

pushes to seek knowledge and academic pursuits for their own sake. Chinese intellectuals now do contribute to policy formation at various levels, through offering professional advice, but they rarely take up the role of social critics or social activists. They have adopted a stance that is termed “constructive criticism” and does not necessarily reflect the radical social commitment of liberal intellectuals. As the Western idea of academic freedom and direct criticism of government has gradually lost its attractiveness, in the face of China's economic success more and more scholars in Chinese universities favor “constructive criticism.”

CHINESE SCHOLARS AND ACADEMIC CORRUPTION

After 1992 China changed very rapidly, making some scholars anxious. Along with increasing wealth, the market economy has also encouraged utilitarianism and a one-sided emphasis on accumulating material wealth. Scholars have found their elite culture replaced by a secular one. Some of them have been attracted by various “shortcuts” to power and influence, especially when their academic integrity has lost its ideological underpinnings and utilitarianism has taken over. It is in this context that plagiarism has become widespread, even in top universities. A recent article in *Science* (March 16, 2009) on plagiarizing or fabricating data by researchers at Zhejiang University (one of China's top universities) put a spotlight on the crisis of academic integrity in Chinese universities and the fact that it is now attracting international attention. This shows a widely held perception that corruption is not limited to the power sphere in China but has penetrated academia. In October 2009, when the Chinese government celebrated the 60th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China and announced Chinese universities now ranked the world's fifth in terms of research capacity, based on the volume of the research papers published, criticism came up immediately from within and outside of the sector, citing the increasing plagiarism and declining integrity.

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 late 1970s

Realizing that academic corruption could jeopardize China's ambition of creating world-class universities, the government has stepped in. While the government used to be viewed as an obstacle to academic freedom, it has now had to become a watchdog for the academic integrity of scholars and universities in China. Elsewhere, this is a time that cries out for intellectuals to exercise self-mastery and self-discipline. China is not exempt from these trends, but Chinese scholars may be even more vulnerable, due to the character of the political regime and discontinuity with the Confucian scholarly tra-

dition. Until Chinese scholars can show themselves to be accountable and exercise a kind of reciprocal responsibility, they may not be entitled to the kinds of autonomy and academic freedom that have been part of the Western tradition. While the Confucian classics are now being reintroduced into the curriculum, it is not clear whether this will lead to a renaissance of China's tradition of intellectual authority and a high degree of social responsibility. ■

Institutional Diversification in Chinese Higher Education

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China's higher education system has experienced unprecedented growth since 1998. According to the most recent data from the Ministry of Education in China, the number of new students entering undergraduate programs rose from around 1 million in 1998 to some 6 million in 2008. This increase resulted in a total number of students of over 20 million in 2008, making China the world's largest provider of higher education.

With the rapid expansion in student numbers came the introduction of several new types of degree-granting institutions. As outlined in an article by Ruth Hayhoe and Jing Lin in *IHE* (Spring 2008), private colleges and *duli xueyuan* or independent colleges, which are set up by public universities with the contribution of a private investor, account for a substantial share of increased enrollments: within just six years (2000 to 2006) 318 independent colleges were established. Now one in six students studying for an undergraduate degree in China is attending an independent or a private college.

This article reports on an exploratory study comparing an independent college and a private college with two public institutions located in a provincial capital in southeastern China. The two public institutions (one university and one college, according to the official classification of higher education institutions) are well established and—in line with government regulation—charge the same level of tuition fees. The independent and the private colleges are younger institutions and charge around 2.5 times higher fees than the public institutions.

In 2008, the public university, public college, independent college, and private college in this study enrolled around 9,000, 2,000, 3,000, and 800 new undergraduate degree-level students, respectively. The public and the private colleges were promoted to degree-level institutions relatively recently, and this explains their smaller intake of students. The majority of students at the private college were following sub-degree-level vocational courses. Many of the teachers at the two nonpublic institutions are retired faculty from public institutions.

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UNIVERSITY ENTRANCE EXAM SCORES

The analysis of the student intake showed clear differences in the types of students attending the four institutions. Students at the two public institutions had significantly higher scores in the university entrance exams than their counterparts at the independent college and the private college. This indicates that the independent and private colleges contribute to the expansion of higher education at the lower end of the student achievement spectrum.

SOCIOECONOMIC BACKGROUND

Significant differences exist in the socioeconomic backgrounds of the student intake of the four institutions. The parents of independent college students had the strongest educational backgrounds in the four institutions and held more prestigious occupational positions, compared with the parents of students studying at the other institutions. The difference in the socioeconomic background of students is particularly strong between the two nonpublic colleges. For example, parents of independent college students were almost five times more likely to have earned a higher education degree than parents of students studying at the private college. Also, compared with fathers of students at the private college, fathers of students at the independent college were 9.5 times more likely to be managers of businesses, 4 times more likely to be administrative personnel at a public authority, and twice as likely to be clerks at public authorities, while fathers of students at the private college were more likely to be industrial and construction workers or farmers. Similar patterns can be found when the occupational positions of the mothers of students are compared.

RURAL/URBAN ORIGINS

Significant differences can also be found in the geographic recruitment patterns of institutions. The independent college recruits more students from urban areas than the other institutions. Its intake of students from rural areas was significantly lower (at 18% of the overall student sample) than at the other

three institutions (29.6%, 24.2% and 37.6% for the public university, public college, and private college, respectively). This is significant, since the rural-urban divide in China is stark and closely correlated not only with the educational achievements of students at high school level (with students at urban high schools on average achieving higher scores) but also with family income levels (with families in rural areas being overall poorer than families in urban areas).

DEGREE OF FINANCIAL CONCERN

The differences in the socioeconomic background of the students are also reflected in the degree of concern students have with regard to the cost of their studies. Despite the fact that students at the independent college pay significantly higher tuition fees, their levels of financial concern are not higher than those of students studying at the two public institutions. However, students at the private college are on average much more concerned about their finances: 45 percent of students at the private college state that they are very concerned about the cost of their studies, which is double the level of concern of students at the other three institutions. This means that the higher level of tuition fees at the nonpublic institutions does not affect students at the independent college because of their more privileged family background, whereas for students at the private college fee levels are a real concern. The study also shows that the high level of financial concern of students at the private college is linked to much lower aspirations for further study.

Lower-achieving students from well-off backgrounds with high levels of economic, social, and cultural capital benefit from the option of paying increased fees to attend independent colleges affiliated to prestigious public institutions.

CONCLUSION

The increasing significance of the independent colleges and the private colleges in the provision of higher education in China has occurred without adequate attention to issues of choice and equality. For example, lower-achieving students from well-off backgrounds with high levels of economic, social, and cultural capital benefit from the option of paying increased fees to attend independent colleges affiliated to prestigious public institutions, while lower-achieving poorer students pay increased fees to attend less-prestigious private institutions. Further research into the labor market outcomes for graduates from different types of institutions is urgently required to establish the rates of return for students from various socioeconomic groups and those from rural and urban areas.

Government policy on higher education does not create more choice for the majority of students. Instead, the diversification of the institutional setup of higher education institutions in China appears to be a by-product of the overarching aim of increasing student numbers. Choice can only be exercised by higher socioeconomic groups.

The recent establishment of private and independent colleges has resulted in a significant new sector, shifting the higher education system in China from being almost homogeneously public to one where a significant proportion of students are enrolled in nonpublic institutions. However, the ever-present institutional hierarchy in the Chinese higher education sector emphasizes vertical diversity, with strong differences in the prestige of the institutions, at the expense of horizontal diversity of institutions offering different types of education. While this form of diversification has created new opportunities for accessing higher education, it has also led to new inequalities in terms of the relative cost and prestige of education at different types of institutions. ■

In Search for World-Class Universities: The Case of Russia

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Innovative development in Russia toward building a knowledge-based economy has become a national priority. While it is recognized that Russian higher education and research fall behind the world leaders in higher education, nostalgia for Soviet achievements in education and science remains relatively strong in the society.

GLOBAL RANKINGS

As in some other countries, in Russia global rankings have stimulated a critical analysis of the current state of higher education and research. Leading Russian institutions did not succeed in global rankings. Moscow State University moved between the 66th and 76th positions, and St. Petersburg State University is listed within the 400-to-500 category of the world's top institutions by the Shanghai Jiao Tong University ranking during 2004 and 2008. The *Times Higher Education* version of the top institutions was also disappointing: since 2004, Moscow State University's ranking varied from 79 to 231.

For one part of the academic community the lower positions of Russian institutions in the rankings have not become a surprise, only serving another signal of the troubles in Russian higher education and research. For other sectors it was difficult to accept such a low ranking position of Russian higher education. The national response to the global challenges was manifold and reflected the lack of social consensus regarding higher education.

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A RUSSIAN RANKING

The dissatisfaction with the methodology and mainly the outcomes of the global rankings have generated the design of a new global ranking declared to be more correct and objective. In 2009, the Russian independent rating agency, RatER, presented a new version of global ranking. The authors emphasize that in contrast to existing rankings it pays more attention to the indicators of the quality of education and teaching. Data collection methods include survey of universities, educational statistics, universities' reports, and Scopus® data. The indicators include the number of educational programs (fields of study), patents and certificates of discoveries, performance of the computer center, number of publications and citations, international awards, university budget per student, presence of university on the Web, and international students. As a result, in this Russian global ranking Moscow State University occupied fifth place, ahead of Harvard, Stanford, and Cambridge. The academic community criticized the ranking and its methodology for numerous flaws. However, to some extent the Russian version proved to be appealing as an alternative or addition to the available rankings.

NATIONAL RESEARCH UNIVERSITIES' PROGRAM

The Russian government is concerned about modernization of Russian education and including several Russian institutions in global rankings. The policy-related response to the international challenges has involved supporting a selected group of universities. The first steps to establish leading institutions were undertaken in 2006 when the Ministry of Education and Science merged several regional institutions to found two federal universities, Siberian and Southern, to strengthen higher education in their respective regions. From 2006 to 2008, in the framework of the national priority project, 57 universities on the competitive basis received federal funding to develop their innovative programs (up to US\$33 million per institution). In 2008 the president of Russia signed a decree to grant a status of national research university along with the funding over the next 10 years for a National Research Nuclear University and technological universities in Moscow. In 2009,