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The global ranking regime and the reconfiguration of higher education : comparative case studies on research assessment exercises in China, Hong Kong, and Japan / Jun Li

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Abstract

The global drive for world-class universities is twinned with a radical movement to create research assessment indicators, and universities have never been pressured as much as today by global rankings. This paper aims to focus on how research assessment exercises have reconfigured the institutional missions of the university in terms of knowledge production, teaching, and service address, by comparing three top research-intensive universities in Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Japan. It critically investigates how far and in what ways academics in the three systems have been pressured to respond to these exercises. The empirical findings show that all the three cases have been affected severely and that Hong Kong universities are the most internationalized and Mainland universities are the most productive in research outputs, as also evidenced in recent QS rankings. The paper argues that the global ranking regime has created a Double Bind for East Asian universities, and has brutally dominated their institutional reconfigurations. To turn the tide, the manipulated emphasis,

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flawed methodology, and unethical desirability of global university rankings and research assessment exercises should be avoided to help universities healthily and meaningfully focus on real missions to which they should commit themselves. Meanwhile, critical reflections and policy actions are particularly urgent on the indigenousness of knowledge exploration and production by higher education systems in East Asia and other post-colonial contexts. Furthermore, the paper anticipates that the importance of teaching and service will be revitalized in the new stage of East Asian universities, e.g., the Chinese University 3.0. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)