.92 | 40.28 |
| USA | 35.04 | 19.40 | 33.65 | 24.74 |
| CANADA | 4.64 | 33.15 | 4.59 | 41.03 |
| FRANCE | 6.38 | 35.71 | 6.09 | 44.00 |
| GERMANY | 8.61 | 34.46 | 8.48 | 43.01 |
| JAPAN | 9.14 | 16.50 | 8.98 | 21.39 |
| AUSTRALIA | 2.79 | 30.59 | 2.91 | 39.76 |
| CHINA | 2.82 | 25.43 | 5.23 | 25.95 |
| INDIA | 2.12 | | 2.46 | |

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# Right-sizing QR: life after REF

**QR winners**

- **Decline in dual support**
- **The mirage of Full Economic Costing**
- **Narrowing of mission**
- **Dominance of medicine and science**
- **Partnership aversion**
- **Gearing reduction**

**The rest**

- **Mode 2 opportunities**
- **Creative and service economies**
- **"Liberal" curriculum**
- **"Translational research"**
- **"The science of performance"**
- **"University-like businesses"**

# THES 2005

| | |
|---|---|
| **Peer review** | **40%** |
| **Employer ratings** | **10%** |
| **Citations per FTE staff** | **20%** |
| **SSR** | **20%** |
| **International staff** | **5%** |
| **International students** | **5%** |

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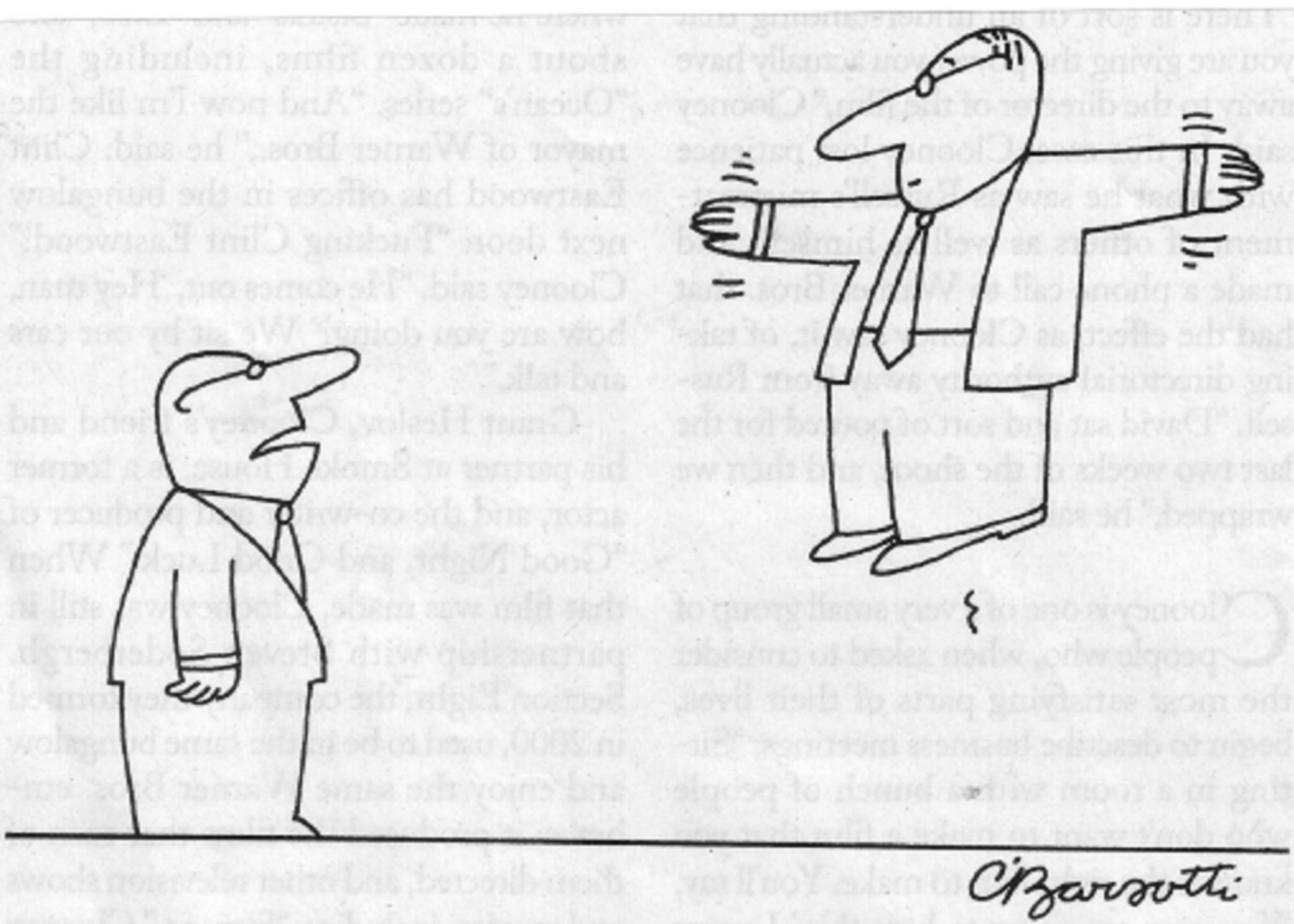
# Reputation over quality

**“A controlled reputational range”**



*"Interesting, but we can never forget that you went to a state college."*

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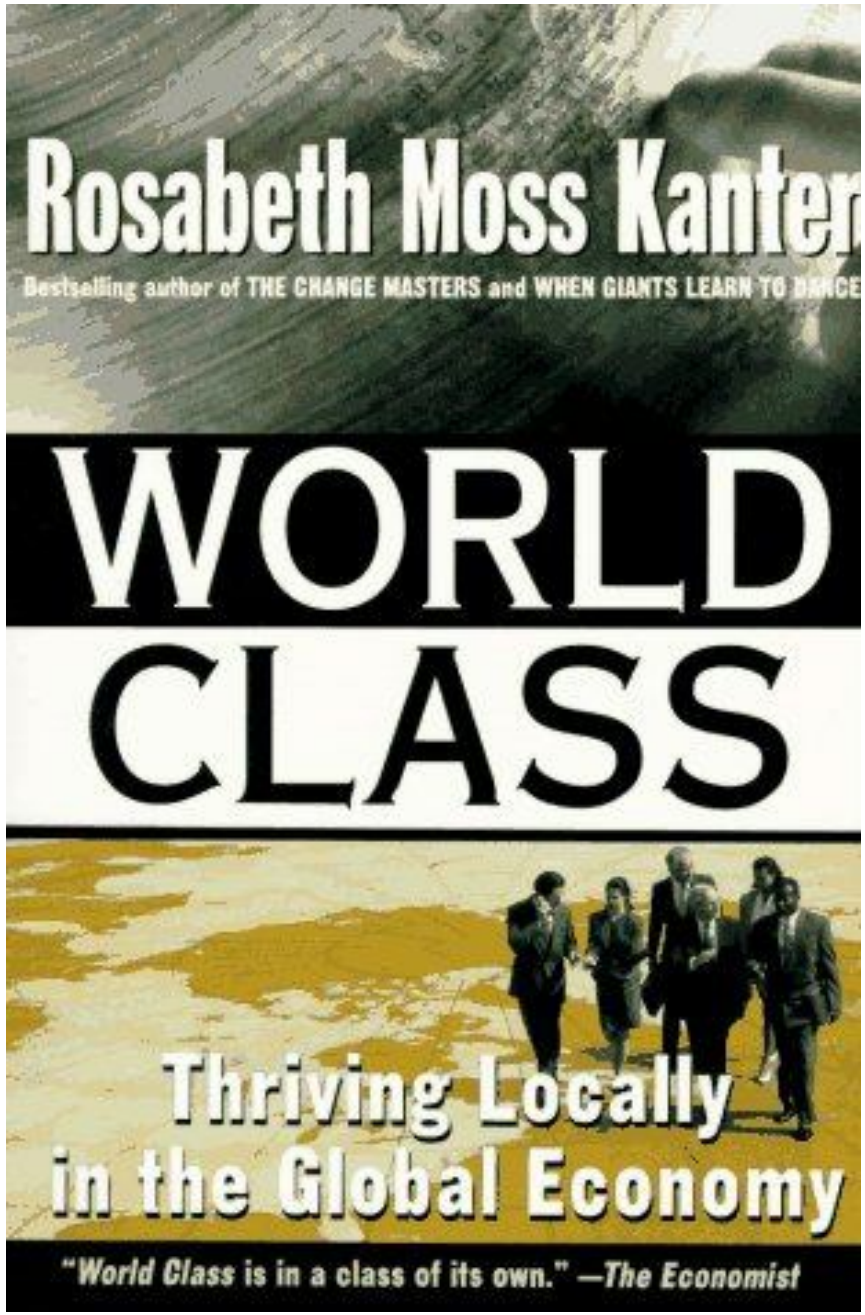
# Reputation over quality

**“Institutions such as my own are outposts of serious and bright students of modest or low-income background taught by dedicated faculty who are often respected researchers as well. These institutions are home to a democratic institutional culture simply not possible at elite institutions…It is time that the national agonizing about the income bias of elite institutions shifts its focus to these institutions.” Lawrence Blum, The New York Review of Books.**


Rosabeth Moss Kanter
Bestselling author of THE CHANGE MASTERS and WHEN GIANTS LEARN TO DANCE
WORLD CLASS
Thriving Locally in the Global Economy
"World Class is in a class of its own." —The Economist

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# World-classness

**What counts**

- **Research**
- **Media interest**
- **Graduate destinations**
- **Infrastructure**
- **International "executive" recruitment**

**What doesn't count**

- **Teaching quality**
- **Social mobility**
- **Services to business and the community**
- **Rural interests**
- **Other public services**
- **Collaboration**
- **The public interest**

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# Why not a world-class sector?

"By mid 2009 I expect to publish a framework for the future development of higher education, with proposals for ensuring our system remains world class over the next ten to fifteen years."

"I am now confirming that you should not issue any further ASNs in 2009/10. Since our original funding assumptions were for 15,000 ASNs to be allocated, I am reducing the funding to you for the coming year by £19m compared with the indicative figure shown in last year's grant letter. At this stage you should not allocate any further Additional Student Numbers for 2010/11; I shall want to review the position later this year."

"I also expect the Council to continue to recognise and reward the highest levels of research excellence wherever it is found. I know that you will need to maintain high levels of funding for those institutions with the largest volumes of world-class research whilst rewarding and nurturing pockets of excellence elsewhere."

(John Denham to Tim Melville-Ross, 22 January, 2009).