

Asian academic community to emerge. Journals in English exist in Taiwan, Japan, and of course in Hang Kong and Singapore. Even China now publishes scientific journals in English. There is also room for scholarship in indigenous languages. In Japan, scientific communication goes on in Japanese and in English.

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***Throughout the region, people look outside Asia, and especially to the academic power centers in the United States and Britain for respectability.***

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There is an urgent need for change. For this to occur, it is not necessary to reject international standards of scholarship or to turn inward. The fact is that Asian academic systems have grown in quality and sophistication. The infrastructures of scholarship are emerging — journals, book publishers, databases, and the like. Local and regional scholarship should be recognized as legitimate and worthy of positive evaluation. Once publication in local journals becomes accepted for academic promotion, those journals will improve. Indeed, with positive leadership, it is possible to instill in local journals high academic standards, a reviewing system that will protect quality, and an overall commitment to excellence. Reviewers from the region and the West can be used, but with the terms of reference determined by Asian editors rather than Westerners. The circulation of local journals will grow, and such journals will achieve recognition throughout the region, and eventually in the current centers in Europe and North America.

As another equally positive result, Hong Kong, and Asian, scholarship will be legitimized by these developments. Research on important local topics will expand and receive recognition, increasing the available knowledge base. Local scholars will cease to feel constrained by the topical and methodological interests of the West, and will be free to pursue locally relevant research. The time has come for Hang Kong, and Asia, to declare intellectual independence from the West. This does not mean jettisoning the ideals of quality scholarship and objective evaluation, but rather applying those standards locally and recognizing and encouraging excellence at home.

#### Internet Resource

For more information on international issues in higher education, visit the Center's web site, located at:

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## Academic Cultures in Singapore and Hong Kong: Some Personal Impressions

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There is a tendency among many Western academics to view Southeast and East Asian countries as an undifferentiated “Confucian” group. One example of this is the simple linking of “Asian values” to the economic success of countries such as Singapore, Hang Kong, South Korea, Japan, and Taiwan. While there may indeed be some common explanatory factors behind the development of these societies, what is often ignored is that the economies have achieved prosperity through varying routes. Diverse social, political, economic, and cultural structures have formed that serve to differentiate outwardly similar countries and influence their organizational environments and those who work in them. That is, institutions of each nation have developed their own shape, and culture and these, at different levels and emphasis, are worthy of reflection.

Our focus here is on the difference in academic cultures between Hong Kong and Singapore. On the surface, one might expect the academic cultures in the two countries to be almost identical given their colonial heritage. After all, Singapore was a British colony for many years and Hang Kong remains so today, that is, until July 1997. Although Hang Kong is presently a British colony and will soon become a special administrative region within the Peoples Republic of China, here it will be referred as a country for ease of comparison. Both countries share a predominantly Chinese culture, have burgeoning economies, few natural resources except their people, and are located roughly in the same part of the world. Yet, in terms of our own experience, both have developed quite different academic environments.

Before describing what we see as some of the differences, it should be noted that our discussion is based on personal impressions only and, as such, is limited by our individual circumstances. While we have both worked in Singapore and Hang Kong, our experience is restricted to faculties of education in particular institutions, and therefore, we do not seek to generalize across all institutions or even across academic disciplines.

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Since the early 1990s, Hong Kong academics have been pressured to compete increasingly for scarce external funding, mainly from the University Grants Council (UGC). The acquisition of extremely competitive external funding has been explicitly built into promotion criteria and, increasingly, departmental funding formulas. As a result academics have been forced to reevaluate their traditional work practice in terms of emphasis, international relevance, and quality. One side effect of the growing importance of external funding in Hong Kong appears to be a move toward greater research collaboration with overseas researchers and even other Hong Kong institutions. As far as we are aware, academics in Singapore have yet to experience similar pressure with regard either to professional practice or departmental resources. Fewer external research funding opportunities are available in Singapore, perhaps reflecting a less intense emphasis on large-scale, internationally relevant research projects. While valuable research is conducted in Singapore, in our experience, it is more likely to be personally motivated rather than institutionally or structurally driven and focused on local in-school rather than international issues.

Differences in emphasis on acquiring external funding carry over to expectations for teaching and publishing in international journals. Recent centralized reviews of teaching quality and open exhibition of student evaluations have added to the stress on Hong Kong academics and forced them to balance their roles carefully. Although pressure to research, publish, and teach more effectively certainly exists in Singapore, it appears much less intense than in Hong Kong. The primary role of academics in Singapore remains focused on teaching, internal research, and service to the local community. Certainly, the Singaporean

academic culture, while still rigorous, appears less stressful because it lacks the harsh externally imposed pressure to acquire and produce. Hong Kong academics have much greater demand placed on them to publish widely in refereed journals than their Singaporean counterparts. Newly established links between productivity, funding, and career advancement in Hong Kong have driven home a message all too common in Western universities: "publish or perish." Indeed, some have perished, and those who remain have quickly learned to play the often selfish game of collecting numbers at the expense of professional sharing and internal collaboration.

A further difference exists in the type of research that is encouraged. Although both Singapore and Hong Kong academics approach local school issues, the tradition in Hong Kong includes considerably more open criticism and debate of policy and political issues than is common in Singapore. In Singapore, academics appear to avoid research that targets political issues or that unduly criticizes government policy. This is probably due to the different forms of government in the two countries. Singapore has a very centralized government that does not actively promote debate and criticism of government policy. Hong Kong, however, has a tradition of open debate, and academics become actively involved in commenting on and critiquing government policy. This is particularly so in the Chinese press. In terms of academic culture, the environment in Hong Kong produces a more openly critical academic community both in public comment and research. Whether change in sovereignty will effect this openness remains to be seen. The academic culture in this sense may be seen as a reflection of the more general societal cultures of the two countries. Singapore has a centralized government and education system with relatively tight control over many facets of society in general, whereas Hong Kong is often characterized as one of the least-regulated societies in the world.

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The most obvious difference between the academic cultures discussed here lies in externally imposed demands for accountability and productivity. In the case of Hong Kong, this is due mainly to the number of institutions and

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?