

ars living abroad by providing free housing, duty-free status, and other benefits.

Some ill-advised national initiatives to avert the wave of immigration have, however, resulted in adverse consequences. Strict regulations hindering the exodus of scholars and students, as a measure to curb brain drain, ended up discouraging prospective returnees.

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SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The motivation of African scholars to study in the United States and stay on later is a result of complex economic, political, social, cultural, and personal matters. The impact of each factor varies from country to country and from individual to individual.

Many African countries are now undergoing economic hardships exacerbated by political turmoil and social instabilities making it difficult for scholars to return home. Furthermore, the news from home on suppression of dissidents by governments aggravated by the ever-declining support for public services discourages potential returnees.

African governments should wholeheartedly embrace the fact that scholars are the center of development, self-reliance, and sustainability. This should be accompanied by the commitment of more resources and autonomy, responsibility, academic freedom, and good working facilities, not only to encourage those scholars abroad to return but also to discourage those at home from fleeing, ultimately strengthening the nation-building capacity.

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An Asian Focus

We feature in **this** issue several articles considering aspects of Asian higher education. One of the most dynamic regions of the world, the Asian Pacific Rim is the scene of several of the world's most rapidly changing academic systems. The articles in **this** section highlight several key elements of current Asian higher education development.

Cosmopolitanism Run Amok: Work and Rewards in Asia's Universities

Philip G. Altbach

Philip G. Altbach is Monan Professor of Higher Education at Boston College. This article appeared in the South China Morning Post (Hong Kong).

The policymakers who run Hong Kong's higher education system, in an effort to ensure that academic staff are both productive and measure up to their colleagues in other countries, have placed Hong Kong's scholars and scientists in an unfortunate straitjacket. They are strongly encouraged to publish their work mainly in recognized international journals and with "gold standard" international publishers. Work published locally does not count for much in the increasingly competitive world of academe, where assessment and accountability are the slogans of the day and everything must be measured to ensure productivity.

International validation of academe has deep roots in Hong Kong, as well as in other Asian university systems.

The idea is that Hong Kong scholars and scientists should be competing with their colleagues overseas in such intellectual centers as the United States and Britain. Just as Hong Kong competes with the rest of the world economically, it should likewise be able to compete intellectually. There is also an underlying assumption that local journals and publishers cannot meet international standards. For example, it is charged that publications are not "refereed" — anonymously evaluated by peers in the field — or that even if they are subject to peer review, standards are somehow inadequate. The local academic community is not trusted to adequately judge quality, and foreign experts must play

a role in evaluating scholarship.

International validation of academe has deep roots in Hang Kong, as well as in other Asian university systems. Foreigners serve as members of Hang Kong's University Grants Committee along with local people, and are frequently involved in the evaluation of academic programs. It is assumed that Hang Kong's small and relatively new higher education system needs external review, and that local people do not have the **skills** necessary for this task. Only one institution, the University of Hang Kong, is more than a half-century old. The seven university-level institutions do not have deep roots. **Part** of the logic of external evaluation stems from the colonial tradition, which is predicated on the idea of external control. It is also assumed that what exists in the metropole is better. It is assumed that local academic standards cannot be trusted even in the heartland of the tradition of Confucian meritocracy, with its devotion to examinations.

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The goal of international validation is laudable, but the result is in the long run very damaging to the academic community, intellectual life, and scientific research in Hang Kong. There are many unintended results. Perhaps most important, the development of indigenous academic infrastructures of journals, publishers, and even of ideas is stifled. Local scholars seek to publish their work abroad. They look to the methodological and substantive interests of the international scientific community, thus ignoring local topics and needs. Everyone is looking abroad because they are forced to conform to international scientific norms.

Many Hong Kong scholars find it difficult to publish in the major international journals. Those whose first language is not English face challenges in writing for journals in the United States or Britain. Topics relevant to Hang Kong may not appeal to journal editors in the West. In many fields, Hang Kong scholars may find it difficult to conform to the current international methodological or ideological fads. The fact is that the Hong Kong academic community has many reasons to follow the scientific canons of the dominant Western trends in various fields from postmodernism to particle physics. This situation presents problems especially in the social sciences and humanities,

but also to some extent in the natural sciences as well.

The Western knowledge distribution system is highly competitive and largely unsympathetic to non-Western concerns. The most prestigious journals reject more than 80 percent of the articles submitted to them. With only a few exceptions, they publish articles that conform to the interests of the scientific establishment in the United States or Britain. A recent survey of academics in major countries found American and British scholars and scientists to be the least internationally minded. In short, it is quite difficult for researchers in other parts of the world to gain acceptance in the competitive and in some ways insular world of Western science.

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The current system focuses academic attention on the traditional centers of academe in North America and Europe. Asia and the region, while recognized as important, somehow seem less central. There is an interesting contradiction here. Research relating to Hang Kong and the region is given some emphasis by funding agencies and evaluators. At the same time, local or regional publications are considered **less** prestigious. Emerging academic centers of excellence in Japan, Taiwan, and Singapore are considered peripheral. China has only recently emerged as a focus of concern. It is, of course, easiest to measure what is already legitimized and clearest to evaluate. The most prestigious journals and publishers are in the West. Concentration on Western sources ignores publications that may be relevant to Hong Kong and to Asia, but that might be more difficult to evaluate.

Hang Kong is not alone in its slavish obeisance to Western ideas and institutions. Throughout the region, people look outside Asia, and especially to the academic power centers in the United States and Britain for respectability. Universities throughout the region encourage their faculty members to publish in Western journals, take sabbatical and research leaves in the West, and generally follow the leadership of American and British academe. In Taiwan, for example, an article published in English in a Western journal, even a journal of lesser status, is valued more highly than a local publication.

The increasing use of English for scientific and scholarly communication in the region makes it easier for an

Asian academic community to emerge. Journals in English exist in Taiwan, Japan, and of course in Hang Kong and Singapore. Even China now publishes scientific journals in English. There is also room for scholarship in indigenous languages. In Japan, scientific communication goes on in Japanese and in English.

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There is an urgent need for change. For this to occur, it is not necessary to reject international standards of scholarship or to turn inward. The fact is that Asian academic systems have grown in quality and sophistication. The infrastructures of scholarship are emerging — journals, book publishers, databases, and the like. Local and regional scholarship should be recognized as legitimate and worthy of positive evaluation. Once publication in local journals becomes accepted for academic promotion, those journals will improve. Indeed, with positive leadership, it is possible to instill in local journals high academic standards, a reviewing system that will protect quality, and an overall commitment to excellence. Reviewers from the region and the West can be used, but with the terms of reference determined by Asian editors rather than Westerners. The circulation of local journals will grow, and such journals will achieve recognition throughout the region, and eventually in the current centers in Europe and North America.

As another equally positive result, Hong Kong, and Asian, scholarship will be legitimized by these developments. Research on important local topics will expand and receive recognition, increasing the available knowledge base. Local scholars will cease to feel constrained by the topical and methodological interests of the West, and will be free to pursue locally relevant research. The time has come for Hang Kong, and Asia, to declare intellectual independence from the West. This does not mean jettisoning the ideals of quality scholarship and objective evaluation, but rather applying those standards locally and recognizing and encouraging excellence at home.

Internet Resource

For more information on international issues in higher education, visit the Center's web site, located at:

http://www.bc.edu/b_org/avp/soe/cihe/

Academic Cultures in Singapore and Hong Kong: Some Personal Impressions

Allan Walker and Peter Bodycott

Allan Walker is associate professor at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shatin, Hong Kong. Peter Bodycott is senior lecturer at the Hong Kong Institute of Education, Hong Kong. E-mail: adwalker@cuhk.hk; bodycott@bc.ied.edu.hk.

There is a tendency among many Western academics to view Southeast and East Asian countries as an undifferentiated “Confucian” group. One example of this is the simple linking of “Asian values” to the economic success of countries such as Singapore, Hang Kong, South Korea, Japan, and Taiwan. While there may indeed be some common explanatory factors behind the development of these societies, what is often ignored is that the economies have achieved prosperity through varying routes. Diverse social, political, economic, and cultural structures have formed that serve to differentiate outwardly similar countries and influence their organizational environments and those who work in them. That is, institutions of each nation have developed their own shape, and culture and these, at different levels and emphasis, are worthy of reflection.

Our focus here is on the difference in academic cultures between Hong Kong and Singapore. On the surface, one might expect the academic cultures in the two countries to be almost identical given their colonial heritage. After all, Singapore was a British colony for many years and Hang Kong remains so today, that is, until July 1997. Although Hang Kong is presently a British colony and will soon become a special administrative region within the Peoples Republic of China, here it will be referred as a country for ease of comparison. Both countries share a predominantly Chinese culture, have burgeoning economies, few natural resources except their people, and are located roughly in the same part of the world. Yet, in terms of our own experience, both have developed quite different academic environments.

Before describing what we see as some of the differences, it should be noted that our discussion is based on personal impressions only and, as such, is limited by our individual circumstances. While we have both worked in Singapore and Hang Kong, our experience is restricted to faculties of education in particular institutions, and therefore, we do not seek to generalize across all institutions or even across academic disciplines.

The most obvious difference we have found between