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# **Inbreeding: local challenge, global problem**

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## Academic Inbreeding

*"Inbreeding" refers to the hiring of graduates to teach in the same department in which they obtained their training. It is commonly disapproved but widely practiced.*

Caplow and McGee (1958)  
*Academic Marketplace*

*[to hire it's own graduates] is natural but not wise*  
Charles Eliot (1908)



# Puzzles associated with inbreeding

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- Why some universities never hire their own graduates while others never take outsiders?
- What are organizational and academic consequences of hiring own graduates?
- Is there any significant difference between strategies, productivity and values for inbred and outbred faculty members?



# Inbreeding: academic and organizational consequences

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## Research

- No fresh air: local rules and local disciplines emerge and flourish
- Investment choice: what research projects to support?
- Biased research evaluation and inefficiency of peer-review mechanisms

## Teaching

- Path-dependency in course curriculum
- Replication of existing practices
- No signals of “something going wrong”

## Organizational culture and knowledge

- Weak links with external environment
- Organizational inertia
- Weak position in global academic game (rules and resources)



# Inbreeding: academic and organizational consequences

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Rich though controversial empirical data exists on:

- «Macro-evidence»: country-level inbreeding and productivity
- Inbreeding and “institutional productivity”
- Individual productivity
- Employment policy: inability to judge objectively



## Inbreeding: when positive?

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Top universities may have high greater percentage of inbred faculty

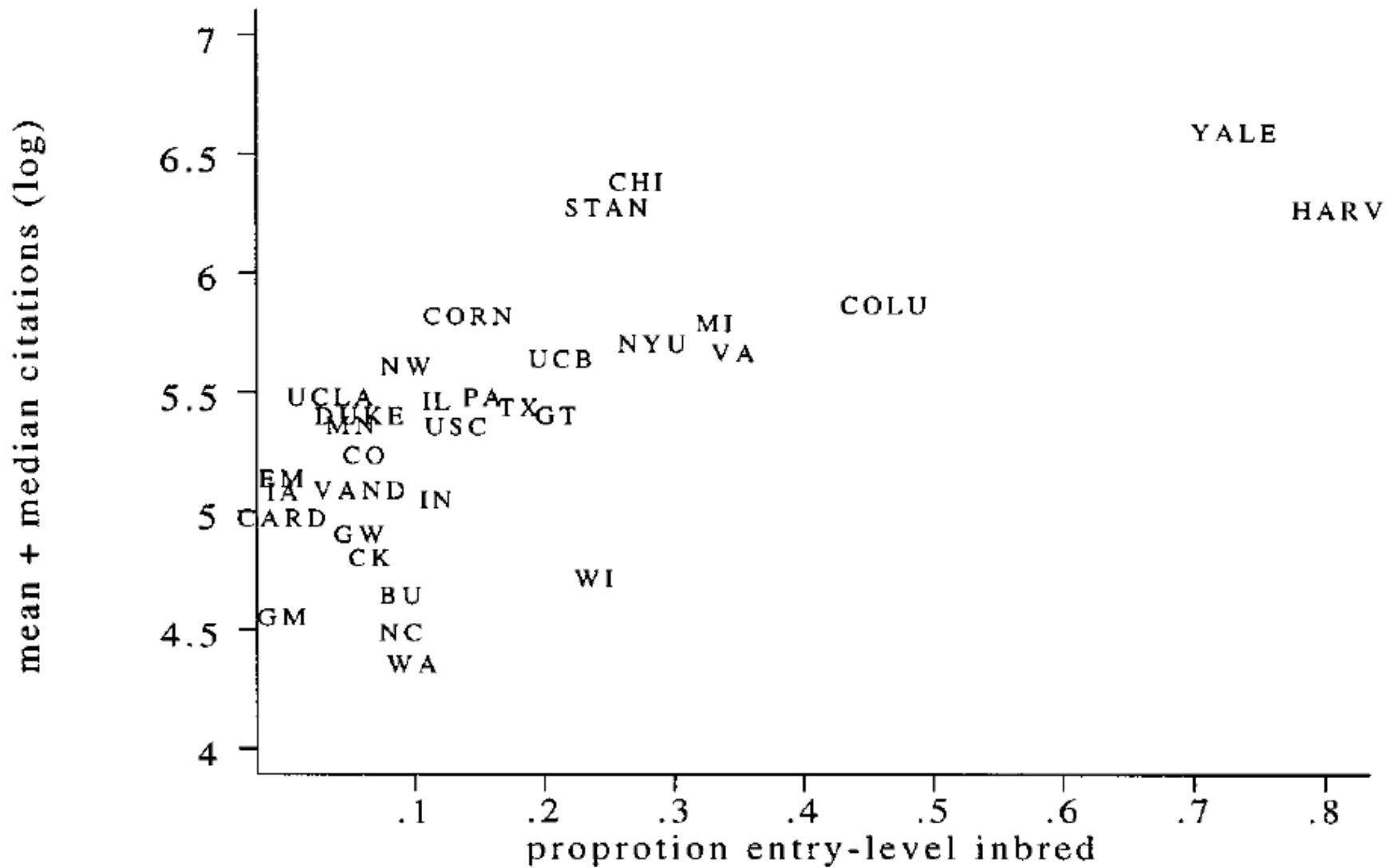
Phenomenon is consistent across countries:

- Yamanoi (2005) for Japan
- Santibanez et al (2005) for Mexico
- Burris (2004), Merrit and Reskin (1997) for USA

For example:

- Harvard Law School: 81%
- Yale Law School: 73%





Source: Eisenberg and Wells (2000)





# Reasons for inbreeding

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## External factors

- Weak national academic market
- Elite universities
- Geographic reasons

## Internal factors

- Financial constraints
- Teaching mission
- Culture, culture, culture...



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*“...we are accused of so called “teaching incest”. Unlike foreign universities (...) we do not have any other way. We prepare our faculty on our own. In that way, it is incest. For some reason it is considered as a bad practice, as a stagnation of blood. Probably, this is correct, but do we have any other way? If it was really possible to conduct a competition and afterwards choose from hundreds of applicants, we would rather do that. However, it is impossible in our country. Economic, financial conditions of the university's life do not allow doing it now. Therefore, it has to be forgotten; if we follow that route, we will have no teachers.”*

[Russian expert, vice-rector at state medical academy]



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*“First of all, our selection [of own students] represents the continuity of the scientific school. We have a very narrow, deep focus, a competitive department. Therefore, at the end, we are interested in: first, give them a job; second, a scientific career, for our people, because there is an institutional soul; third, assure a continuity of the scientific school.”*

[Russian expert, vice-rector, director of research institute,  
chair head at federal university]



# Inbreeding project

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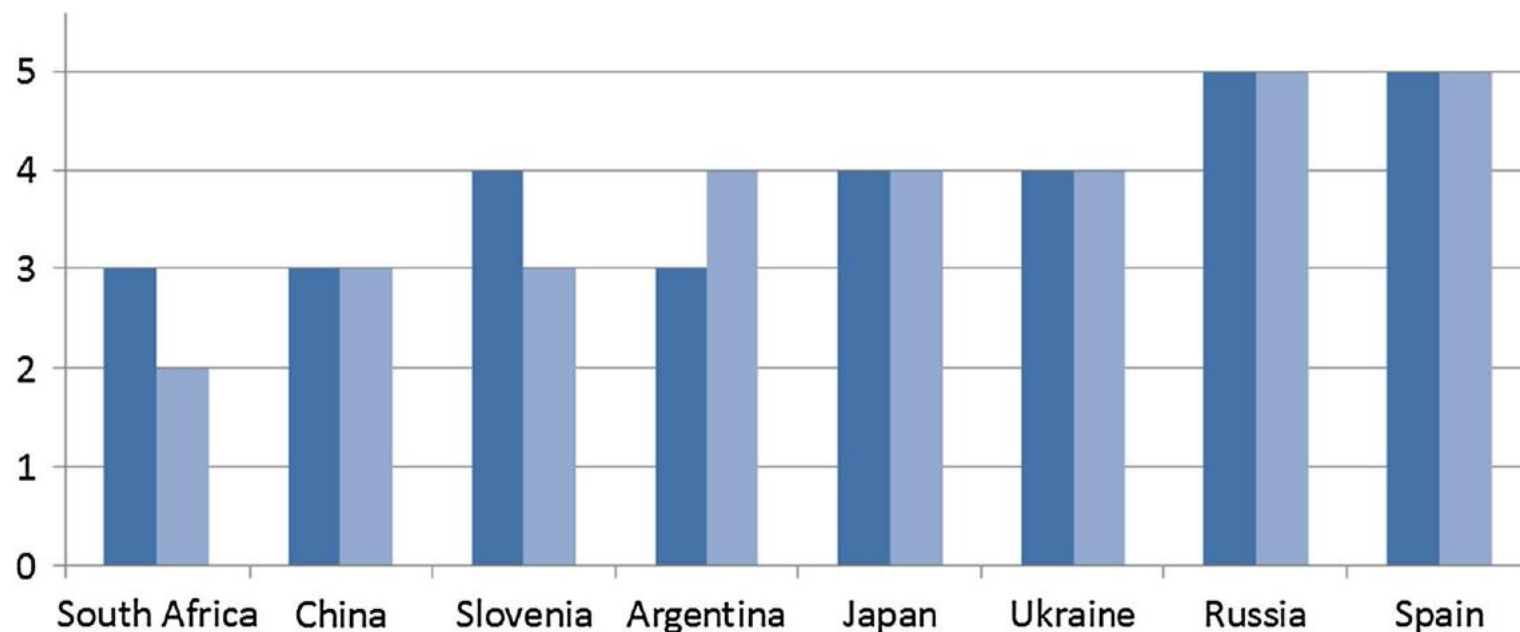
8 countries with high level of inbreeding in university sector:

- Argentina
- China
- Japan
- Russia
- Slovenia
- Spain
- South Africa
- Ukraine



# Degree of academic immobility

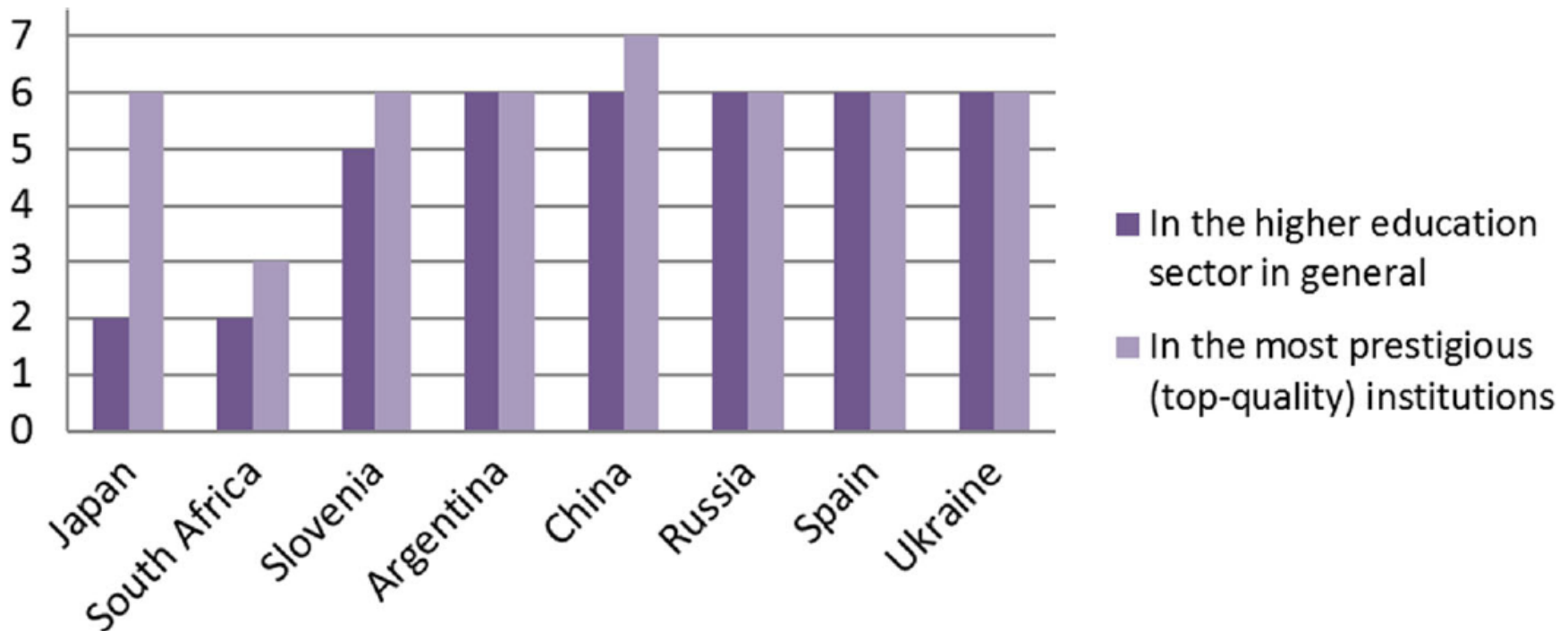
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- A single-university career (not necessarily at an institution where a person got the highest degree)
- Getting the first academic position at the university where the person received their highest degree

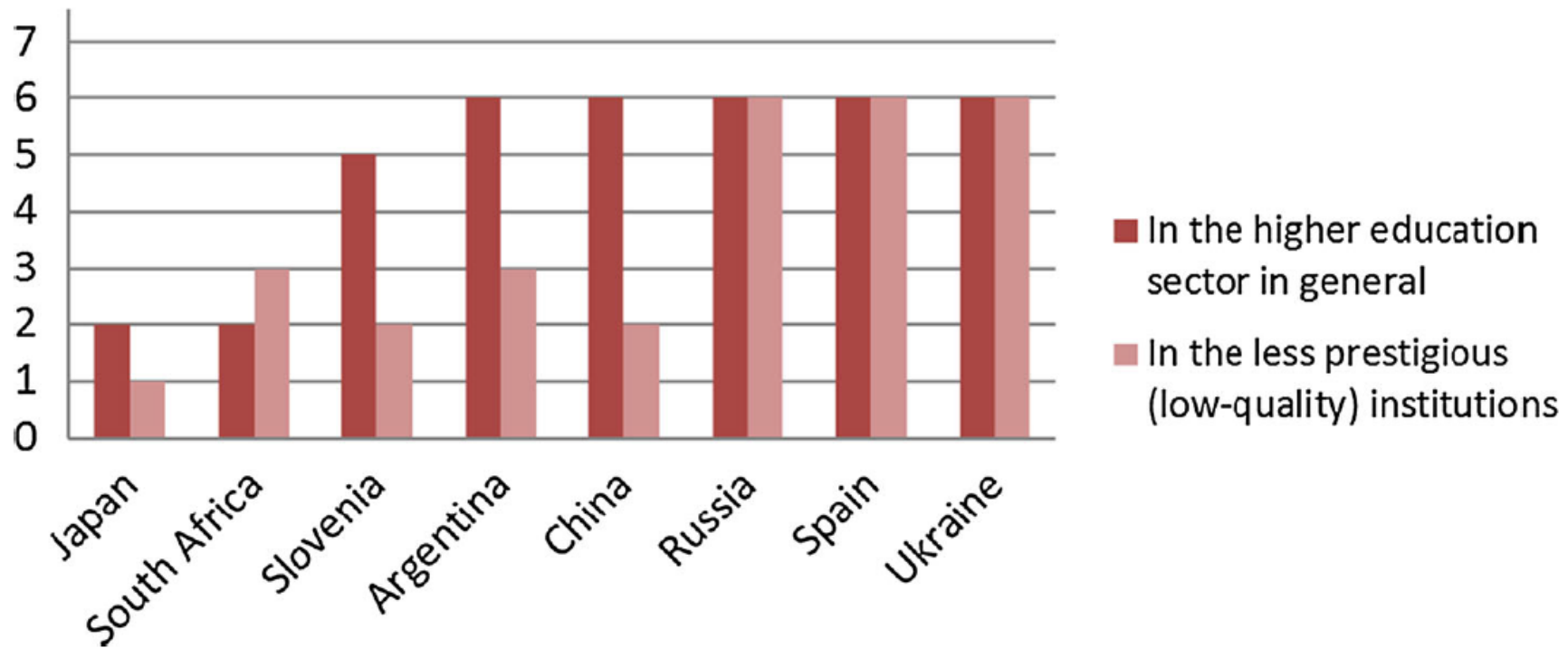


## Level of inbreeding in the higher education system, on average versus within the most prestigious (top-quality) universities



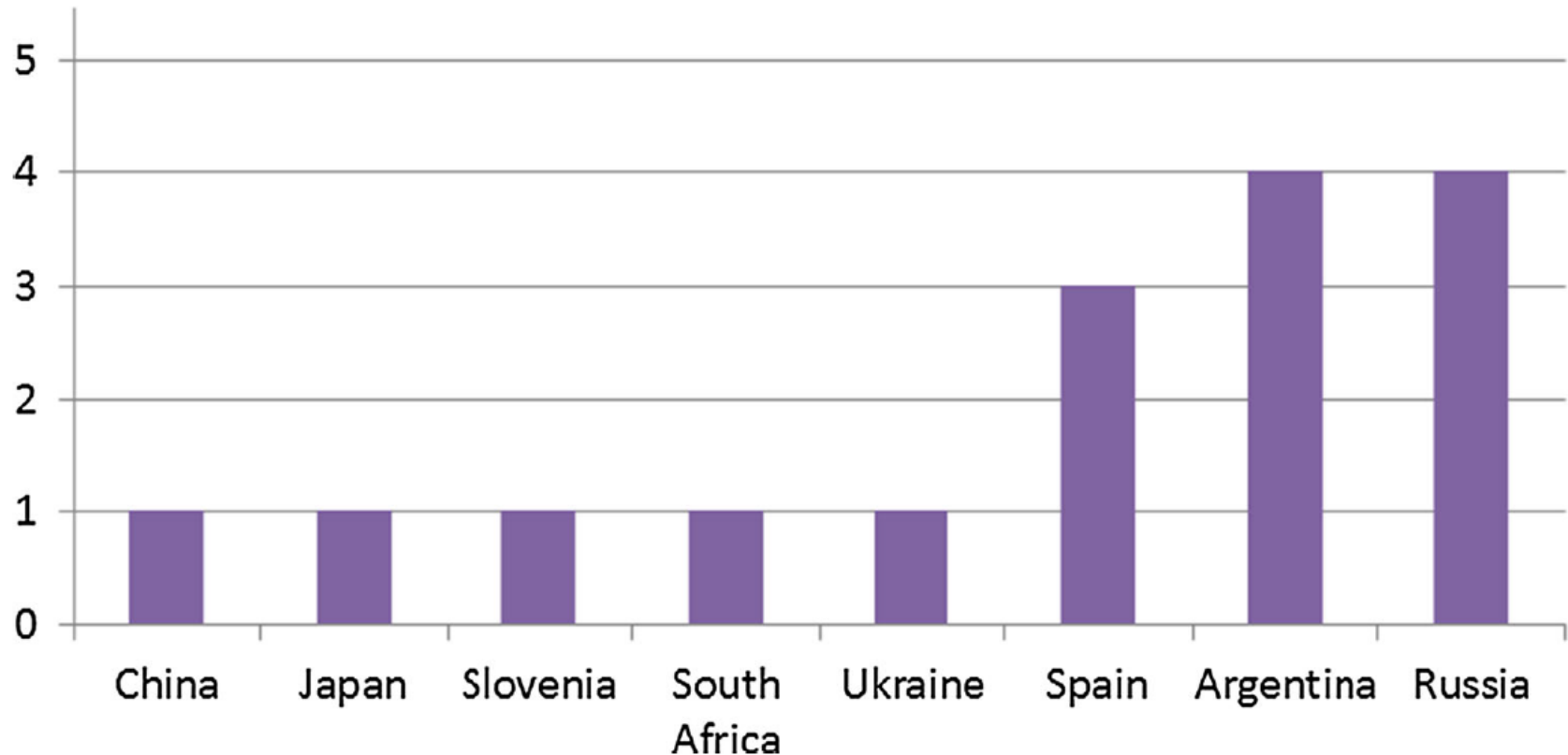
# Level of inbreeding in the higher education system, on average versus within low-quality universities

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## Reasons for academic inbreeding: uncompetitive earnings in academia

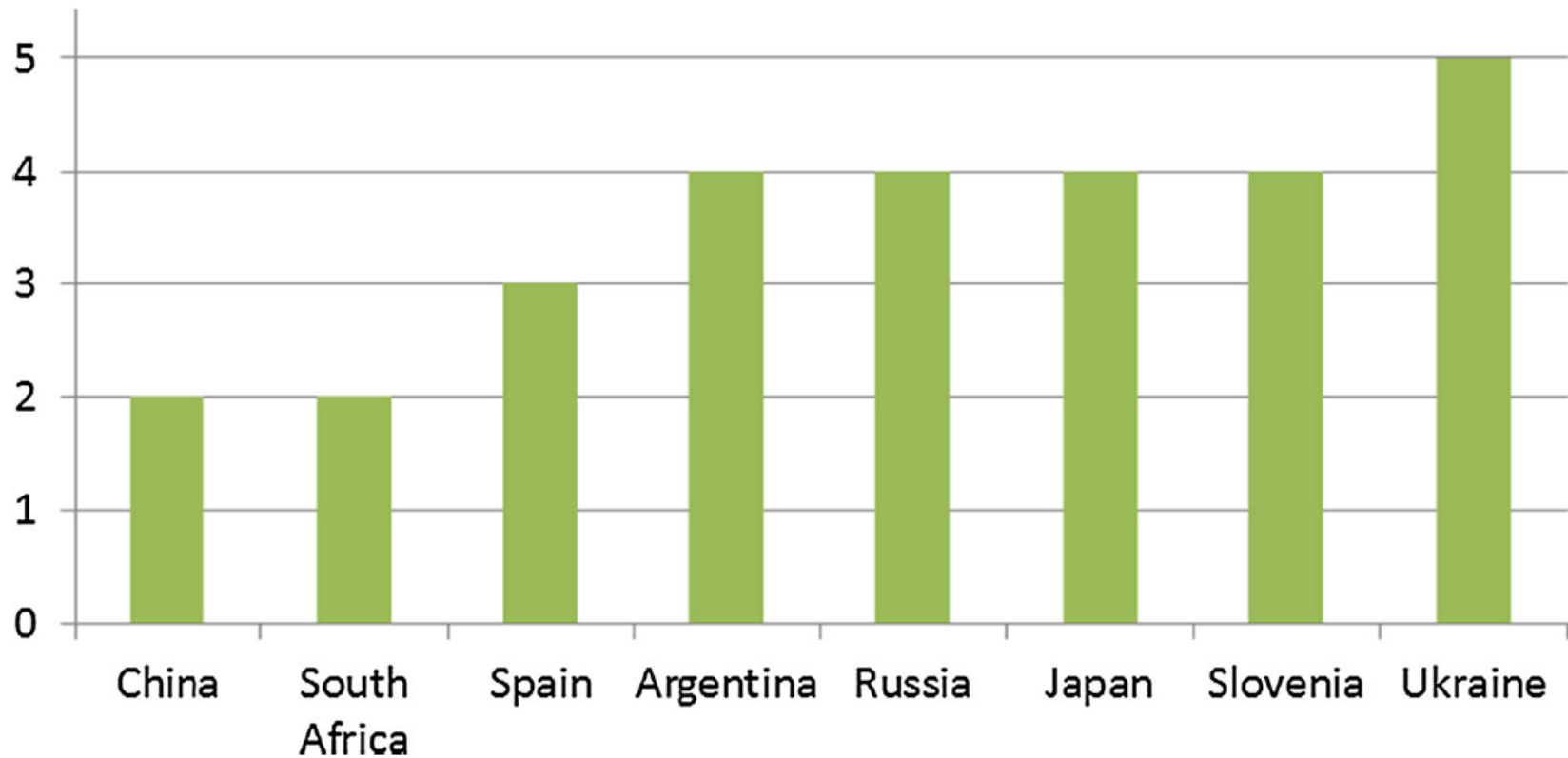
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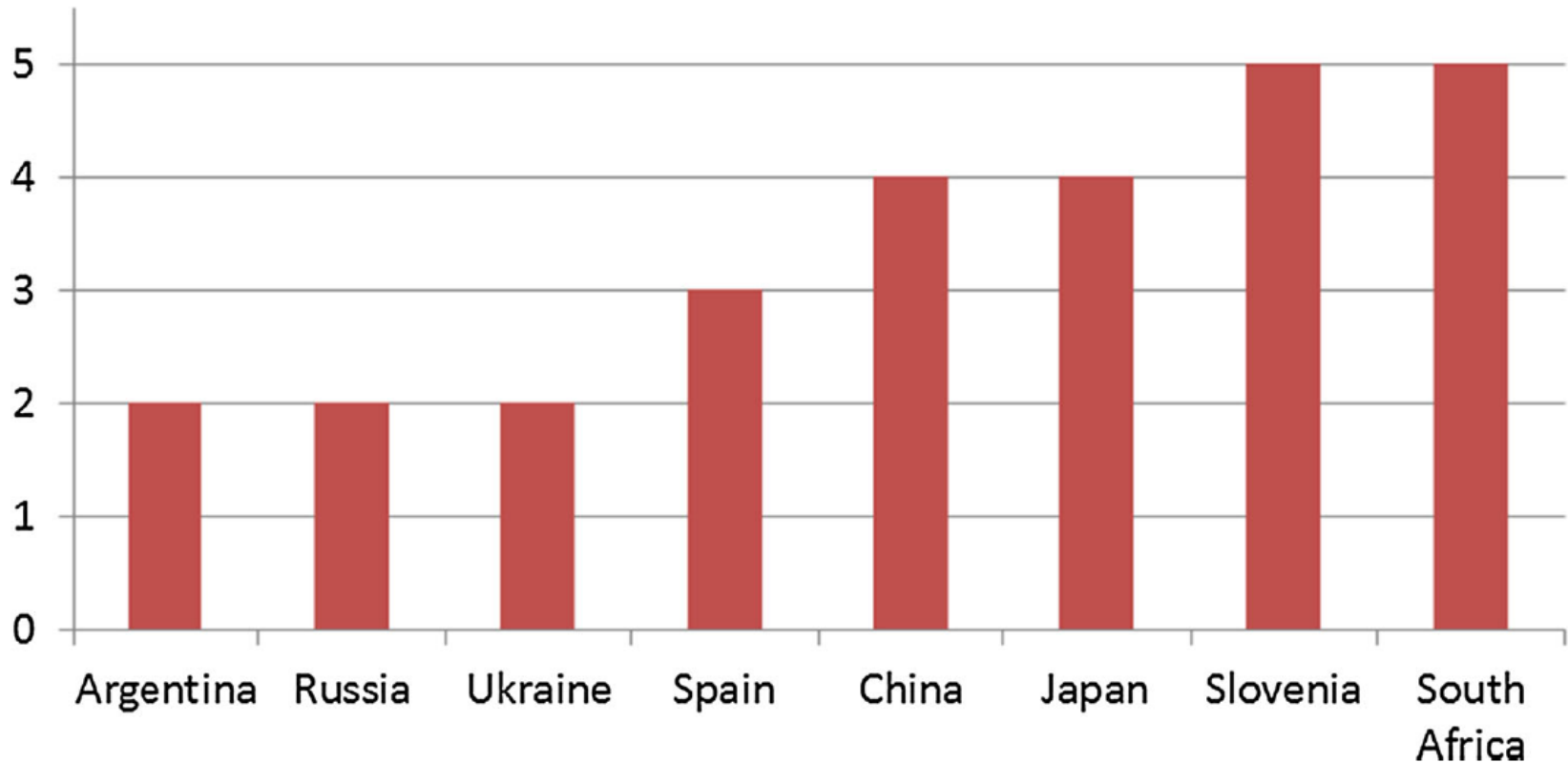
# Reasons for academic inbreeding: importance of social ties

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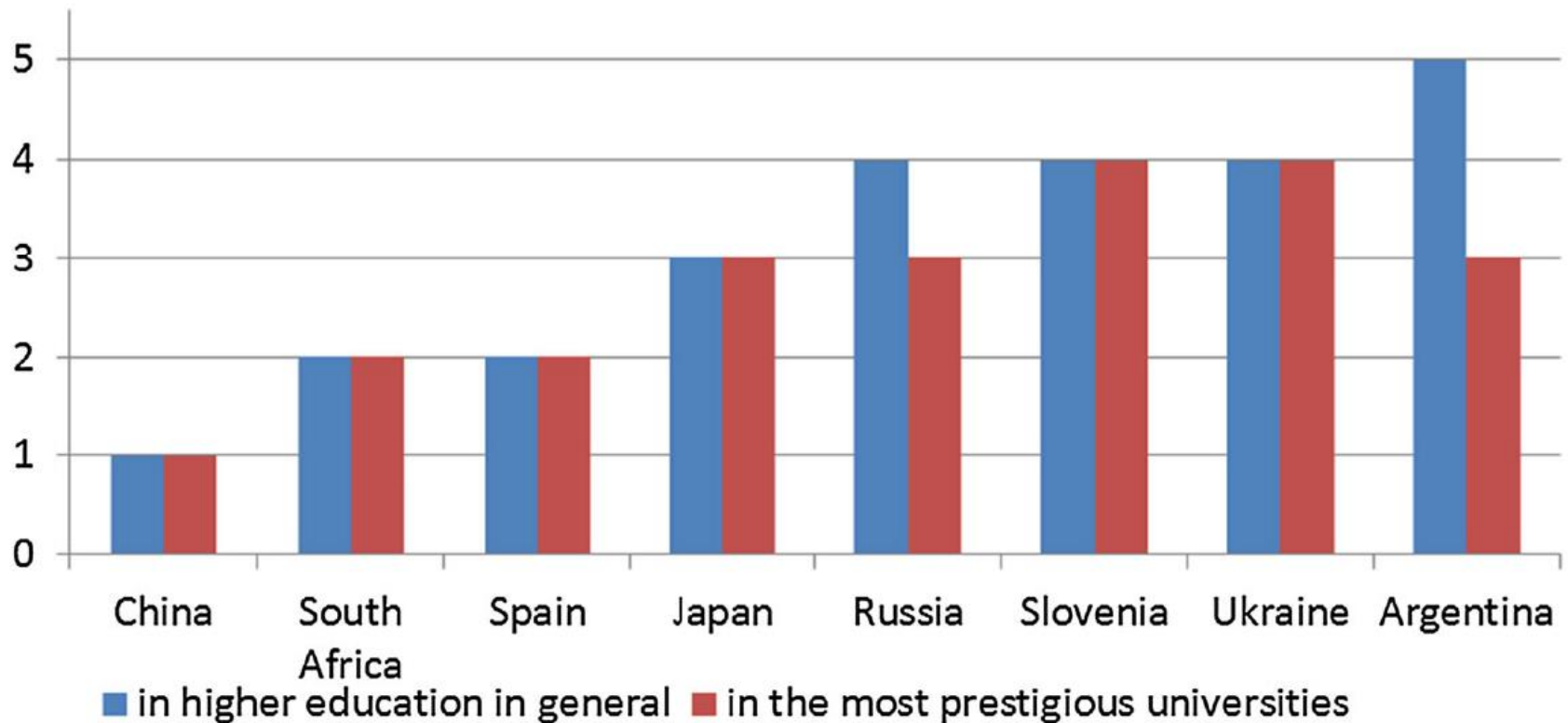


# Reasons for academic inbreeding: preference is shown to inbred candidates only when they are more competent than other candidates

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## Importance of various factors in faculty hiring decisions: the job applicant is a graduate of the hiring university



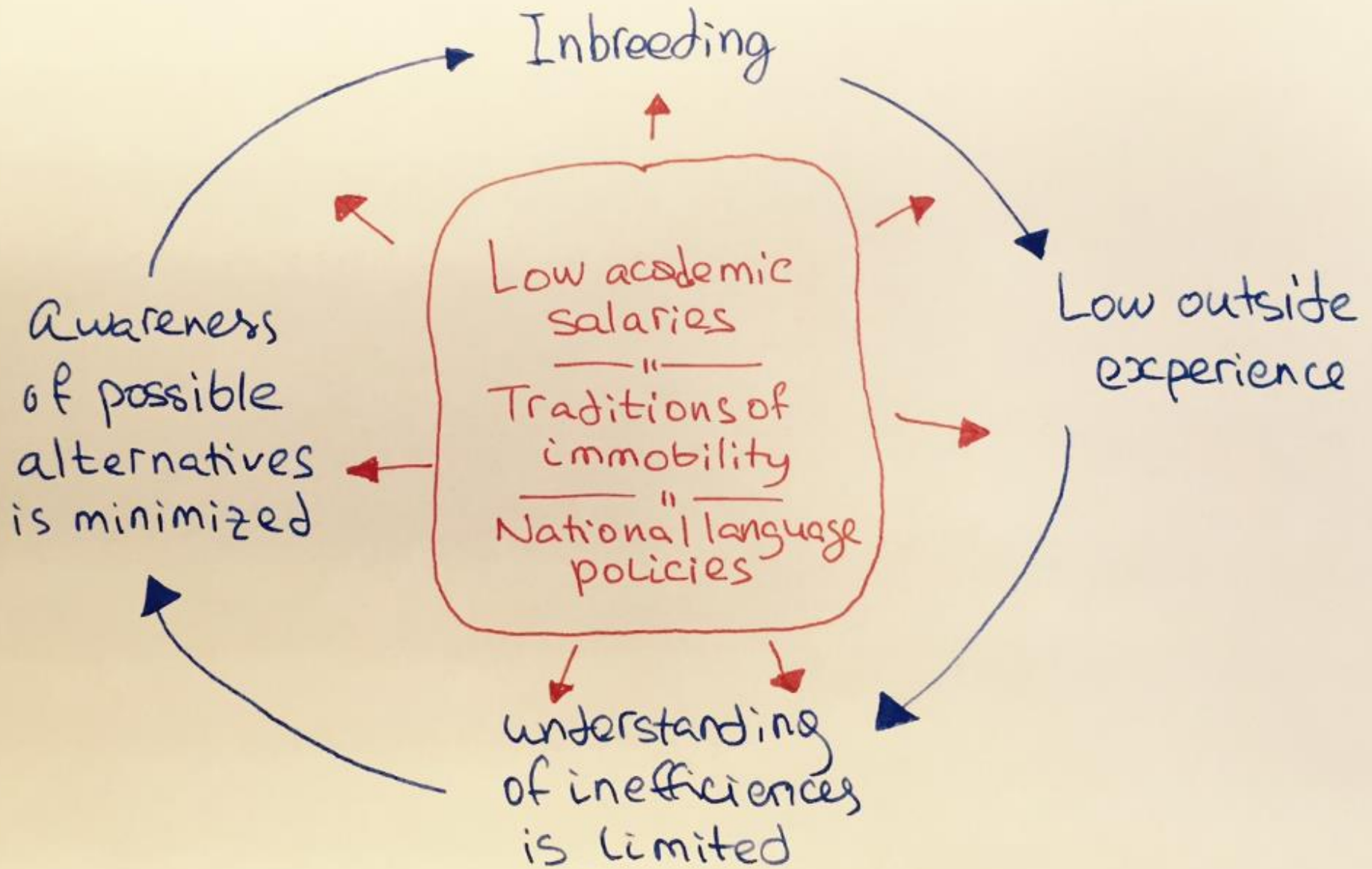
# Gap between theory and practice

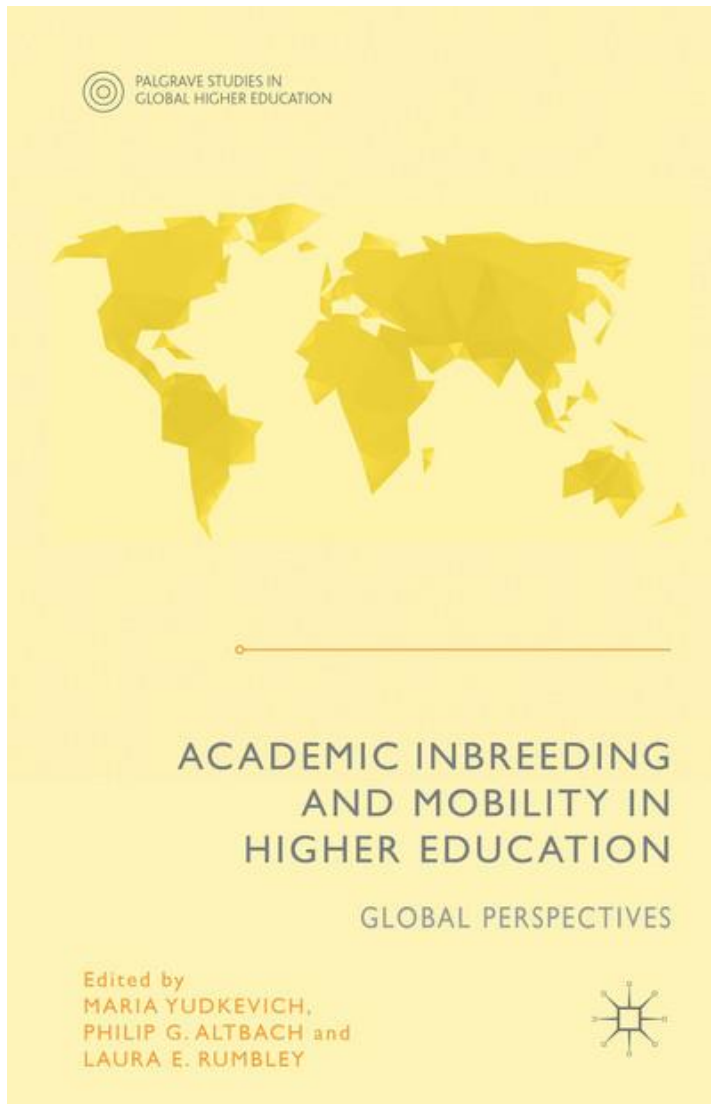
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**Table 1** National higher education experts' opinions on formal procedures versus real practices [How often an open competition is a “fiction” (1—not at all often, 5—very often)]

	Argentina	China	Japan	Russia	Slovenia	South Africa	Spain	Ukraine
Please indicate how often an open competition is a “fiction”	4	1	3	5	5	1	4	4







## For further reading:

*Academic Inbreeding and Mobility in Higher Education. Global Perspectives* / Ed. by Maria Yudkevich, P. G. Altbach, L. E. Rumbley. Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

Altbach P., Yudkevich M. M., Rumbley L. E. Academic inbreeding: local challenge, global problem // *Asia Pacific Education Review*. 2015. Vol. 16. No. 3. P. 317-330.



# Stable cultural characteristics?

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## US universities

- Beginning of XX-th century: high level of inbreeding
- Year 1919: 64% of Harvard faculty – got PhD degree at Harvard
- Today: 20% on average at research universities



# University systems at some stage of development

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Academic inbreeding as an integrant part of the development process of any higher education system;

Part of an institutional strategy to overcome geographic and financial handicaps related to academic recruitment

Positively discrimination of non-inbred faculty

- Higher salaries
- Lower teaching loads

Allows to obtain a competitive position at the academic market





# The ease of finding academic employment

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**16-20 ноября 2015 года – НИУ ВШЭ, Москва, Россия.**

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