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**Abstract**

In China, the central government has released a series of key policy initiatives over the last twenty years to foster decentralisation of control over higher education, giving prominence to discourses of increased autonomy for both universities and academics. This article reports findings of an empirical study of changing autonomy in Chinese higher education and it focuses on the effects of these key policy developments in two case study universities. This research was part of a larger study of new power relationships emerging from changing policies on accountability and autonomy in Mainland China, Hong Kong and Singapore, located within a broader context of the impact of globalisation on higher education. The focus on the three regions was selected to begin to redress a Western hegemony in such research. The larger study is premised on the principle that globalisation is characterised by ongoing tensions between global commonalities and context-specific differences, and that it is important not to gloss over the complex and often contradictory national and local mediations of

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