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BETWEEN CULTURAL EXPERIENCE AND NEOLIBERALISM: TOWARDS A CRITICAL UNDERSTANDING OF SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS IN CHINA

Abstract:

This paper aims at enriching the discussions on the impact of national cultural experience and the neoliberal globalization in shaping the micro educational policies and practices. It specifically examined the case of the social sciences research ethics in the higher education sector in China. Through interviewing twenty faculty members of social sciences departments from fifteen higher educational institutions across mainland China, this study entails two major tasks: 1) to examine the role of cultural experiences and neoliberal forces of globalization in shaping the participants' perspectives and practices of research ethics? And, 2) to identify the tensions and challenges related to research ethics within the current higher education sector, and thereby to provide a critical understanding of the issue of social sciences research ethics in China. The findings of the study suggest that the faculty members' understandings of research ethics are heavily shaped by the national culture, the individual experience and most importantly, the neoliberal discourse in the form of national and institutional policies that emphasize the competitiveness and research productivity. The issue of research ethics in social sciences has not yet been put on the policy agenda as it is perceived as less urgent, even though all participants consider it as important. The findings highlight globalization as one of the most powerful driving forces behind China's effort to develop higher education. The higher education policies, as reflected from the interview data, have been tremendously affected by the neoliberal forces, which have simultaneously transformed the faculty members' understandings of their research work and research ethics in a subtle fashion.

Keywords:

research ethics, critical policy analysis, neoliberalism

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