The WCU Policy Rhetoric

- Building world-class universities has been the dream of generations of Chinese [...] not only for pride, but also for the future of China
- The government wants a national innovation system in which universities and research organisations attract the best minds to conduct world-class research, fuelling the innovation system with new knowledge and ideas
- Top level research to make Germany a more attractive research location
- Aalto University is born to be one of the leading institutions in the world [...] by 2020
- Place France among the highest ranking international universities

"Which" is a WCU?
The Long-held Assumption of WCU Policies' Value

A Critique of Existing Rankings

- Unspecified target groups
- Ignore diversity within institutions
- Narrow range of dimensions
  - Mainly traditional research and reputation
- Composite overall indicator
- League table
- Field and regional bias in citation databases
- Unspecified and volatile methodology

Characteristics of a WCU
Why WCU Policies?

- More investment in research
- More research output
- Better educated labour force
- Promote knowledge transfer

It is about being globally competitive as a system and improving national wellbeing
It is about making the higher education system better

Examples of Initiatives in Selected Countries

Germany
Excellence Initiative: €1.9 billion over 5 years over three funding tracks

China
211: Strengthen about 100 HEIs and key disciplinary areas as a national priority for the 21st century (€4.5 billion total)
985: Funding a few world class universities as a supplement to funds already covered by Project 211 (€1.37 billion in first stage)

Finland
Aalto: In addition to the core funding for the university: €700 million (2008-2010)

France
Operation Campus: Investments in universities to create ten world-class universities starting in 2007, investing around €2bn, encouraging mergers, stimulating international attraction and building critical mass

Reflecting on the Effects of WCU Policies

- World-class universities owe their status to high private paybacks of higher education and are thus very attractive
- Governments invest in WCU s, expecting high public returns and externalities
- In a global context

Do world-class universities make the higher education system better?

- HEIs may produce more outputs which benefit the nation (e.g. knowledge, infrastructures, talent etc.)
- WCU policies can change the relationship between HEIs within the system
- The policies have effects on the resources for other providers
Possible Spill-Over Effects on the System

- Increased exogenous resources
  - Additional staff, students and research funding from outside the country/ higher education system which spill-over to other higher education institutions
- Increased private endogenous resources
  - Resources that would have either not been spent in the country’s universities, or gone to other universities, go into the sector, which spill-over to other higher education institutions

Possible Spill-Over Effects on the System (II)

- More efficient use of public resources
- New products (e.g. Graduate School trajectories)
- Reputational benefits
  - All national universities benefit from a higher external awareness/reputation from the presence of one or more world-class institutions in the system

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<th>Public benefits of higher education</th>
<th>Framework Dimensions</th>
<th>More exogenous resources</th>
<th>More endogenous resources</th>
<th>System improvements</th>
<th>New products</th>
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A World-Class Higher Ed System?

We need an "all-encompassing quality"
- About horizontal diversity and pathways within the system
- About antecedent conditions
- Does money do it all?
- Does reputation do it all?
- About aligning optimally private and public returns of higher education

• Match student/program
• Access and success
• Close interaction teaching and research (both in academic and professional education)
• Must be internationally attractive

Therefore: Differentiation
• In structure (e.g. binarity)
• Profile (not only focus on research to be top-X ranked)
• Variety of provision

Different But Equal

Thank You for Your Attention!

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