

lack first-class research achievement but show promise and solid resource infrastructure enjoy special privileges. In this respect, issues relevant to China's development in the 21st century are especially obvious targets of the plan. The Centers for Rural Development (Central China Normal University), Northwest Historical Environment and Economic and Social Development (Northwest Normal University), China's Minorities (Central Minority University), International Law (Wuhan University), and World Trade Organization Studies (Foreign Trade University) all fall squarely into this category. Others include the Centers for Media Studies (Beijing Radio University), Chinese Folklore (Sichuan University), and Huizhou Culture Studies (Anhui University).

Conclusion

The plan echoes an international trend in educational restructuring: ongoing devolution in finance and administration with increasing central government influence on curricula. This major initiative to promote research deserves our particular attention as China's scholars in the humanities and social sciences have achieved far less international visibility than their colleagues in engineering and the natural sciences. The humanities and social sciences, however, serve as a more accurate barometer of the extent of China's progress in the internationalization of higher education.

Along with other features, the plan stresses China's practical needs. This would appear to be reasonable in China, where problematic issues demand urgent practical responses and concentration of limited resources is designed to "use the best steel to make the knife's edge." However, one thing is certain: the plan will exercise an enormous impact in China on the humanities and social sciences in the years to come. ■

University Autonomy from the Top Down: Lessons from Russia

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In Russia and the other newly independent states of Eastern Europe and Central Asia the concept of university autonomy was rekindled by the new democratic ethos and economic policies that encouraged initiative and responsibility on the part of individuals and enterprises. At the same time, the central governments of most of these states faced severe financial constraints resulting in reduced support for most public services including higher education. For example, state support for

higher education in Russia decreased threefold in real terms between 1992 and August 1998 before the rouble default. While the government's policy of greater university autonomy was not consistently spelled out in a single document, the state nevertheless granted numerous freedoms to individual universities on matters that prior to the mid-1980s had been the exclusive prerogative of the central government.

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Universities had no choice but to make the best use possible of increased legal and financial autonomy. My recent study focused on three institutions that adopted distinctive strategies enabling them to fare relatively well in the new system.

St. Petersburg State University, Russia's oldest and one of its most-renowned universities, was faced with declining enrollments and a sharp cutback in federal support from the early 1990s. The new rector, who was appointed in 1994, decided that the key to St. Petersburg's future was to regain its position as a top institution deserving special treatment from the central government. Accordingly the university announced plans for a highly visible celebration of its 275th anniversary, which included invitations to many prominent academics and politicians both from within Russia and around the world. Drawing on its extensive cultural capital, the university won recognition as a special institution by the National Duma with the corollary privilege of receiving a level of support per student several times that of the average university. At the same time, individual faculties of St. Petersburg University were able to develop many new revenue-generating programs.

At Novosibirsk State Technical University, radical restructuring in response to changing market conditions was the response. With the collapse of the economy, this technically oriented institution lost large sums of research revenue. As the job market for engineers eroded, the university experienced plummeting enrollments and thus faced the prospect of a sharp cutback in state subsidies in the early 1990s. In 1990, the newly elected rector, who had prior experience as a chief operating officer in an industrial corporation, proposed a full-scale review of the university's mission. The faculty responded to this call and worked harmoniously and efficiently to identify new approaches. Out of the ensuing review emerged a

strategy of orienting all academic offerings to market opportunities, as well as engaging in new commercially oriented research that would be of interest to private enterprises. By 1994, the university was already able to get back on its feet. The extent of the university's reforms as well as the rector's skillful promotion of them received much publicity. The rector was appointed to the board of the then State Council of Higher Education, and the state readjusted its subsidy so that Novosibirsk Technical received more favorable treatment.

Kemerovo State University was not hit as hard by the economic downturn as were the other institutions. On the other hand, it had dimmer prospects for gaining favored treatment from the central government. Accordingly, the rector decided to establish closer links with the regional government and other local entities in the expectation that these entities would be willing to pay for new services provided by the university. Once these links were established, he assigned faculty to sustain and develop them. Kemerovo State established several branch campuses throughout the region by merging with and incorporating into the university structure a number of middle vocational schools. Key faculty were also encouraged to work on the commercialization of research. The institution's top-down leadership style is a clear contrast to the bottom-up approach at Novosibirsk. Through these and other strategies, Kemerovo State University was able to increase its off-budget revenues so that, by 2000, these made up 42 percent of the total university budget—an impressive accomplishment, given the university's exclusive dependence on state subsidies 10 years earlier.

These case studies, combined with other research, provided the background for the formulation of five principles relating to autonomy.

First, autonomy of higher education institutions is relative. It is constrained by other social organizations as well as the norms shared by the social system as a whole.

Second, autonomy is based on five key resources: culture, law, leadership and management, political linkages, and financial stability. In the recent Russian context, financial stability has been the Achilles' heel. However, universities with a rich reserve of cultural capital can draw on this resource to seek special political concessions and support from the private sector. In contrast, universities with limited cultural capital have to rely primarily on leadership and managerial initiatives to strengthen their financial position.

Third, the strength of a university's autonomy is tied to the autonomy and dynamism of its internal units, so long as they share a common culture. The staff of Novosibirsk Technical shared a common culture by virtue of their strong science and technology orientation;

the pragmatism of their faculty culture allowed a more or less unified response. St. Petersburg State is a much more complex institution, with diverse academic cultures, yet its rich institutional history instills enormous pride in the St. Petersburg tradition and the "brand name." Thus, the approach at St. Petersburg was to build on this common sense of belonging by encouraging each unit to develop its unique response to the crisis. Kemerovo State was perhaps the only institution that did not base its response on a shared culture; instead the rector's political skills helped the institution to reach out to various local partners, while internally units that had a "special" relationship with the authoritarian rector fared best.

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Fourth, while autonomy is applied generally to the state of an organization, within the organization its impact is uneven. In some universities, the rector may exercise greater autonomy with respect to personnel and finance, but the deans and individual professors may experience a decline in freedom due either to new standards of accountability or arbitrary decision making. When autonomy is extended to individual faculties, some—by virtue of superior leadership, market position, or other advantages—are likely to fare better. In other institutions, certain faculties may be favored with generous resources and discretion, while others find they are expected to subsidize the favored faculties.

Finally, legal autonomy alone does not eliminate the vulnerability of an institution to outside contingencies. The traditional decentralization of faculties at St. Petersburg induced some to rebel against the central administration at a time of increasing outside pressures. "Having each tub on its own bottom" delayed building up the centralized infrastructure at St. Petersburg State and slowed the progress when the whole enterprise needed to head quickly in new directions (such as distance learning). Novosibirsk Technical found ways to balance centralized decision making with the climate of open and constructive criticism and accepted rules about the limits on the autonomy of each unit. This balance allowed the institution as a whole to agree on several priorities and move ahead briskly. The power of strong leadership at Kemerovo State propelled the university into a leading position in the region, but it may not be sufficient to counteract the penetration of other competitors in its own "territory."

It can be said that Russian higher education is at least surviving the forced imposition of "autonomy from above." The three cases examined show how institutions have transformed their academic programs, significantly increased student enrollments, improved their managerial capacities, motivated their faculty members for change, and most importantly generated sizable levels of additional revenues. But all have also experienced hardships: research has suffered, many faculty have left, and it remains difficult to attract qualified young staff due to the depressed salary levels at the newly autonomous Russian universities.

Are these institutions better today than they were in the Soviet period? Is Russian higher education as a whole better today? There is no simple answer to these questions, given the many other factors that have created unprecedented challenges for the university, faculty, and students. What is clear, however, is that the current system of higher education is able to draw on the insights of far more people than before. Empowered by the enhanced autonomy of individual universities, the Russian academy has been able to respond in new and diverse ways to these challenges. ■

News Books from the Center for International Higher Education

Philip G. Altbach and Yoshikazu Ogawa, eds., *Higher Education in Japan: Reform and Change in the 21st Century*. This book was originally published in 2002 as a theme issue of *Higher Education*. It features essays by Japanese scholars on the current wave of reforms taking place in Japan. A limited number of free copies are available from the Center.

Philip G. Altbach and Viswanathan Selvaratnam, eds., *From Dependence to Autonomy: The Development of Asian Universities*. This book, originally published in 1989 by Kluwer Publishers, examines the development of universities in key Asian countries from a historical perspective. A limited number of free copies are available from the Center to readers in developing countries.

A Spanish-language edition of Philip G. Altbach's *Comparative Higher Education* has been published in Argentina. The Spanish title is *Educación superior comparada*.

The publisher is the Universidad de Palermo. This volume is available for sale from Librería Técnica, Florida 682, Local 18, C1005AAM, Ciudad de Buenos Aires, Argentina. E-mail: <info@cp67.com>.

African Higher Education: An International Reference Handbook, coedited by Philip G. Altbach and Damtew Teferra, has gone into production at Indiana University Press. The book will be published in late 2002. Copies will be made available to African institutions and researchers. This project has been funded by the Ford Foundation. Further information can be obtained from Ms. Dee Mortonsen, Indiana University Press, Indiana University Press, 601 N. Morton Street, Bloomington, IN 47404, USA.

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News of the Center and the Boston College Program in Higher Education

In cooperation with Prof. Toru Umakoshi of Nagoya University in Japan, the Center has received a grant from the Toyota Foundation and additional support from the Japan Foundation and the Ford Foundation to organize an inquiry into the historical and contemporary development of higher education in selected Asian countries. This project will result in a book on the theme of the past and future of Asian universities. A conference relating to it will be held in December, 2002 at Nagoya University in Japan.

The Center continues its work in cooperation with the Program on Research on Private Higher Education at the State University of New York at Albany on developing an Internet-based resource center on private higher education. This work is being coordinated by Alma Maldonado-Maldonado at BC and Yisa Cao at SUNY-Albany. This project will involve key researchers in analyzing national concerns and preparing a book based on these analyses.

Damtew Teferra and Philip G. Altbach are beginning work on the establishing of a *Journal on Higher Education in Africa* with the assistance of the Ford Foundation.

Yoshikazu Ogawa, a doctoral candidate in higher education and formerly a research associate of the Center, has become associate professor of education at Tohoku University, Sendai, Japan. Hala Taweel, doctoral candidate, continues her work with the University of the Middle East Project. Alma Maldonado-Maldonado, doctoral candidate and fellow of the Mexican Science Council, has coedited a book of critiques and analysis of international higher education reports in Spanish.