Preface

At a time when systems of higher education and research are under reform, there seems to be an increasing desire to regulate, to monitor and to control the production of knowledge and learning in universities and higher education organizations. Increasing political efforts to create international markets for education and research are noticed. In recent years we have also seen an increase in other efforts to compare, assess and monitor education; among them an increasing production of ranking lists and league tables. Despite strong interest and intense debates, there is little research trying to entangle what rankings really are, why they have become influential and widely diffused, and what it means for higher education that such efforts are proliferating.

Taking seriously the idea that rankings are influential and important, this book is an attempt to provide a critical analysis of the proliferation of rankings in management education. I do not attempt to determine whether rankings are good or bad, but rather to thoroughly analyse, empirically and theoretically, the development of rankings and its implications for the field of management education. In doing so, the book will focus on questions of how and why the rankings have developed, how business schools have responded to the changes, and what the implications are for the field of management education. By integrating different theoretical approaches and traditions, including organization theory, sociology of knowledge and education, the book is also an attempt to explain the role of classifications and other monitoring activities in forming social order and fields of practice. This is important for understanding the development of transnational monitoring systems and new modes of governance in many areas of society.