

INSTITUTIONAL ADAPTATION AND CORRUPTION

Survival and self-preservation can be powerful motivating factors. Institutions can be easily propelled by these forces to create methods to adapt to their difficulties. Faced with this challenge, which threatens their own organizational survival and personal financial stability, university faculty members have no choice than to lower their standards informally, while projecting outward quality in order to satisfy their assessors. The lowering of standards creates a breeding ground for cynicism, professional disappointment, and resentment toward students as well as the government, which is unable to regulate the situation effectively.

These mismatched trends produce a power imbalance, where universities need their students more than the students need the universities.

Once the standards are lowered and cynicism is allowed to flourish, a fertile ground has been created for academic corruption. If it is no longer possible to derive professional satisfaction from intellectual engagement with the students, then the fact that the students can be used as a source of additional income provides a certain amount of consolation. Each individual faculty member has a choice to take part or not to take part in this culture. Those who do not participate will be coerced to abide by the silent agreement, to lower their standards. Those wishing to remain active participants have the opportunity to supplement their income—average Russian academic salaries are quite low—and recalibrate the institutional power imbalance in their favor, albeit only at a personal level. The majority, thus, forms an academic conspiracy, which is a very powerful structure that sustains the existence of the individual faculty members in both financial and psychological terms—and naturally punishes those who do not participate willingly.

WHO IS GUILTY AND WHAT CAN BE DONE?

Students, or at least some of them, are guilty of lacking the proper motivation when entering higher education. It might be unfair to expect this from very young or sometimes even underage people in a society in which blue-collar workers have lost their former prestige, and the system of vocational education is almost destroyed. Disappointed, disillusioned, and overloaded academics have a choice with regard to their individual involvement in obvious monetary corruption or covert nonmonetary corruption, including ac-

ademic collusion—by ignoring the lack of academic integrity among their students. They may even not be fully aware of how inappropriate their actions are. As most academics in a given university are also graduates from the same institution, they simply end up repeating the familiar patterns they have learned, while being students themselves. The government, while striving to boost the international legitimacy of the higher education system, is disregarding the natural demographic trends and the quality of the secondary school graduates. Equally, however, each individual actor, including the government, is a victim of the overall institutional trap and the burgeoning corruption grounded in its distorted links and relationships. The victim status perpetuates the sense of helplessness, and the belief that the “citadel” is more powerful than its members. ■

California and the Future of Public Higher Education

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California has been at the leading edge of modernity since World War II. New social trends, tendencies, and tensions tend to show up in California before they spread to everywhere else. For example, in an extraordinary 14-year period, California invented university student power (Berkeley 1964), hippies and the collectivist counter-culture (San Francisco 1967)—followed by the high individualist tax revolt, in the form of Proposition 13, which was passed by a state referendum in 1978 and capped local government taxes and spending. All of these movements went on to sweep across the whole world, and, in some respects that are still with us. The 1980s and 1990s phenomena of Silicon Valley and Steve Jobs—also still with us, is not to mention the continuous influence of California’s film and television industry.

In the past 60 years, California has also led the world in policy and provision of higher education and university-based science, while at the same time leading the evolution of ideas about university education. California is unmatched in its concentration of high-quality public campuses (for example, University of California, Berkeley; University of

California, Los Angeles; University of California, San Diego). It also has some top-private universities including Stanford, Caltech, and the University of Southern California. Only the Boston corridor, where private education plays a greater role, is in the same league as universities in California, and Boston lags behind.

THE GREAT CALIFORNIA MASTER PLAN

Perhaps more surprisingly, given the high-capitalist ideology that characterizes California today, the state also long led the world in public planning and the public principle of social access to higher education. In that regard the shining moment was the 1960 master plan. This was led by Clark Kerr, who was then president of the public system of 9 (now 10) research university campuses, known as the University of California, and agreed by a state legislature and governor mindful of growing public pressure to expand educational opportunity.

At that time, California led the United States in its rate of participation in higher education. The master plan was a blueprint for continuing the expansion of the system, while maintaining research universities of the highest quality, on the basis of what became the much-cited principle of differentiated provision.

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The plan enshrined a high-access model funded by the state, with low-tuition charges. The cost of student participation was limited by channeling most of the growth into two-year California community colleges, and confining the research-intensive campuses of the University of California to the top 12.5 percent of school leavers—in between lay the four-year California State University sector. This tripartite scheme has survived to the present day. The barriers generated by what is a highly stratified system of participation (in many other countries half or more of all tertiary students enter research universities) are meant to be offset by upward transfer of a good proportion of students from the community colleges to the California State Universities or the University of California campuses.

The distinctive character of the California master plan lay not only in the creation of three-stratified sectors of higher education with carefully segmented missions, but the fact that this ternary system proved so enduring, despite

the inevitable pressures for mission drift in the California State Universities and community college sector. From early in its life, the plan was hailed nationally and internationally as a mechanism that combined excellence in the top-tier universities, with universal access down below. For example, the extraordinary transformation of higher education in China, from the late 1990s onwards, has been partly patterned on California.

On the whole, the excellence part of the master plan has worked out very well. Seven of the University of California campuses are positioned in the world's top 50 research universities, according to the Shanghai Academic Ranking of World Universities, and 9 are in the top 150. Perhaps Berkeley, University of California at Los Angeles, and San Diego are not quite as strong as they used to be in competition with Stanford and Harvard for top researchers, especially since the cutbacks in state funding triggered by the 2008 recession, but in terms of research outcomes they remain stellar.

It is the access part of the master plan that has proven more difficult to sustain. Here the record is decidedly mixed.

SOCIAL EQUITY HAS FALTERED

On one hand, the elite University of California campuses are relatively equitable in terms of access. Students from poor families and first generation higher education students are much better represented on the University of California campuses than in private universities like Stanford or Harvard. Both the University of California, Berkeley and Los Angeles *each* have more low-income students than the *whole* US Ivy League. Further, 40 percent of Berkeley undergraduates pay no tuition; 65 percent receive financial aid; and half graduate with no debt. In a country in which tuition is rising rapidly in all of higher education, these are extraordinary numbers. There is no other global top-ten university that is as accessible as Berkeley, though it must be added that all of Berkeley's students, rich and poor, have exceptional academic credentials.

But the resulting contribution to social equity is a drop in the ocean of a highly unequal education system. Data published by Suzanne Mettler show that in the United States in 2011, of people in the top income quartile, 71 percent completed college by early adulthood, a substantial increase from 40 percent in 1970. In the bottom quartile, the completion rate had also increased, but only from 6 percent to 10 percent. In the second-bottom quartile it rose from 11 percent to just 15 percent. In other words, the bottom half of the population is largely shut out of higher education, placing a ceiling on the further growth of participation and ensuring that higher education tends to reproduce prior social inequalities.

School retention in California was just 78.5 percent in 2012, with stark inequalities between rich and poor districts, and ethnic communities: 73.2 percent of Latinos and 65.7 percent of Afro-Americans completed school in 2012. The quality of community colleges and California State Universities is uneven by locality, and upward transfer rates from the California community colleges and California State Universities, and beyond, are very patchy.

Why has access faltered? Arguably, the culprit has been California's Proposition 13, an extraordinary law which enshrined as a "social" principle the antisocial doctrine that government tax/spend is a violation of individual liberty. The proposition has made it very difficult to increase taxes, and triggered recurring budget crises in California. Proposition 13 remains in place today and is a major stumbling block of efforts to improve access to high-quality public education.

Since the prolonged recession that began in 2008, California has chopped off one third of state funding for higher education. All levels of institution are turning away qualified applicants, for the first time since 1960. Significantly, community colleges no longer provide opportunity for all, forcing many students into the for-profit sector, plagued by low completion rates, and the highest level of average student indebtedness in any sector of American higher education.

WHERE TO FROM HERE?

Currently, institutions in the University of California system face an impossible choice between steeply hiking tuition, undermining access, or allowing material educational conditions to deteriorate and educational and social inequalities to widen further.

Will rampant individualism and fiscal neoliberalism continue to hold sway over the common good in California? Will public support for public higher education continue to deteriorate? Or will Californians find ways to regenerate public support for common provision and equality of opportunity, recognizing that in the education of each lies the interest of all? If they do resurrect the public mission of the system, their example will again influence the world. Repeal of Proposition 13 would be a good place to start. ■

Pitfalls of International Cooperative Education Programs in Vietnam

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As a result of globalization, the number of international cooperative education programs between Vietnamese and foreign higher education institutions has been increasing in the last decade. Both involved universities and other organizations appear to achieve their goals; however, the degree of success varies broadly. There are many pitfalls as a result of differences in educational systems and communication among institutions. For various reasons, depending upon the goals and the details of these programs, some languished, some fell apart, and others required further negotiations.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN VIETNAM

International cooperative education (ICE) programs are study programs collaboratively offered by Vietnamese and foreign higher education institutions. Students can choose either to complete the whole program in Vietnam or to take part of the coursework in Vietnam and complete the program at the foreign institution. The curriculum includes courses designed by both Vietnamese and foreign institutions. Upon completion of the study program, students are awarded a diploma issued by the foreign institutions.

As of January 2015, the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) has approved 266 ICE programs for operation in Vietnam. The top five countries whose higher education institutions offer such programs are France (42 programs), United Kingdom (40), United States (33), Australia (27), and Taiwan (20). Most of these programs are in business- and economics-related fields—such as accounting, banking, business administration, finance, information technology, and marketing.

GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS

The central government in Vietnam acts as the direct supervisor and administrator of higher education. Despite market reforms, Vietnam remains a unitary, nonfederal state in which state power emanates from the National People's Congress, Vietnam's top legislature. The central government determines the management of colleges and universities and educational exchange activities through MOET. MOET is responsible for governing all levels of education



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