

the intensive competition between them. There are now seven universities in Hang Kong that offer various qualifications in education-related disciplines and teacher education. There are also two other tertiary institutions offering qualifications in education: the newly restructured **Institute of Education** and the Open Learning Institute. Singapore has two fully fledged universities, and only one of these offers teacher education degrees; however, like Hang Koug, education degrees are also offered by the Singapore equivalent of the Open Learning Institute. To gain research and operational **funds**, status, and the best students, Hang Kong institutions must compete not only with each other but also with an increasing number of international universities. This has contributed to a shifting of the academic culture toward productivity and increased quality of teaching. The picture in Singapore is quite different. Internally, the Singaporean institution has a near monopoly and has yet to feel the bite of competition in attracting students and funding, teaching quality, and research productivity. Put simply, the lack of competition and subsequent **lesser** value placed on measurable outputs **minimizes** the pressure on Singaporean academics, creating a more comfortable place to work.

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Perhaps a deeper factor influencing the shape of the academic culture is that Hang Kong remains a British colony and, as such, more directly inherits trends and policies experienced in the United Kingdom. The considerable restructuring and production emphasis experienced in U.K. higher education are reflected in the policies and structures in Hang Kong, despite differences in economic conditions. Singapore, on the other hand, although an ex-British colony, appears to have moved beyond direct or overt British policy influence and to have set more of its own direction.

These differences are indicative only of the diverse academic cultures in Hang Kong and Singapore. There are, of course, others that we have not touched upon, such as language, bureaucracy, collegiality, and deeper cultural practices related to conflict resolution. There are also similarities. Both cultures, for example, have in place a system of confidential staff appraisals in which the heads of de-

partment write reports on tenured staff with regard to their productivity, teaching, and so on. These reports go into confidential files that are not accessible or shared with the staff member involved. Equally, education, as a discipline, has a rather low status in both countries when compared to hard science faculties. Both academic cultures have strong service traditions and relatively tight links with the **ministry** of education.

From **our** perspective, the academic working culture in both countries offers different **types** of reward and opportunity, and success is largely determined by the ability of the individual academician to recognize and work within the parameters of the specific cultural context. In this respect, the academic cultures in Singapore and Hang Kong, while differentiated, share many similarities with academic cultures in the West.

#### NOTE

1. For a discussion of some of the issues **surrounding** research productivity in Hang Kong, see K.K. Ho, "The Measurement of Publication **Outputs** in Six Universities in Hong Kong," *Educational Research Journal* 11, no. 1 (1996):38-44.

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## The Professor and the *Sensei*: Faculty Roles in the United States and Japan

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**S**urvey data collected by the Carnegie Foundation in its comparative study of the academic profession in 15 countries indicate some differences and similarities in the activities, preferences, and productivity of faculty in Japan and the United States. These comparisons provide a unique lens through which to view the relationship between faculty culture and national culture.

Faculty in the United States are more likely to work in a research university and more likely to have a doctoral degree than are faculty in Japan. Yet although their total workloads are roughly comparable, Japanese faculty spend 50 percent more time on research, are much more likely to have interests primarily or leaning to research, and publish almost twice as frequently as their U.S. counterparts. How can these differences between Japanese and U.S. faculty be explained?

In prewar Japan there were many kinds of postsecondary institutions. However, only a small number were identified as universities and were authorized by the government to conduct research. Nonuniversities were defined solely as teaching institutions, and their faculty were not considered to be members of the academic profession. After the war, all higher education institutions gained equal legal status and were given responsibility for research as well as teaching. The new institutions tended to follow the patterns of the older prestigious universities. In Japan, *scholarship* is for universities, *teaching* is for schools, so teaching is less prestigious than research. To be a member of the academic profession is to do research.

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Although the publication of research is a central element of the professional role in Japan, the meanings of both “research” and “publication” may differ from those in the United States. One major difference is that these activities in Japan for the most part take place outside the framework of peer review. Peer review in Japan is not only virtually nonexistent but for many perhaps also virtually inconceivable. Japanese faculty have many of their articles automatically accepted in their own university journals, present unjuried papers at professional association meetings, and may even publish their own classroom materials as books. Why is peer review not widely practiced? Among other things, the nature of Japanese culture makes it difficult, if not impossible, for a junior faculty member to criticize the work of someone who is senior. It is not merely that an unhappy senior faculty member in Japan (as in the United States) could have a major impact on a career of a junior faculty member, but rather both junior and senior faculty would find such assessments to be embarrassing, inappropriate, and disrespectful. In addition, the Japanese emphasis on norms of equality, avoiding conflict, and maintaining the status of all members who have been admitted to the group prevents members of the group from criticizing the work of another member. Japanese are more likely to base publication decisions on a logic of fairness than a logic of quality. Fairness provides equal opportunities for all who choose to participate, requires the making of no invidious comparisons, maintains harmony, and saves face.

A number of other factors distinguish faculty expectations and careers in Japan from those in the United States.

Each reflects a cultural reluctance in Japan to engage in the kinds of critical assessment on which the U.S. academic system is presumed to depend. The most obvious examples include the appointment of almost all faculty to immediate tenure, appointment of many faculty to their positions through sponsorship rather than contest, and the lack of institutional review of faculty teaching or research activities.

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It would be a caricature to say that the U.S. culture values individualism, assertiveness, heterogeneity, suspicion of authority, and commitment to an ideal-related ideology, while Japanese culture values group identification, harmony, homogeneity, respect for authority, and a commitment to an other-related ideology. Nevertheless, these tendencies are clearly present, and they have led the academic profession in somewhat different directions in the two countries. In the United States the accuracy-cohesion trade-off is likely to be made in favor of accuracy because institutional legitimacy depends on being seen as a producer of valid knowledge.

But in Japan, institutional legitimacy depends more on the linkages universities forge with employers and governmental agencies, and the networks that scholars establish with other social institutions and between themselves, than on their contributions to knowledge. The accuracy-cohesion trade-off is thus more likely to favor cohesion because it legitimates institutions as a producer of socialized graduates able to assume their proper role in Japanese society. Faculty must publish and attend academic meetings to conform to the expectation of the professional culture, but creating valid knowledge may sometimes be secondary to maintaining social interactions and relationships.

A difference in the ways faculty members in both countries are addressed may provide a metaphor for the cultural distinction. In the United States, Dr. Smith would commonly be referred to by students, and by nonintimate acquaintances, as Professor Smith. In Japan, Dr. Tanaka, although also having the rank of professor, would likely not be addressed by students and nonintimate acquaintances.

ces in that way, and instead would be referred to as *Tanaka-sensei*. The term "sensei" is an honorific accorded to teachers, with a meaning transcending that of professor. It has been suggested that if a Japanese prime minister were to meet a former teacher, it is the former student who would bow low as a matter of acknowledging his proper place. The prime minister might later tell someone about having met his *onshi*, a word translated in the dictionary as "former teacher" that also connotes a person to whom one owes a debt that can never be fully repaid. *Sensei*, then, is not only a person of wisdom but also a major actor in the intricate web of obligations, group memberships, and dependencies that define Japanese social life and culture. To take the role of *sensei* does not necessarily imply the creation of valid knowledge even though it requires the "publication" of "research," nor does it necessarily presume an obligation to contribute to student learning even though it may require the holding of classes. To maintain status as *sensei* requires membership in a group identified by some specialized research commitment, active involvement in activities that separate those inside the group from those outside it, the placement of students in jobs, and the sponsorship of those with academic ambitions into family-like academic cliques.

The ways in which faculty construct their roles may have major effects on critical public policy. Japan is now considering reforms at the university level explicitly based on U.S. practices. The changes being advocated include, among others, the development of interdisciplinary courses, the establishment of credit transfer systems, the preparation of course syllabi, the recognition of the concept of faculty development, the use of student course evaluations, and the appointment of faculty to contracts rather than tenure. More generally, universities are being told to create self-monitoring and self-evaluation systems for both teaching and research, to publicly report the results of these systems, and to individualize and diversify their programs. Most of the changes being advocated are consistent with the values of U.S. professional culture but run counter to current institutional practice in Japan as well as to deeply held national cultural values. In contrast, many reforms currently being proposed for U.S. institutions may be consistent with national cultural values but inconsistent with U.S. professional culture. In both settings, viewing higher education from a cultural perspective may help us understand why our systems function as they do, and create more realistic expectations about both the costs and benefits of proposed improvements.

## Chinese Higher Education Reconsidered from the U.S. Experience

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In the past six months we have twice visited the United States to look at developments in American higher education in order to draw lessons for the current reforms in Chinese higher education. These visits, short as they were, helped us to get a better understanding of U.S. higher education, which in turn shed light on many of the issues we have been wrestling with in China. In this article, we offer some reflections on aspects of American higher education that we find relevant and useful in the Chinese context.

### THE PYRAMID STRUCTURE

The U.S. higher education system, the biggest system in the world, basically reflects the requirements of the United States job market. The demand for human resources manifests itself in a pyramid structure, with a large number of institutions that train the general labor force at the bottom and a smaller number of research institutions that produce advanced specialists at the top. In contrast to the U.S. structure, the Chinese counterpart before the 1980s could be viewed as a small inverted pyramid. There were more university-level students than technical/vocational students.

With the transformation from a centrally planned economy to a socialist market economy since the 1980s, the inverted pyramid is now in the process of being overturned. By 1994, out of the 1,080 regular higher learning institutions, 453 were short-cycle institutions with an enrollment of 1.3 million. The rest were teacher training institutions with an enrollment of 1.5 million undergraduate and 127,935 graduate students. By 1995, 1,156 adult higher education institutions had been established with an enrollment of 2.57 million students. This figure does not include the annual 100,000 graduates with a diploma obtained through self-study. In addition, over 800 nonstate postsecondary institutions have been created.

However, the percentage of university students in the population is still only 0.44. With rising living standards, parents' high expectations for their only child, and the cultural value placed on school learning, the demand for higher education in China far exceeds the current capacity of the institutions.