

often teaching in more than one private university. Bottom-tier institutions in Colombia have problems in hiring and paying professors, and some operate in rented buildings poorly adequate for teaching or research. Of course, along with control efforts by the government to change the problematic patterns there are several worthy endeavors of institutions in the middle, searching simultaneously for access and quality.

IN PURSUIT OF QUALITY

In contrast to the troublesome features, Colombian private higher education has led the movement into voluntary high-quality accreditation. Private institutions constitute the majority of institutions (63%) in obtaining such accreditation according to the National Commission of Accreditation data. About a dozen of those private accredited universities might be classified as the leading ones, characterized as well by their offer of doctoral degrees especially in health, law, and social sciences and having a well-trained faculty.

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Truly, no Colombian higher education institution appears in the research-oriented world rankings—such as the *Times Higher Education/QS* or the Shanghai Jiao Tong rankings. The leading private Universidad de Los Andes is the only institution registered within the top 500 on the World Universities' rankings (Webometrics.info) according to the visibility, volume, and quality of its electronic publications. The Universidad de Los Andes also has the greatest number of doctorate programs within the private sector.

Although such classifications are quite inexact, perhaps an additional 30 of the five-year private institutions hold national or regional prestige because of accredited programs recognized by the public and the academic community at the undergraduate level. More clearly “demand-absorbing” units could be found in another 74 institutions. Along with them, 81 nonuniversity private institutions offer two-and-three-year programs. As only few of the Colombian “demand-absorbing” and nonuniversity institutions have accredited programs, their quality and legitimacy rest more in holding the “basic conditions of quality.” These conditions are mandatory for all Colombian higher education institutions assessed by academic peers and the Ministry of Education as part of the quality-assurance system. ■

Undergraduate Teaching Evaluation in China: Progress and Debate

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China has experienced dramatic higher education expansion during the past decade. In comparison with the previous year, the number of students admitted to higher education increased by 47 percent in 1999, which again increased by 25 percent in 2000. In 2002, the relevant age group participating in higher education reached 15 percent, compared with 5 percent in 1993. With more than 27 million students, China's current higher education system is the largest one in the world.

Under the context of rapid expansion, priority has been placed on quantitative growth. Universities, especially local universities were encouraged by the government to enroll more students. Meanwhile, the quality of higher education came to be somewhat neglected. Forgetting about quality caused many problems, such as decline of educational expense per student, deteriorating teaching conditions, and employment difficulty for colleges graduates. Education quality has been questioned by employers, academics, and the public. The government worries that without rigid quality assurance, the expansion itself may not improve national and individual competitiveness.

Currently, the priority of higher education has shifted from quantity growth to quality enhancement. Quality is now being seriously considered by China's government and universities.

MAJOR INITIATIVE

A key measure for China to guarantee quality is the national evaluation of colleges and universities. In 1994, the Department of Higher Education of the Ministry of Education initiated a pilot project on undergraduate teaching evaluation and followed this with two other such evaluations in 1996 and 1999. The results indicated that higher education institutions under evaluation tended to improve their campus and teaching facilities, increase educational spending, closely monitor teaching quality, and put emphasis on teaching.

The landmark of evaluation is the establishment of the Higher Education Evaluation Center (HEEC) of the ministry (<http://www.pgzx.edu.cn>) in 2004. During its first five-year cycle, HEEC implemented an undergraduate teaching evaluation for 589 colleges and universities. Although it is to be developed as a comprehensive quasi-government evaluation agency, HEEC starts its work with the national evaluation of

undergraduate teaching. The ministry insists that undergraduate teaching typically reflects higher education quality, and thus teaching must be strengthened rather than weakened.

The evaluation of the standards of undergraduate teaching work at regular higher education institutions includes three stages: the institutions conduct self-evaluation; experts' teams enter the institutions to conduct investigations; and the institutions carry out rectifications and reforms. HEEC developed a sophisticated indicator system for evaluation, which includes 7 first-level indicators and 19 second-level indicators. Both the Ministry of Education and its affiliated HEEC hold the discourse of evaluation as the means and improvement of teaching quality.

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The evaluation of standards in undergraduate teaching work is the most far-reaching higher education reform since "adjustment of colleges and departments" (*yuanxi tiaozheng*), which adopted the former USSR system in the early 1950s to facilitate national industrialization.

In fact, adopting the same evaluation instrument and indicator system on undergraduate teaching, provincial education administrations have implemented sub-baccalaureate teaching evaluation on tertiary vocational colleges in respective scopes. The teaching at the majority of private higher education institutions was evaluated by HEEC or provincial education administrations.

EFFECTS AND DEBATES

According to the ministry and HEEC, achievements of the first-cycle undergraduate teaching evaluation are remarkable, similar to that of evaluations in 1996 and 1999. Even so, Ji Zhou, the minister of education, admitted some negative effects in the evaluation, such as formalism, fraud, and deception. Besides, the unitary nature of the evaluation system limits its benefits across different categories of institutions, and the costs, especially hidden costs, are high. Ironically, although most colleges and universities were burdened with heavy pressure and invested huge energy before teaching evaluation, more than 80 percent of institutions received a score of "A" in the first-cycle evaluation.

Academics, administrators, students, government, the public, and the media have been involved in the debate on effects and direction of undergraduate teaching evaluation. Among them, two essays by presidents of national key universities in 2008 constituted a sharp-cut contrast, published by *People's Daily*, the most influential newspaper in China. Baocheng Ji, president of Renmin University of China, was the former head

of the Department of Higher Education in the Ministry of Education, which was in charge of teaching evaluation before HEEC was established. He criticized the multitudinous evaluations of universities and claimed more autonomy shall be granted to universities, including evaluation. Daren Huang, president of Zhongshan University, held a completely different stance, insisting that teaching evaluation is quite necessary. Huang pointed out that China's higher education evaluation bears a solid legal basis, and the monitoring education quality represents an international norm. Despite some problems that exist, the evaluation itself cannot be disaffirmed. According to him, if teaching evaluation becomes a regular tool for quality guarantee, it will not disturb everyday teaching at universities.

Although undergraduate-teaching evaluation is still in heated debate, a vice-minister of education stated that China would continue in this direction with efforts to strengthen evaluation of its higher education institutions. Organizing evaluation is specified as the responsibility of government and receiving evaluation as an obligation of the universities.

THE FUTURE

Based on the positive and negative experiences of the first five-year evaluation of undergraduate teaching, the Ministry of Education and HEEC are working to improve evaluation. The new direction of undergraduate-teaching evaluation will include three aspects. First, a quality-assurance system run within each higher education institution is preferred to an external monitoring system driven by government. Second, to

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avoid colleges and universities becoming a passive recipient of evaluation, more opportunities will be provided for them to play an active and leading role in their institutional evaluation. Third, the pressure on the majority of higher education institutions to participate in lengthy and stressful evaluations will be reduced. It has gradually become realized that undergraduate-teaching evaluation is more than a top-down measure of the government but rather an accountability measure among a broader group of stakeholders—including not only government but also institutions, academics, administrators, students, families, and even the media.

While a great deal of work remains to develop a comprehensive, well-established higher education evaluation system, China's specific national evaluation of undergraduate teaching represents an important milestone in national efforts to ensure and improve education quality. It has been reported that the Ministry of Education will initiate the second five-year cycle

evaluation of undergraduate teaching via HEEC in late 2009. Some initiatives on teaching evaluation will be explored in the new cycle. ■

Academic Freedom and Public Intellectuals in China

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Academic freedom has always been viewed as problematic in China. The recent academic integrity crisis on university campuses and governmental intervention have once again brought this issue to the fore. Since 2002, China's Ministry of Education has promulgated a series of policies aiming to clean up academic corruption on university campuses. Most recently, in March 2009, it announced severe penalties for academic misbehavior. Then, what is the status quo of academic freedom in Chinese universities? To consider this issue, it is necessary to go back to the Confucian intellectual tradition, as it viewed the relations between academics and the state in a quite different way from the Western notion. This article starts by offering a historical perspective on academic freedom in China, followed by an effort at discerning the trajectory of its evolution over the last century, as a way of exploring the causes of corruption among contemporary Chinese university scholars.

UNITY OF KNOWLEDGE AND ACTION

Unlike the Western tradition, where scholars believe in the power of words and seek to be public intellectuals through engaging in critical debate, the Confucian tradition prompted Chinese scholars to realize their ideals through action and a kind of direct responsibility for managing the state. This tradition was best explained by the Confucian canons of knowledge and the imperial examination system that selected intellectuals to serve as scholar-officials. Knowledge was less a matter of understanding the world than of changing it, and scholars were expected to "cultivate the self, manage the family, govern the country, and bring peace to the world." Put explicitly, they sought a unity of knowledge and action through their roles as scholar-officials. Rather than considering themselves as independent social critics, they saw themselves as offsetting political authority with intellectual authority and being responsible to "tame" the ruler so that he would be a "Philosopher King." While there were inevitably cases of cynicism and corruption, this scholar-official role did not necessarily confine Confucian scholars in terms of independent thinking. More often, they were seen as upholding social justice and morality with their "iron shoulders."

A CENTURY OF UPS AND DOWNS

The abolition of the imperial examination system in 1905 led to the formation of an independent intellectual class. In the May 4th Movement of 1919, often called China's enlightenment, the Confucian tradition was repudiated and both radicalism and utilitarianism began to characterize Chinese academia. The former resulted in revolutionary activism, while the latter led to a growing cynicism among Chinese scholars. Since then Chinese scholarship seems to have oscillated between these opposite extremes. The May 4th Movement witnessed the emergence of radical intellectuals, many of whom later joined the Chinese Communist Party and contributed to the formation of the People's Republic of China in 1949. Eight years later, in 1957, when Khrushchev denounced Stalin at the 20th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party, Chinese intellectuals participated enthusiastically in the Hundred Flowers Campaign, suggesting that China's new government should "govern democratically" and accept criticism. Mao Zedong viewed this as violating a healthy level of criticism and launched the Anti-Rightist Movement. Many university-based intellectuals were labelled "rightists" and sent into exile.

The Anti-Rightist Movement resulted in Chinese intellectuals feeling themselves to be objects of suspicion and oppression. They became largely voiceless from the late 1950s to the

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late 1970s, and some became cynical. This may have contributed to such disasters as the great famine of the early 1960s and the Cultural Revolution between 1966 and 1976. When Deng Xiaoping launched a series of economic reforms that led to the gradual implementation of a market economy, the Chinese government found itself groping to resolve the contradictions that arose from its new and controversial policy. Intellectuals were again encouraged to contribute actively to reform, in the name of "respecting knowledge and talent." Irritated by China's economic backwardness and the ultraleft thinking of the Cultural Revolution, many Chinese intellectuals shared a strong commitment to the pursuit of freedom and democracy in the 1980s. Thus, the 1980s witnessed a second enlightenment era with a predominant belief among university faculty that the reforms had not gone far enough. Having seen the political liberalization undertaken in the name of *glasnost* by Gorbachev, they were hoping for comparable reform in China. This culminated in the June 4th Incident in 1989.

Leaving the idealist and passionate 1980s behind, Chinese intellectuals experienced a transformation close to what their Western counterparts did after 1968: a split between intellectual reformer and academic worker. A very few continued as liberal intellectuals, but the majority retreated to university cam-