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Discipline in the context of development : a case of the social sciences in Malawi, Southern Africa

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Abstract

Changes in research production precipitated by the globalization have generally been theorized as applying across nations and disciplinary projects. This article examines the relation of discipline to research production from the situational vantage point of the developing world, specifically the Southern African country of Malawi, and from the empirical perspective of the social sciences. Evidence derives from eight months of ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Malawi in 2003 and 2004, drawing specifically from over 100 formal interviews and from analysis of historical and contemporary documents. The article finds that against depictions of academic disciplines as inflexible, arbitrary, and in need of restructuring, the case of the social sciences in Malawi demonstrates the value of distinctly disciplined expertise in problem-oriented research. This efficacy is, however, precariously dependent on the capacity of local disciplinary communities to regenerate and reproduce their expertise and compete effectively in the increasingly competitive knowledge market. (HRK / Abstract übernommen) Holland, Dana G., E-Mail: daygholland@yahoo.com