

To facilitate such transformation, the MoE initiated a project in 2013 that aims to introduce the institutional fabric of European-originated applied type of universities to the Chinese system and supported the founding of a national alliance of such institutions. Given that the type of institution is new to higher education policymakers and practitioners in China, this alliance serves as a hub for drawing on the European experience and exploring their niches on Chinese soil. Its membership quickly grew to more than 150 local universities. This kind of “collective actions” was observed even earlier at the local level. For instance, in the province of Anhui, in central China, 16 universities (out of a total of 33 located in the province) formed a similar consortium in 2008, helping one another with absorbing the ideas, experiences, and functions of the German *Fachhochschule* into their own operations. Now a consensus has been formed among these newly founded universities at the local level—that they need to follow a path alternative to conventional universities and focus on curricular and program offerings in applied areas. They see this path as the solution to addressing their deficiency in competitiveness in attracting students and preparing their employability.

AN APPLIED UNIVERSITY SECTOR EMERGING IN CHINA

It appears that China is on the shift toward a binary higher education system that extends to the university level, from the current unitary and stratified one where all institutions are governed and measured according to one single set of criteria. While it is now premature, to state a binary system has already taken shape in Chinese higher education; and there is further evidence that supports such a speculation. The MoE stipulates that new universities are entitled to apply for offering advanced degree programs, after eight years of operating of undergraduate programs. Now, a few dozen of such universities are starting to offer master’s degree programs—all with clear relevance to local needs—and even professional doctoral programs. Lately, the MoE launched a pilot project, for a designated period from 2012 to 2017, which allows new universities to offer master’s and doctoral degree programs even before they fulfill the minimum years of operating undergraduate programs—as long as they can prove that their advanced degree programs are explicitly geared toward meeting the specific needs of the local, regional, and national development. Most recently, a MoE vice minister disclosed on March 22, 2014 that China would soon adopt dual track selection of university entrants, one for academic-focused universities, and the other for applied-type institutions. She further revealed that the MoE had prepared to convert around 600 local universities into those of applied sciences.

Thus, it is likely that Chinese higher education will have two parallel and discrete sectors. One will comprise

the national, seminational, and those local universities that are included in Project 211, as well as a few dozen traditional local universities. They are no more than 500 in total and provide a broad array of programs in the established disciplines and professions and increasingly in liberal arts and general education. They are academic and “cosmopolitan” in their outlook and, as such, support their academic staff to conduct intensive research and train the next generation of researchers. Less selective institutions will consist of the new universities, higher vocational colleges and private institutions. It is huge in size, incorporating close to 2,000 universities and colleges, which are local and teaching and service oriented. If they conduct any research, that exists as applied research. Limited upward mobility is now possible within the latter. A certain proportion of college graduates is allowed to continue to study in local universities, through participating in a competitive examination. With a shrinking age cohort in Chinese population, such mobility is expected to be enlarged and enhanced in the next decade. However, effective from 2008, all Projects 985 and 211 universities are not permitted to take college graduates through this articulation arrangement.

This shift helps diversify the interpretation of higher education quality and contributes to its relevance, while improving equity by providing alternative paths. This is of particular significance in a system like China’s, which has a strong tradition of meritocracy and elitism in higher education that emphasizes a single dimension for assessing merit and tends to vertically divide all higher education institutions. On the other hand, it remains to be tested if the same tradition of meritocracy and elitism could ultimately drive changes back in the academic direction (i.e., academic drift). Nonetheless, however, from the early 1950 to the early 1980s, when Chinese higher education was Sovietized, polytechnic universities were indeed granted high status in the system. ■

Graduate Education in Malaysia and Thailand

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Across Asia, higher education enrollment has experienced explosive growth over the last two decades, from 20 million in 1980 to 84 million students in 2011. To serve this growing enrollment, graduate programs have needed to expand, both to supply more instructors and to upgrade existing instructors' qualifications, in cases when unqualified instructors were hired to teach in response to increasing undergraduates. The expansion of graduate education has translated into positive outcomes. In the Philippines in 2002, for instance, only about 8 percent of faculty members in higher education institutions had doctoral degrees, with another 26 percent holding a master's degree. In 2012, the shares have increased to 13 percent and 41 percent, respectively.

In Malaysia and Thailand, the governments believe that investing in graduate education contributes to national economic development.

From the perspectives of many governments, expanding graduate education has an attractive secondary benefit. Many governments see universities as centers of research that will yield positive economic returns to the country. University research is typically done at the graduate level. Therefore, expanding graduate education is viewed as a means of increasing economic competitiveness of the country.

Higher Education in Asia: Expanding Out, Expanding Up, recently published by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, examines the dynamics associated with the expansion of graduate education, with a particular focus on middle-income countries in Southeast Asia. Included in the report is a case study of Malaysia and Thailand, conducted to elaborate the reasons that governments and universities have been expanding their graduate programs and the impacts of that expansion. The case study is based on interviews with senior administrators and faculty members in selected public research universities, officers in the Ministry of Education, and international organizations in the region.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

In Malaysia and Thailand, the governments believe that investing in graduate education contributes to national economic development. The dynamics of Malaysian interviewees are that a substantial investment in education will build an educated workforce. The evidence of an educated workforce will attract international investment, which will boost national economic development. For this investment in

graduate education to yield the expected outcomes, top universities not only need to be good but must be recognized effective internationally. International university rankings were viewed by many interviewees as a way to earn this international attention and respect.

DESIGNATED RESEARCH UNIVERSITIES

Recent policies designating top-tier universities as research universities and increasing funding for university research activities exemplify the value governments are placing on expanding graduate education. In Malaysia, graduate enrollment has increased by 400 percent over the last decade, and this increase reflects the government's high priority in offering graduate education. The government aims to enhance indigenous research capability and reduce reliance on industrial research, conducted by foreign companies. To support this priority, the government has been generous in providing inputs into graduate education. In 2008 and 2009, the government designated five research universities, and these universities received an increase in public funding by 70 percent, compared with the amount in the previous year.

Similarly, graduate enrollment in Thailand has grown by 300 percent since a decade ago. One reason is the government's belief that Thailand's competitiveness in research is a significant indicator of the production and quality of human resources of this country. To this end, in 2009 the Ministry of Education initiated the National Research Universities Project with an additional 12 billion baht (US\$370 million). Currently, nine universities are selected in this project. These research universities are expected to achieve higher world university rankings.

UNIVERSITY RANKINGS

Both government officers and university personnel are concerned about their university's placement in international rankings. This thinking can be summed by an analogy expressed by a Malaysian interviewee: The performance of a nation's football team in an international competition tends to be the basis on which observers judge the football prowess of the entire country. If the national team does well, the presumption is that there is wider football strength in the country. Fair or not, the image of the whole country is usually based on the perception of a few. It is the same in higher education. International observers judge a higher education system on the basis of a country's leading institutions.

In Thailand, university personnel took a somewhat more benign view. They also sought high international rankings for their universities. However, the cost of raising their rankings could get in the way of other ends that they valued. Rankings are important, but relevance of universities to Thai society is also important.

PUBLICATIONS AS THE ROUTE TO HIGH RANKINGS

Since the publication rate is a key ingredient across most international university ranking systems, pushing faculty members to publish in top-tier international journals was viewed as an important strategy to high rankings. In Malaysia's research universities, the pressure to publish in top-tier international journals is intense. Universities have sought to raise publication rates by modifying accountability and incentive systems. The government, working through the universities, has introduced a system of key performance indicators, aimed at specifying the level of productivity—number of publications, amount of teaching, grants and public services—expected of each faculty member.

Research universities in Thailand also emphasize publications in top-tier international journals but with more nuance. Some faculty members are concerned that if they publish in top-tier journals in English language, the results will be largely inaccessible to the wider Thai society, most of whom do not understand English. There was a strong view that it was important for universities to give back to Thai society. Moreover, a frequent observation was that some faculty members may be less comfortable writing in English language at the level required for top-tier international journals.

Graduate students are viewed as important contributors to publications, both as they assist in conducting faculty members' research and as they publish as part of their graduate program requirements. In Malaysia and Thailand, PhD students in selective universities are required to publish their research in journals as a condition of graduation. Perceiving graduate students being valuable to help move their institutions up in university rankings, research universities involved in this study are in the process of reducing their undergraduate enrollment—while increasing their graduate enrollment, with a target ratio of 1:1 for undergraduates to graduates.

In summary, in both Malaysia and Thailand, the initial rationale for expanding graduate education was to provide qualified instructional staff to serve expanding undergraduate enrollment. In both countries, this rationale was eclipsed, to a large extent, by the view that graduate education would help fuel national economic development. The focus on economic development triggered an intensified emphasis on universities placing high in international rankings, which led to pressure for more research. This pressure led some faculty members to focus more of their time and energy on research, sometimes at the expense of their teaching. In short, "expanding up" has changed organizational dynamics and the nature of faculty work in important ways. ■

The Unified State Exam in Russia: Problems and Perspectives

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Russian universities have undergone two significant changes since the collapse of the Soviet Union: the dramatic cuts in state financial support that accompanied the adoption of a market economy and integration into the European higher education system through the Bologna process. Both reforms remain incomplete. Universities are still dependent on the state. There are more universities than necessary, and the level of education they offer is sometimes questionable. Corruption in many forms and in large volumes in the university admissions process and during university studies is the other challenge, with which many universities still have to deal.

CORRUPTION IN UNIVERSITY ADMISSIONS

The university admissions process has been one of the most problematic issues in Russian higher education in terms of corruption. Until 2009, each university in Russia held its own entrance examination. The level of corruption in this area was the highest of all kinds of corruption in education. By 2004, it had reached 10.7 billion rubles (US\$455 million) per year. In order to solve this problem, university admission is now awarded on the basis of the EGE (Edinyi Gosudarstvennyi Eksamen—Unified State Exam) tests that serve as both a school final examination and for university entrance. The EGE gives potential students the opportunity to apply to several universities simultaneously, which had not been possible before. With the EGE replacing the previous entrance examinations, there is no longer a need to visit a university during the application process and spend a few weeks on campus—expenditures that not all families could afford. Now, however, corruption has moved largely from the universities to other areas—including the processes responsible for conducting the EGE itself.

PUBLIC OPINION AND EMPIRICAL RESULTS

The sociological surveys conducted regularly by the Levada Center, one of the best-known Russian opinion research institutes, show that a majority of respondents believe that,