

Academic Culture in Transition: Measuring up for What Cause in Taiwan? (II)

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Roundtable on University and Journal Rankings

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OUTLINE

- Who Started University Ranking in Taiwan?
- When and Why?
- How these rankings have affected policy making and university operation ?
- The unintended consequences of university rankings.
- How the SSCI Syndrome has affected academic culture and education?
- *Governance and Academic Drift*
- Comparing orange and apple
- The on-line petition against the over-emphasis on SCI and SSCI paper publication
- Alternative Univ Rankings: The Cost-Efficient and sustainable univ



Overview

- In order to promote international competitiveness and visibility, many Asian higher education institutes (HEIs) have strived to create “world-class” universities.
- Leading universities in East Asia have often favored faculty publishing in international journal indexes such as:
 - the Science Citation Index (SCI),
 - the Social Science Citation Index (SSCI),
 - and others as major performance criteria for faculty.

Context: Why 'World-Class'?

* Globalization



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*Rankings as both goal and measure (World-Class Research University Project, 2003; 'Five Year, Fifty Billion' plan).

*Internationalization



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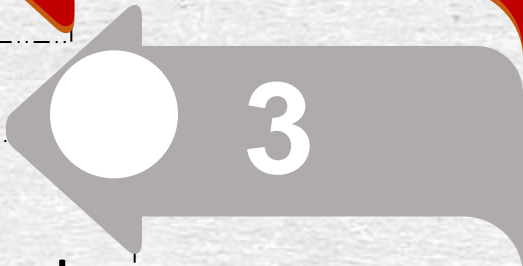
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* Research output is the key

*Government

Preference for neo-liberal, market-based solutions



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In the name of being as standardized and objective as possible to avoid academic bias accusations

- University Quality Assurance, used as benchmark for budget allocation
- Monitor the publication records among individual faculty members
 - New hiring practices
 - 6-year probation
 - Performance and evaluation systems



Publication Race in Ranking Competition

- As early as 2003, when the MOE and NSC were pushing to implement the new performance evaluation indicators regulated in the University Law which decides public funding based on university evaluation outcome (mainly publication in indexed English journals)
- All these policies aim to improving the competitiveness and raising international visibility of Taiwan's top universities.

Unexpected Result...

- Local relevance of research called into question
 - ‘Public intellectual’ role diminishing
- Themes selected are ‘global’ for publication reasons.
 - **‘Global audience’ is, in effect, journal editors – ‘gatekeeper effect.’**
- Publication in English less accessible for local audiences.
- English language writing ability now acts as proxy measure for academic merit in non-English-speaking academic communities.
- “Winners take all” effect appears to dominate.



The SSCI Syndrome in Higher Education

- Comparing research productivity between science and social sciences
- Academics who can publish Journal papers with high impact factor and citation become HIGH VALUE PEOPLE (HVP) at the expense of academic diversity, collaboration and collegiality

- This SSCI-preference also highlights “Essential Science Indicators” (ESI) as one of the four key standards to evaluate, rank , and fund the academic programs across all disciplines.
- The traditionally renowned dimensions, such as book publications, were cast aside with an even lower/zero point value.

- This pro-SSCI and SCI publication as sole performance criteria has crippled the status of faculty in Humanities and Social Sciences in Taiwan.
- Junior faculty in social sciences and humanity encounter even more barriers in promotion and publication due to lacking main-stream research topic and English proficiency.

Apple VS. Banana



NCCU renowned for Humanities and Social Sciences Protested against MOE and Media Ranking Result on Paper Publication in 2003



The Unintended Consequences...

《TAIPEI TIMES 焦點》 Education minister resigns over scandal



2014-07-15 03:00

PAPER PLAGUE: Chiang Wei-ling said he stepped down to protect his reputation and the ministry's from fallout over a peer review scam allegedly run by a local academic



Staff writer, with CNA

Minister of Education Chiang Wei-ling (蔣偉寧) resigned yesterday amid an uproar over his alleged connection to an academic who has had dozens of his papers retracted from an international journal due to suspected manipulation of the peer-review process.

- Winners not only take all but also become most corrupt especially in the STEM field which publish most and receive the highest grant.

NTU president to resign amid scandal

RESTORED Yang Pan-chyr said that National Taiwan University is a valuable asset and that he would resign to protect the reputation and achievements of the institution

By Sean Lin / Staff reporter



National Taiwan University President Yang Pan-chyr yesterday announces during a conference at the university that he will resign as president when his current term ends in June.

National Taiwan University (NTU) president Yang Pan-chyr (楊洋池) yesterday said he would resign after his term expires in June, because he does not want allegations of academic misconduct to continue be directed at the university in the wake of suspected breaches of academic integrity involving him and former NTU professor Kuo Min-liang (郭明良).

“I am the coauthor of some of the research papers being investigated, but I did not breach academic ethics and I was unaware of the issues in [Kuo’s]

NTU to fire two professors accused of academic fraud

By Sean Lin / Staff reporter



National Taiwan University vice president Kuo Tei-wei talks to reporters in Taipei yesterday as the university released investigation results into an academic fraud scandal.

Photo: Hsiao Yu-hsin, Taipei Times

National Taiwan University (NTU) yesterday released stage-two investigation results on an academic fraud scandal involving professor Kuo Min-liang (郭明良), which saw the university move to fire Kuo and professor Chang Cheng-chi (張正琪), while clearing NTU president Yang Pan-chyr (楊洋池), who cowrote four problematic papers published by Kuo's team.

Two internal investigation teams and an investigation committee comprising members from outside the institution found that Kuo's

research team presented a host of misleading images in six papers, of which two have

The on-line petition against the over-emphasis of SCI/SSCI in 2010--11

- 3,000 petitioners, 85% in the humanities and social sciences and 10% in science-related fields.
- The major demands of the petition have been echoed in various public forums and public-sponsored research findings.
- The debates over SSCI have continued to attract public awareness via national news coverage.
- Till mid-2012, top government agreed for the first time to review the SSCI issue.
- In 2012, revisions to the pro-SSCI funding policies and evaluation guidelines
- New system for multi-channel rank promotion scheme introduced by MOE

All count VS. Paper Only

- Thirty-three indicators for research performance are proposed for social sciences and humanities

Any way out about university ranking?

- Alternative University Rankings: The Cost-Efficient and sustainable university
- **Cost per student**
- NCCU is by far the most cost-efficient institution per student, nearly 75% of the next least costly university, Hitotsubashi Univ in Japan.
- The most costly institutions are the private universities in the US – this may reflect historic baggage such as large and costly estate; or the large-scale provision of facilities not related to either teaching or research; or it may reflect fees set to position the institution as a ‘luxury good’ (Harvard, LSE)

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Recent books:

Taiwan Education at the Crossroad (2012)

The SSCI Syndrome in Higher Education (2014)

Chinese Education Models in a Global Age (2016)

