

# Academic Culture in Transition: Measuring up for What Cause in Taiwan?

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Roundtable on University and Journal Rankings

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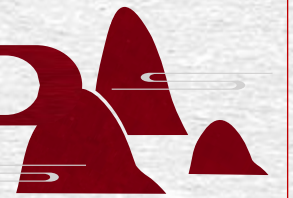
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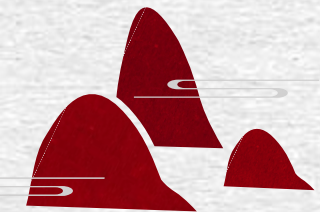


## Overview

- 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.



- The study aims to analyse how these higher education policies have affected academic culture.
- It compares the change in faculty publication profiles between two departments of a national university in Taiwan.
- Journal publication was recorded in 1993, 2003, and 2013 to examine how faculty research performance has transformed under world-class university rankings and global competition.
- In-depth interviews were conducted among senior faculty to gain insight into ranking competition over the last two decades.





# Research Findings

- The forces of globalization and world-class university rankings have affected faculty publication performance and priorities differently depending on discipline and research methodology orientation.
- Increasing gender disparity and generation gap have become evident.
- The “publish or perish” mentality or “SSCI Syndrome” has come to exist in some departments in Taiwan’s academia since 2003.

# Context: Why 'World-Class'?

\* Globalization



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

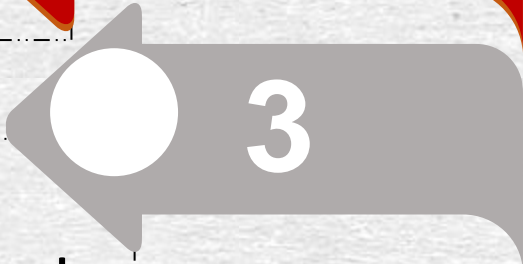
\*Internationalization



\* Research output is the key

\*Government

Preference for neo-liberal, market-based solutions



# ***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



# Short-term outcomes

- Selected universities gained in international reputation.
- Research publications rose by over 56% between 2008 and 2013 (World of Science, 2014).
- Academic impact rankings showed no improvement. (The US still dominated.)

| Overall Score | University Name  | Flag |
|---------------|--|------|
| 70            | National Taiwan University (NTU)                                   |      |
| 155           | National Tsing Hua University                                      |      |
| 182           | National Chiao Tung University                                     |      |
| 224           | National Cheng Kung University                                     |      |
| 260           | National Taiwan University of Science and Technology (Taiwan Tech) |      |
| 338           | National Yang Ming University                                      |      |
| 376           | National Taiwan Normal University                                  |      |
| 379           | National Sun Yat-sen University                                    |      |
| 397           | National Central University  |      |



# Research Findings

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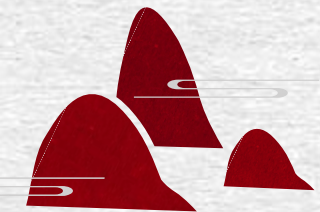
## 1. Different disciplines have different priorities for publication

- Education:
  - Faculty increasingly have quantitative backgrounds.
  - Papers on educational psychology, science education, and educational technology boost research output.
- Ethnography:
  - Interdisciplinary – difficulty in placing articles
  - Requirement for long periods of field work



## 2. Publication Trends by Department

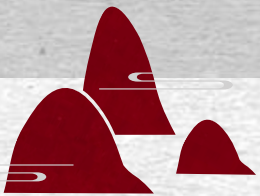
- More English papers in Dept. of Education after 2003.
- Ethnography faculty continued publishing primarily in Chinese after 2003 .
- Faculty with quantitative backgrounds published more than those with qualitative backgrounds.



# Trends in publication

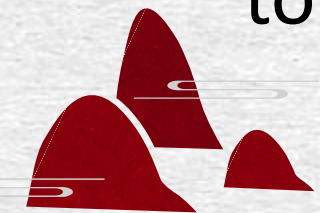
| Year | Ethnography* | Education* |
|------|--------------|------------|
| 1993 | 0.78         | 1.48       |
| 2003 | 0.78         | 1.67       |
| 2013 | 1.3          | 4.17       |

\*Average number of papers published per faculty member per year



# 3. Hiring and Promotion

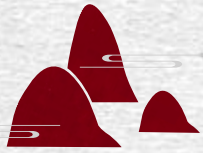
- Probation and evaluation systems rely heavily on research journal article publications.
- Promotion rates within these departments showed correlation with journal publication rates.
- Faculty hired under post-2001 terms (6-year probation) tend to prioritize journal publication.



# Unexpected Result...

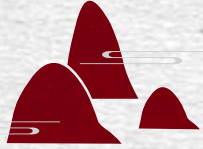
- Local relevance of research called into question
  - ‘Public intellectual’ role diminishing
- Themes selected are ‘global’ for publication reasons.
  - **‘Global audience’ is, in effect, journal editors – ‘gatekeeper effect.’**
- Publication in English less accessible for local audiences.
- English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





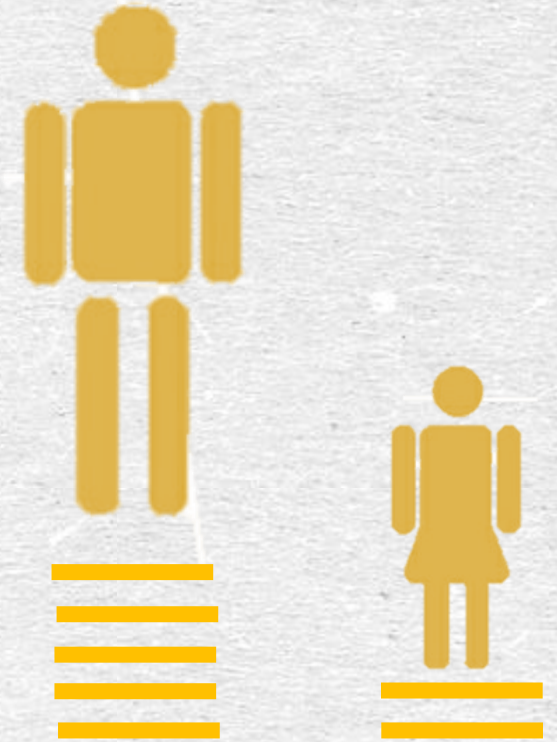
# New Gender Disparity – Promotion

- The new system of rewards based on journal publication has crippled the status of female faculty in Taiwan since the 2000s.
- Junior female faculty in social sciences and the humanities encounter even more barriers to promotion and publication.
- More gender disparity in ‘elite’ universities.



# New Gender Disparity – Academic positions

- 162 colleges and universities in Taiwan, only 14 headed by female presidents (2016)
- Percentage of female faculty at universities or colleges only slowly increasing (2007, 34.14%; 2014, 35.21%)
- More males than females received academic awards and honors at the institutional and national level.



- Women are concentrated in lower ranks.
- Promotion prospects limited by:
  - Social expectations for wives/mothers
  - Limited opportunity to network internationally as a result
  - Gender relations – “One of my colleagues considered refusing a promotion because she felt her husband would be angry with her for being away from the home too much.”



## Conclusion

- Journal publication is the number one academic task.
- Promotion heavily depends on publication in SSCI, SCI, TSSCI.
- Teaching and 'public intellectual' roles have become secondary.
- A 'winner takes all' environment amongst colleagues has emerged.



- Education's SSCI-relevant research output comes from a small number of staff.
- Research topics are geared to appeal to journal editors, not to be locally relevant.
- Ethnography's low publication rate and mainly-Chinese medium make them less vulnerable to pressure.
- Increasing gender disparity appears in Taiwan's academia.

**This presentation contains preliminary findings as part of the WUN project titled:**

*“Measuring Up: The Intended and Unintended Consequences of Global Competition and Metrics on Local Scholarship.”*

- For further information, please refer to the Special Issue of *Higher Education Policy* (Winter 2016).



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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)***



Thanks for **your** attention

感恩與感謝

