

# Choices, choices ...

## Lesson 5

Education this time. Have fun! ☺

Just as magpies adorn their nests with shiny trinkets, young people seeking to burnish their credentials love to scour league tables to spot the world’s brightest universities. Time at such places, they hope, will stoke both brainpower and future earnings. (...)

American institutions shine in the rankings of university performance: exercises that are themselves of varying merits. The success comes despite growing grumbles about visa difficulties for foreign students, and rocketing costs. Harvard consistently tops a league table produced by Shanghai’s Jiao Tong University. First published in 2003, this rates institutions according to the excellence of the research they produce.

In the most recent Shanghai table Europe fares remarkably poorly. It is certainly striking that from all of Europe only Oxford and Cambridge feature in the top 20. In the top 50 entries, Europe has only ten places (but 32 in the top 100). By contrast, fully 17 of the top 20 are American. (...)

In 2004 a rival appeared. It was compiled jointly by the Times Higher Education Supplement, a British periodical, and Quacquarelli Symonds, a provider of guides to higher education. This gave the main weight to outsiders’ views—chiefly of other academics and of employers that recruit graduates. It included the staff-student ratio as a measure of teaching quality. (...)

Yet none of the league tables shows how well universities teach in practice. Later this year, the OECD will begin to test the abilities of final-year university students in different countries. That is tricky but not unprecedented.

Retrieved from: *The Economist*, March 25<sup>th</sup> 2010.

Find words in the text that mean the following:

- ♣ evidence of authority, status, rights, credit - .....
- ♣ make smooth and bright, polish - .....
- ♣ decorate, add beauty, enhance - .....
- ♣ clean, remove dirt, clear - .....
- ♣ rising rapidly, increasing quickly - .....
- ♣ stir up, feed (e.g. a fire), poke - .....
- ♣ noticeable, impressive, conspicuous - .....