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Abstract

Diversity among institutions or, at least, institutional types, is a policy objective that most systems of higher education pursue although to different degrees. North American colleges and universities, for example, are among the most diverse in the world. In the East, Chinese universities have until recently tended to be highly homogeneous. At the same time, both systems are concerned about equity of access, the quality of educational opportunity, and the role of higher education in worldwide economic competition. Individual institutions, for a variety of reasons, ranging from accountability to the allocation of scarce resources, attempt to compare or 'benchmark' themselves against other institutions. Although diversification and benchmarking involve measurement, classification, and the selection of peers, they often work against one another. League tables and rankings, which are the most evident and accessible manifestations of benchmarking, tend to encourage isomorphism instead of diversification among universities. This irony becomes a particular problem when comparisons are attempted between Western and Eastern systems of higher education. This study is an effort to move

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beyond or at least refine benchmarking by devising a new paradigm based on peer selection. The study is a collaborative venture involving the University of Toronto, in Canada, and Tsinghua University in the People's Republic of China. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)