

by up to 25 percent, to eliminate several part-time posts, to cut funding for the library, and to offer more full-fee paying places in 1998 in order to cope with budget cuts. Increasing differentiation among staff from the same faculty towards senior, tenured staff (who do research) and junior, untenured staff (who are “teaching only”) can also be expected to become more common.

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The ongoing reforms mean a further intensification of academic work among faculty, many of whom already complain of increasing stress levels. Moreover, heightening internal and external demands for greater “accountability” means that more faculty time is taken up with gathering and compiling such evidence, in addition to detailed and regular program management. Greater attention to marketing, and other such activities also takes time away from teaching and research, both of which are also subject to increasing scrutiny. All in all, fewer and fewer faculty are responding to ever more demands on a wider variety of fronts—and with lower levels of resources. It is perhaps partly for this reason that the recent U.K. Dearing Committee’s analysis of comparative costs of university teaching found them to be lower in Australia than in any other country surveyed (the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Germany, and the Netherlands).

Further budgetary constraints on the federal government will only increase demands upon universities to diversify their sources of funding.

While such trends are not unique to Australia—articles in recent issues of *International Higher Education* point to similar trends in several other contexts—they will clearly place the Australian higher education system, and the faculty upon whom it depends for its continued health, under increasing strain. There is still no sign that current trends will soon change direction. Indeed, further budgetary constraints on the federal government will only increase demands upon universities to diversify their sources of

funding. Moreover, further intensification of work can be confidently expected. Some faculty have already left to work overseas, others have taken early retirement, often without being replaced. Those who remain arguably face a challenging and troubling march “back to the future”—in which, as in the past, university entry is easier for students with wealth, and only select staff are able or, indeed, expected to maintain research activity.

Notes

1. *The Australian* (Higher Education supplement), September 10, 1997, 37.
2. S. Marginson, “Academic Salaries in Australia, 1967 to 1990,” *Australian Universities Review* 2 (1989): 14–23.
3. B. Sheehan and A. Welch, *The International Survey of the Academic Profession: Australia* (Princeton, N.J.: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1996), 60.
4. Department of Employment, Education and Training Higher Education Division (DEET), *National Report on Australia’s Higher Education Sector* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1993), 138; see also G. Moodie, “Class Additions Don’t Add Up,” *The Australian* (Higher Education supplement), September 3, 1997, 46.

Higher Education in Hong Kong: The Morning After

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Since sovereignty retrocession, Hong Kong’s universities have continued to transform themselves. Changes include consolidation, the introduction of a credit unit system, staff and management reviews, recurrent funding assessment, teaching and learning quality process reviews, new admission standards, an increase of students from outside of Hong Kong, staff retitling, course broadening, retrenchments, budget “top slicing,” and discussion about moving from a three- to four-year system. So far, however, very little of this change seems directly tied to Beijing’s control over Hong Kong. Moreover, there seems no reason why at least 3 of China’s new universities in Hong Kong should not again find themselves rated among *Asiaweek*’s top 10 Asian universities in 1998.

If the 5,000 plus academic staff in Hong Kong higher education had to operate within the standard system found on the Chinese mainland, major adaptation would be necessary to accommodate the different academic tradition,

organization, governance, finance, and institutional culture found there. Furthermore, a loss of Internet facilities would drastically decrease integration into the global academy. Nevertheless, a half year after becoming part of China, Hong Kong's universities have not been greatly affected. To better appreciate why this is the case, consider the following:

1. The differences between universities under capitalism and socialism are not as great as expected. Hong Kong and the Chinese mainland share a number of features. The two systems share a common cultural heritage. As China becomes increasingly market oriented, it permits an expansion of linkages with Hong Kong formerly restricted by ideology and central planning. In addition to this increased economic integration, academic exchanges have been stepped up that foster familiarity and reduce suspicion among staff and students about each other's systems, but also engender a greater coming together of perspectives concerning the functions of higher education. Both systems are almost totally dominated by state-funded universities that are increasingly being told to be more cost-effective and self-supporting. That said, great differences between the systems still exist. The income/qualification gap between staff in Hong Kong and the rest of China will remain for many years to come.

2. Despite the transfer of sovereignty, the academic profession in Hong Kong has maintained its staff, including a high proportion of international faculty. The turnover rate has not been abnormally high. New positions created by the 1989–96 expansion were easily filled. The 1997 hype even attracted many top-notch academics to Hong Kong, some of whom stayed on longer than planned. Overseas academics, as well as many Hong Kong-born academics, have foreign passports. If problems emerge on the horizon, many without an overseas passport may take unpaid sabbaticals, during which time they may acquire a passport before returning.

3. Most changes affecting the academic profession have been a function of the rapid expansion of student numbers, public pressure for fiscal accountability, and global trends in higher education—such as the devolution of financial responsibility. Until the late 1980s, Hong Kong was a two-university city, even though costs were high and the scale small. Now, with almost eight universities, costs have increased dramatically. Government expenditure for higher education was 35 percent in 1994–95 and has remained almost unchanged since that time. Staff costs account for almost half of that expenditure, and the public is understandably interested in getting value for its money. Nevertheless, Hong Kong only spends 3.3 percent of its GDP on education—on July 1, 1997, the new Chief Executive of Hong Kong allocated HK\$6 billion for education, not a penny of which was for university education. At the same time, university staff are drowning in assessment processes, placing them under more pressure to produce than at any time in the past.

4. The integration of Hong Kong's academics into the global academy has been strengthened rather than hindered by their increased engagement with academics in mainland China. The University Grants Committee's allocation for academic exchange with the Chinese mainland jumped from HK\$2.5 million in 1991–92 to HK\$4.4 million in 1995–96. Given the global interest in China's expanding economy, Hong Kong academics are still playing a bridging role between academics from China and the rest of the world.

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5. There is enormous potential in the coming decade for a large shift toward the appointment of academics from mainland China who earned their doctorates in the United States and other Western countries. This trend is evidenced by an increased number of academics from the Chinese mainland who earned their doctorates overseas and who are already beginning to take up residence in Hong Kong. Their impressive competitiveness within the increasingly performance-based higher education system in Hong Kong will assure continued recruitment. They will also join their Hong Kong counterparts in serving as a bridge between academics from China and the rest of the world.

6. Assuming that academic traditions and values are preserved, the other changes taking place in Hong Kong will not fundamentally alter the degree of academic integration of Hong Kong faculty into the global academy, and will, in fact, increase the integration of China's academic community. Nevertheless, some point to potential hazards, such as the University Grants Committee's statement of last year on academic freedom and autonomy: "These are not absolutes (there are restrictions) and their survival depends very much on pragmatic considerations of efficiency as on moral and ethical arguments." This statement was not consoling to members of the academy since it appeared less than a year before the new flag was raised. While academic freedom is specifically guaranteed under Article 136 of the Hong Kong Basic Law, standards of scholarship are jeopardized by the growing number of self-censoring academics. Since July 1, 1997, however, the universities have stood firm on their defense of academic freedom, even when challenged by a Beijing-appointed legislative councilor. University students continue to commemorate the 1989 suppression of the student movement in Beijing. University bookshops continue to stock books unobtainable on the mainland. Professors criticize the government and return to teach the next day.
