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Opportunity structures and higher learning in a globally connected place : tensions and ties between outbound and upward mobility

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Abstract

This paper examines how opportunity structures for learning, income, and status emerge in a global space shaped by local stakeholders aspiring for strategic positions in international competition. The case-study of Hong Kong suggests that moving up the pyramid of college and university degrees provides opportunities for higher income and reduces turbulence in times of global recessions and layoffs. However, low socio-economic status students are more likely to sustain their upward movement if their learning experiences are enriched with boundary-crossing competencies provided by studies abroad, foreign language training, cross-disciplinary programs, etc. While outbound mobility enhances opportunities for upward mobility, it also challenges the established cultural patterns of learning. This paper discusses the tensions and ties between outbound and upward mobility by analyzing local/global disequilibria in human and institutional agencies of higher education working across social, economic and political boundaries. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)

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