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Challenges to the work life of academics : the experience of a renowned university in the Chinese mainland

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Abstract

Under the major educational reform movement in the Chinese Mainland, which began in 1985, higher education was considered the most important apparatus for national development. The Ministry of Education initiated 'Project 985' to develop two top national universities into world-class universities. As part of this project to raise educational quality and academic standing, the Ministry of Education carried out a reform of the university personnel system. The reform aimed to launch a new system of employment practices based on performance and contract, with an emphasis on competition and rewards. This research focuses on the severe constraints academics at a sample university in China faced at the state, university and faculty level. First, at the state level, the state directly set the direction of academic research. Second, at the university level, the new employment reform was imposed using a top-down model. Most academics conformed to it but some employed a 'double bookkeeping' strategy. 'Administrative domination' also reflected a centralised approach at the university. Third, at the faculty level, a few academic-administrators held most of the decision making

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power. Academics urged the university to offer a more supportive environment for conducting genuine scholarship. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)