

Winter 2005

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Recommended Citation

Ross, Heidi and Lou, Jingjing (2005) "'Glocalizing" Chinese higher Education: Groping for Stones to Cross the River," *Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies*: Vol. 12: Iss. 1, Article 8.

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“Glocalizing” Chinese Higher Education: Groping for Stones to Cross the River, 摸着石头过河

HEIDI ROSS* AND JINGJING LOU**

INTRODUCTION

Over two and one-half decades have passed since Deng Xiaoping proclaimed that Chinese education must face in “three directions”—toward modernization, the world, and the future.¹ At that time leaders had yet to articulate the driving purpose of reform as the creation of a robust market integrated with the global economy. Today Chinese educators and policymakers use “globalization” rather than modernization to approximate the pedagogical and social means (including cultivating a citizenship capable of creativity, flexibility, independent thinking, and innovation) they believe will ensure China’s engagement in an international knowledge economy.² In response, Chinese universities grapple with how to shape institutional frameworks that fit the social, political, economic, and intellectual contours of this evolving context.

Most Chinese commentators have jumped on the globalization bandwagon, praising globalization for injecting into education a forward-looking “Olympic spirit.” Some, however, describe the impact of globalization on education more cautiously, using a Chinese proverb, “groping for stones to cross the river.” We

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1. HEIDI A. ROSS, *CHINA LEARNS ENGLISH* 8 (1993).

2. See, e.g., *CENTRALIZATION AND DECENTRALIZATION: EDUCATIONAL REFORMS AND CHANGING GOVERNANCE IN CHINESE SOCIETIES* (Mok Ka-Ho ed., 2003) (The University of Hong Kong Comparative Education Research Centre, Studies in Comparative Education 13) [hereinafter *CENTRALIZATION AND DECENTRALIZATION*].

see in this proverb an apt metaphor for the tentative searching on the part of Chinese higher education for a firm foothold in a globalizing world. The proverb also alludes to a number of contemporary metaphors for dislocation and economic change, such as diving into or crossing dangerous waters. Such images may represent the outward-looking, risk-taking, profit-seeking values associated with China's goal of "connecting" with the world.

Our paper offers a modest response to challenges set by two comparative educators who have contributed to our understanding of education and globalization processes. First, Nelly Stromquist has asked, "How can we apply the theory and knowledge of unfolding globalization developments to create an understanding of new educational phenomena?"³ We begin with that application in our examination of higher education reforms in China. Second, Philip Altbach has noted that "a balanced perspective [on how globalization trends influence education] requires careful analysis of the downside—viewpoints often not articulated in the rush toward the global future."⁴

Current scholarship on Chinese higher education suggests three particular downsides that compromise the ability of Chinese leaders to create and sustain effective interaction between purposive public policy and "growing expectations and demands of different stakeholders in society."⁵ These include the danger to schools' missions and social relationships of managerialism; the danger to educational quality of the massification and marketization of schooling; and the danger to social stability of educational disparity.⁶

In thinking about these downsides, we have found it helpful to adopt the strategy of thinking "glocally." Universities in China, like their counterparts around the world, are simultaneously national and international institutions.⁷ We agree with Robert Arnove that the study of higher education necessitates

3. NELLY P. STROMQUIST, *EDUCATION IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD*, at xxii (2002).

4. Philip G. Altbach, *Knowledge and Education as International Commodities: The Collapse of the Common Good*, INT'L HIGHER EDUC., Summer 2002, at 2, 2, available at http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/avp/soe/cihe/newsletter/News28/text001.htm.

5. Mok Ka-Ho, *Centralization and Decentralization: Changing Governance in Education*, in CENTRALIZATION AND DECENTRALIZATION, *supra* note 2, at 3.

6. *See id.* at 12–13.

7. *See generally* RUTH HAYHOE, *CHINA'S UNIVERSITIES AND THE OPEN DOOR* (1989); D. Bruce Johnstone, *Chinese Higher Education in the Context of the Worldwide University Change Agenda*, available at <http://www.gse.buffalo.edu/org/IntHigherEdFinance/Chinese/7WebBeijingForum.pdf> (last modified Sept. 30, 2003).

coming to terms with the “dialectic [that] is at work between the global and the local.”⁸ Recently, theorists have employed this insight to create the neologism “glocalization,” sometimes defined as “global localization.”⁹ Glocalization implies a search beyond the contributions and the downsides of globalization in order to conceptualize a world of greater balance between the potentially empowering trends of global communication and the concrete challenges faced by local communities.¹⁰ We hope that readers will see in our “glocal” analysis that specific economic, political, and historical contexts of China are crucial determinants of educational reform processes. Policies that look like, and often are, responses to globalization are also “pursued within the context of managing state-building and economic growth in a state-directed (or government-directed) paradigm of governance.”¹¹

I. UNIVERSITIES AS THE SPEARHEAD OF GLOCALIZATION

All levels of Chinese education have undergone profound transformation in the last decade. Public Montessori preschools vie with private international kindergartens for the children of affluent parents; internet connections and international textbooks, particularly for English language instruction, are available to students in urban classrooms. A small number of all-girls’ secondary schools, both public and private, are experimenting with gender sensitive curricula.¹² These initiatives are a direct result of Chinese policymakers, educators, and parents training their eyes and their minds outward as they attempt to educate their children.

8. Robert F. Arnove, *Introduction: Reframing Comparative Education; The Dialectic of the Global and the Local*, in *COMPARATIVE EDUCATION: THE DIALECTIC OF THE GLOBAL AND THE LOCAL I* (Robert F. Arnove & Carlos Alberto Torres eds., 2d ed. 2003) (discussing this dialectic in the field of comparative and international education) [hereinafter *THE DIALECTIC OF THE GLOBAL AND THE LOCAL*].

9. See BARBARA CZARNIAWSKA, *A TALE OF THREE CITIES: OR THE GLOCALIZATION OF CITY MANAGEMENT 12* (2003).

10. Some theorists working in this tradition pin their hopes on cities as the human setting most capable of securing the foundations of human equity, sustainability, and peaceful resolution of conflict. See *THE GLOCAL FORUM, THE GLOCALIZATION MANIFESTO 5* (2004), available at <http://topics.developmentgateway.org/glocalization/rc/filedownload.do-itemId=1011133> (last visited Jan. 27, 2005).

11. Mok Ka-Ho, *Beyond Decentralization: Changing Roles of the State in Education*, in *CENTRALIZATION AND DECENTRALIZATION*, *supra* note 2, at 203, 213.

12. See Heidi Ross, *Guest Editor's Introduction*, 34 *CHINESE EDUC. & SOC'Y* 3 (2001).

Our narrower purpose in this article is to evaluate higher education as China's "spearhead of globalization."¹³ Our use of the concept "glocalization" cuts across the grain of much Chinese scholarship on higher education and probes a contradiction within it. While the chief foci of that literature include the internationalization, globalization, and marketization of Chinese education, the underlying assumption by its scholars "continues to be determined by nation-building and modernization priorities."¹⁴

Specifically, we examine six interrelated trends in Chinese higher education. These include rapid expansion and "massification" of the system; the redefined role of the state in decentralization processes; the consolidation and ranking of universities, including the attempt to build "world class" institutions; redefinitions of quality learning and teaching; marketization and privatization; and "new transnationalism." Our particular focus on how these trends shape private higher education illuminates new stresses in the system, as well as what happens when neoliberal policies from above, globalization forces from without, and strong demands for access and accountability from below create a "perfect storm" for educational transformation.

II. THE EXPANSION AND MASSIFICATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Two global milestones were reported by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) at the end of last summer. The first milestone was that the world's university population had topped 100 million. The second milestone was that China had more students studying in post-secondary institutions than any other nation, including the United States. Over sixteen million students were studying in China's post-secondary schools, nearly two and one-half times the 1997 figure.¹⁵

The latter milestone is used by Chinese educational leaders and officials as a marker of the success of its "reform and opening" policies. Reform and expansion throughout the educational system have become potent domestic measures

13. STROMQUIST, *supra* note 3, at 103.

14. Gloria Davies, *Introduction* to VOICING CONCERNS: CONTEMPORARY CHINESE CRITICAL INQUIRY 1, 7 (Gloria Davies ed., 2001).

15. When not specifically indicated, all statistics used in this article come from the Chinese Ministry of Education. See Ministry of Education P.R.C., *2003 Statistical Report on Education*, available at <http://www.moe.edu.cn/stat/tjgongbao/> (last visited Jan. 27, 2005).

for China's emergence as a global power. It is the rare daily newspaper that does not headline expanded special and early childhood education facilities; near universal nine-year compulsory education; breaking the biggest educational bottleneck in China's system, senior secondary schools; or the latest distance education program for adults pursuing a college degree.

Until very recently, China's educational system was described as having a low center of gravity. Relative to other developing countries, the base of China's educational pyramid was very broad while the top was very narrow. Three percent of 18 to 22 year olds were studying in tertiary institutions in 1990 compared to 8 percent in India.¹⁶ Fewer than one out of every one hundred citizens in 1990 were college graduates, and between 1952 and 1988 this rate probably declined. The gross enrollment rate of higher education lingered around 2 percent in the 1980s and 3 percent in the early 1990s.¹⁷

Such figures, coupled with China's increased engagement in the global economy, explain why higher education has entered a period of unprecedented expansion. In 1999, 4.13 million students were enrolled in 1,100 regular tertiary institutions, an increase of 770,000 students in one year. Enrollment in adult higher education was 3.05 million, an increase of almost 250,000. In 2002, 9.03 million students enrolled in 1,396 regular higher education institutions. Over 80 percent of high school graduates in many cities matriculate into post-secondary institutions.

Higher education gross enrollment rates reached 15 percent of the age cohort two years ago, which, according to international standards, marks the transition from elite to mass higher education.¹⁸ Expanded higher education opportunities simultaneously reduced the gap between supply and demand at the tertiary level and put more pressure on admissions to high schools, which in 2002 accepted only 58.3 percent of junior high school graduates. Structural reforms, such as adoption in some universities of the credit system and lifting of

16. See N. Rao et al., *Primary Schooling in China and India: Understanding How Socio-Contextual Factors Moderate the Role of the State*, in *COMPARATIVE EDUCATION: CONTINUING TRADITIONS, NEW CHALLENGES, AND NEW PARADIGMS* (Mark Bray ed., 2003).

17. See UNESCO, *Education for All: The Year 2000 Assessment; Final Country Report of China*, available at <http://www.2.unesco.org/wef/countryreports/china/contents.html> (last visited Jan. 27, 2005).

18. China achieved a gross enrollment rate of 15% eight years ahead of the goal set in the state's *Action Plan to Vitalize Education in the 21st Century* issued by the Ministry of Education in 1999.

the age limit of twenty-five years for enrollment in higher education, also opened Chinese universities to older and part-time students.¹⁹

This “unprecedented expansion” built on gradual growth since 1978.²⁰ In addition, a number of more recent top-down, bottom-up, and external forces combined to expand higher education.²¹ First, the government decided to increase college opportunities and keep costs low by initiating cost recovery measures to stimulate the domestic economy. Demand by families for higher education opportunities far outstripped supply, and pragmatic policymakers, anxious to promote spending among savings-conscious families, understood that formal education was one of the few “commodities” that would urge parents to loosen their purse strings.²² The Chinese labor market also provided the younger generation rates of return for tertiary training that were much higher than those for their parents, a connection families made more rapidly than scholars. Furthermore, expanding enrollments were related to achievements in primary and secondary education.²³

III. THE CHANGING ROLE OF THE STATE IN DECENTRALIZATION PROCESSES

As higher education has expanded, relationships among the state, society, individual universities, and students have changed dramatically. Part of this change is global in nature, reflecting worldwide neoliberal trends in state and education administration. By neoliberalism we do not mean “decline of the state” arguments, singularly inappropriate in the Chinese context.²⁴ In fact, one of the chief characteristics of reform in China is “the state’s concerted effort to make use of the non-state sector and to mobilize market forces to finance educa-

19. See Mok Ka-Ho, *Globalisation and Higher Education Restructuring in Hong Kong, Taiwan and Mainland China*, 22 *HIGHER EDUC. RES. & DEV.* 117 (2003).

20. See Xin Wang, *A Policy Analysis of the Financing of Higher Education in China: Two Decades Reviewed*, 23 *J. HIGHER EDUC. POL’Y & MGMT* 205, 206 (2001).

21. Min Weifang, *Economic Transition and Higher Education Reform in China*, at 4–5 (2002), available at http://www.teacherscollege.edu/centers/coce/pdf_files/EconTransitionandHEReform.pdf.

22. Belief in the power of formal education to lead to social mobility is ubiquitous in China. Educational expenses get first priority in family budgets and are the fastest growing focus of consumer spending by urban residents. Some economists have speculated that this spending is increasing at an average rate of about twenty percent annually.

23. See CENTRALIZATION AND DECENTRALIZATION, *supra* note 2.

24. See generally STROMQUIST, *supra* note 3, at 25–31 (discussing the role of the state and neoliberalism).

tion.”²⁵ Decentralization and centralization of China’s educational system is happening simultaneously as the state mobilizes “the market, the family, the third sector and individuals” to regulate social services.²⁶

That the Chinese state plays a strong guiding role as social and economic “architect” and “regulator” will surprise few readers who have followed the processes and conditions of decentralization worldwide. Decentralization, defined as the redistribution of power and responsibility, does not necessarily mean that states do less.²⁷ It does mean that their role as “education service providers” changes “from carrying out most of the work of education itself to determining where the work will be done, by whom and how.”²⁸ Indeed, the Chinese state’s legitimacy increasingly depends on whether it successfully organizes the education system.

Since 1978, the state’s reorganization of education has been primarily to support the economic policies associated with market socialism. As power was gradually decentralized to lower levels of government during the 1980s, provincial and local governments were allowed to retain part or most of their revenues and to decide how to spend them. Furthermore, taxation reform a decade ago codified legitimate authorities of taxation and helped stabilize incomes of central and sub-central levels of the government.²⁹ In this context, educational policies promoting decentralization expanded to include: (1) the reduction of the central state’s regulation, provision, and subsidization of education service; (2) the devolution of responsibility and power to localities; (3) the diversification of resources (i.e., the encouragement of multiple channels of funding, including cost recovery measures like tuition); and (4) enhanced flexibility and autonomy in governance of educational institutions.

25. CENTRALIZATION AND DECENTRALIZATION, *supra* note 2, at 208.

26. Mok, *supra* note 5, at 5–6.

27. A large body of literature carefully examines the differential and sometimes contradictory processes in Chinese education that were once all labeled “decentralization.” Most scholars of Chinese higher education reform use as a springboard for such analyses. Mark Bray’s useful distinction is among them: “de-concentration” (the downward transfer of administrative tasks but not authority); “delegation” (discretionary transference of decision making power to other entities); and “devolution” (transference of authority to a unit with the power to act independently). Mark Bray, *Control of Education: Issues and Tensions in Centralization and Decentralization*, in *THE DIALECTIC OF THE GLOBAL AND THE LOCAL*, *supra* note 8, at 204, 206.

28. Mok, *supra* note 5.

29. Kai-Ming Cheng, *Reforms in the Administration and Financing of Higher Education*, in *HIGHER EDUCATION IN POST-MAO CHINA*, 11, 18 (Michael Agelasto & Bob Adamson eds., 1998) [hereinafter *HIGHER EDUCATION IN POST-MAO CHINA*].

Policies associated with numbers one and two above essentially define the parameters of education's "bottom line" and have been the most contentious. Particularly after the *Decision of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party on the Reform of the Educational System* in 1985, which aimed to reduce excessive government control and give higher education institutions more autonomy, institutions began to generate non-budgetary funds through tuition, contracts, international assistance, such as World Bank loans, and philanthropic donations. Once the central government deliberately reduced its role in regulating, financing, and providing services for higher education, private universities carved out a space to survive and develop.³⁰

On the ground, students, parents, and teachers had to rapidly adjust to a changing culture of schooling that emphasized private investment over public good. "Cradle to grave" housing, education, and health services for university staff and faculty were cut back as universities contracted out services. While the number of university students increased 3.2 times from 1992 to 1999, the number of support staff fell 35.3 percent. Student services and financial aid were at the forefront of change. National, provincial, city, and institutional measures to help students afford college accompanied increases in tuition. Universities began to offer teaching and research assistantships, and The People's Bank of China, the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Finance, and other institutions began supporting national student loan programs. As families absorbed an increasing share of college costs, graduates gained flexibility in job choice and place of residence.³¹

From the perspective of the college administrator, decentralization meant that universities had to raise the majority of their operating funds, sometimes as much as 80 percent, from nongovernmental sources (research grants, tuition, gifts, sale of services, income from university-run enterprises). Yet, the state remained in control of enrollment, tuition, and faculty positions, keeping out of the hands of administrators the power over a significant portion of both income and expenses. Although individual campuses began to create their own curricula, the Ministry of Education still approved all major concentrations.

30. See JING LIN, *SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION AND PRIVATE EDUCATION IN CHINA* 5–6 (1999).

31. Minzuan Zhang, *Changing Conceptions of Equity and Student Financial Support Policies*, in *HIGHER EDUCATION IN POST-MAO CHINA*, *supra* note 29, at 249.

At present, Chinese states “remain the most influential actors in shaping local education policy formulation and directing educational development.”³² Yet, “pressure for restructuring and reforming education is increasingly driven by the growing expectations and demands of different stakeholders in society.”³³ Official policy calls for the state to move from being controller and producer of social services to becoming the architect of a new, more self-regulating socialist market and knowledge-based system.³⁴

IV. CONSOLIDATION, HIERARCHY, AND WORLD-CLASS EDUCATION

Expansion and decentralization of Chinese higher education has sharpened the status hierarchy of tertiary schools. From 1995 to 1998, China’s most prestigious institutions competed for inclusion in Project 211—100 institutions forming the core of China’s world-class knowledge system, with distinguished chairs, competitive salaries, and high-tech parks and research grants to promote scholarship and university-enterprise collaboration. Guidelines for restructuring universities were to change the “obsolete” pattern under which universities were owned and run by a variety of central ministries. Such guidelines also establish a relatively decentralized, two-tiered management system in which administrative powers would be shared by both central and local governments, but with the local governments playing a major role.³⁵

Mergers were to improve economies of scale and also act as a fast track to world-class standards. From 1998 to 2000, 387 colleges and universities were consolidated into 212. By 2001, the Ministry of Education had reduced from 200 to 71 (about 3.5 percent of China’s public universities) the number of institutions it operated and provided them with additional funding.

The desire for reaching world-class standards is widespread in China and has impacted high-profile activities from producing world-class athletes who compete for gold medals on the Olympic stage to the aspirations of China’s metropolises, such as Shanghai, to become world-class cities. Significantly, education is at the core of the world-class city concept. World-class cities are envi-

32. CENTRALIZATION AND DECENTRALIZATION, *supra* note 2, at 203.

33. Mok, *supra* note 5.

34. See Ministry of Education, *Action Plan for Vitalizing Education for the 21st Century*, available at <http://www.moe.edu.cn>.

35. See Cheng, *supra* note 29, at 23.

sioned as “centers” for international economic interests, finance and trade, and learning. Shanghai’s road to becoming a “Learning City” has engaged leaders in discussions about lifelong education, all-around personal development, and satisfying public demand for education.³⁶ Shanghai provides a mirror for the future of higher education in China. When its higher education gross enrollment rate exceeded 40 percent, a number of officials raised concerns about maintaining educational quality and about the under-employment of college graduates. Those fears, as we see below, are now national in scope.

Comparative educators are generally skeptical of high-profile attempts to build world-class universities.³⁷ Nevertheless, the world-class concept has one important benefit: “[I]t is focusing attention on academic standards and improvement, and on the roles of universities in society, and of how academic institutions can fit in a higher education system within a country and in the global academic universe.”³⁸ These questions, which consume the attention of administrators at premier and mid-level institutions in China, are typically labeled issues of “quality.”

V. CONCERNS ABOUT QUALITY IN THE CONTEXT OF MASSIFICATION AND GLOCALIZATION

Gerard Postiglione has correctly noted that in China “[t]here is an abiding faith in and appeal to international standards (*guoji jiegui*) as a means of salvation within the new economy.”³⁹ A school in Beijing, for example, describes quality education as a toehold for cultivating creative twenty-first century internationalized thinkers.⁴⁰ However, glocalization has complicated educators’ understandings of educational quality (*suzhi*) and how to improve it. Commonly, quality is defined in China holistically as the cultivation of citizens with high-level academic skills, the capacity to think critically, and “virtue.”⁴¹ Virtue usu-

36. Interviews with Officers of the Shanghai Bureau of Education (June 2004).

37. See, e.g., Philip G. Altbach, *The Costs and Benefits of World-Class Universities*, INT’L HIGHER EDUC., Fall 2003, at 5, 8, available at http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/avp/soe/cihe/newsletter/News33/text003.htm.

38. *Id.*

39. Gerard Postiglione, *Universities for Knowledge Economies: Hong Kong and the Chinese Mainland Within Globalization and Decentralization*, in CENTRALIZATION AND DECENTRALIZATION, *supra* note 2, at 157, 162–63.

40. See Beijing Shu Ren Private School, at www.shuren.org/engvision/.

41. See Heidi A. Ross & Jing Lin, *Schools of Goodwill in China: Helping Poor Students Succeed*, 39 J. OF THOUGHT 131, 133–35 (2004).

ally translates to moral responsibility, humanistic concern, and a regard for Chinese cultural traditions, all of which seem to the Chinese public to be eroding away in a globalizing age. At the university level, one interesting and under-analyzed example of such thinking is implied in China's 1999 Plan to Build up Key National Bases for Humanities and Social Sciences Research in Regular Higher Education Institutions. Just over 100 leading research centers were identified for the program, which is creating new multidisciplinary programs to study some of China's most pressing social needs.⁴²

China's rapid expansion of private schools, to which we now turn in more detail, has ratcheted up concerns about quality. Many private schools lack adequate funding, qualified teachers, and students. Systems of accreditation and oversight are in their infancy.⁴³ In addition, as the job market for college graduates becomes more competitive, the media, policymakers, and parents are more carefully scrutinizing college programs. Furthermore, college graduates must now find their own employment. More than 2.8 million students graduated from Chinese universities last summer, and the Ministry of Education has reported that about 30 percent of these students will not find immediate employment. In response, institutions of higher education are pressed to “prove” the value of their degrees and provide greater support to job-seeking graduates. This year, the state has also stepped back in, through a highly symbolic “start and improve your business” program, to urge university graduates to “become their own bosses.”⁴⁴

While the debate about what Chinese universities should be doing and do continues, students are arriving on the doorsteps of unaccredited institutions by the millions. It is highly unlikely that the problem of quality teaching and learning will be solved any time soon. “[Q]uality assurance will be up to a professoriate in China that is generally under paid, a college and university administration that is focused on financing the expansion, and a government education apparatus that has begun to transfer more autonomy and responsibility to individual institutions.”⁴⁵

42. Interviews with faculty at Tsinghua University (June 2004).

43. See LIN, *supra* note 30.

44. Interviews with higher education faculty in four institutions in Beijing (2004).

45. Postiglione, *supra* note 39, at 165.

VI. THE MARKETIZATION AND PRIVATIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Despite continued expansion of higher education, supply still lags behind demand.⁴⁶ Parental demand for education is one of the reasons private institutions have received so much bottom-up support since their re-emergence in the 1980s. This demand has exacerbated the State's relationship with private universities, which has been, at best, "affirmative but also contradictory,"⁴⁷ and "encouraging with great cautions."⁴⁸

By 2001, eighty-nine private higher education institutions had been accredited by the Ministry of Education to offer degrees and diplomas. In 2002, China's 1,396 regular colleges and universities (with an enrollment of nine million students) included 133 accredited private institutions, which enrolled a total of 320,000 students. An additional 1,202 non-accredited private higher education institutions enrolled 1.4 million students.

Is the emergence of private universities on such a large scale a sign of privatization? A number of scholars argue convincingly that privatization, the transfer of ownership or administration from public to private sectors, is not an accurate description of the Chinese context.⁴⁹ Instead, private universities were established in China independent from the public sector, receiving neither financial support from the state nor a clear legal framework in which to operate. Consequently, to describe the rise of private universities in China we prefer the broader term marketization. While the idea of a "free market" is based upon principles such as private ownership, private management, private production and distribution of goods, and the retention of profit in private hands, the process of marketization may or may not involve privatization. Marketization

46. China's institutions of higher education include regular and adult higher education. The regular sector includes four-year and three-year specialized programs, leading to a bachelor's degree and diploma, respectively. Adult higher education consists of two- and four-year diploma granting programs. Self-study higher education programs are also available. Students who fail to enter four-year, degree-granting institutions have several options, including specialized colleges or vocational-technical colleges with two- or three-year diploma granting programs. Private schools provide another option. See Johnstone, *supra* note 7.

47. LIN, *supra* note 30, at 156.

48. H. H. Zhao, *An Analysis of China's People-run Schools* (2004) (Unpublished paper presented at the Comparative International Educational Society Annual Conference, Mar. 8–12, Salt Lake City).

49. See, e.g., Julia Kwong, *Introduction: Marketization and Privatization in Education*, 20 INT'L J. OF EDUC. DEV. 87 (2000); see also CENTRALIZATION AND DECENTRALIZATION, *supra* note 2.

refers, then, to the adoption of market practices and criteria such as profit, affordability, efficiency, effectiveness, accountability, and customer choice in public sectors like education.

The “Supply” and “Demand” of China’s Education Market

A review of the research on marketization of Chinese education indicates that the return, growth, and development of private institutions are the result of multiple “glocal” forces. The expansion of private schools was fueled on the supply side as “[e]ntrepreneurial educators entered the market to make a profit when a scarcity of educational opportunities existed.”⁵⁰ As education became perceived as a private investment, private schools of all types became more popular because of their willingness to accommodate: (1) the needs of “failed students” who had not passed the college entrance examination and sought a second chance to attend college; (2) the desire of students for marketable “hot skills” like foreign language and computer competencies; (3) the hopes of urban parents who sought elite alternatives to state schools to give their single children a leg up in what was an increasingly competitive job market; (4) the limited means of rural students who sought a cheaper local alternative to increasingly expensive non-local public compulsory education; and (5) the inability or unwillingness of the state to pay for the growing demand for quality education.

For decades, China has been criticized for what both international agencies and the state’s own officers have criticized as disproportionately low investments in education. In 1998 to 1999, when rapid expansion of higher education grabbed the country’s attention, China ranked 145th out of 153 nations in terms of per-capita education spending. Although national policy prescribed government educational expenditures of 4 percent of GDP in 2000, the figure was 2.5 percent, virtually unchanged since the 1950s.⁵¹

We have mentioned above the significance to marketization of the state’s primary financing strategies: financial decentralization, in which financing responsibility is delegated to local governments, and resource diversification, in which both governmental and non-governmental resources are mobilized for

50. Julia Kwong, *The Reemergence of Private Schools in Socialist China*, 41 COMP. EDUC. REV. 244, 257 (1997).

51. See *Education for All: The Year 2000 Assessment; Final Country Report of China*, *supra* note 17, at § 5.1.

Table 1. Funding sources for higher education (1978–1994) (billion yuan, 1 us dollar=about 8.3 yuan)

Year	GDP	Total Gov. revenue	Gov revenue as % of GDP	Total Gov. expenditure	Total expenditure on higher ed	Gov. expenditure on higher ed as % of total Gov. expenditure
1978	358.80	123.30	34.4	122.50	1.50	1.2
1979	399.80	126.30	31.6	146.90	2.32	1.6
1980	447.60	131.60	29.4	146.20	2.81	1.9
1982	518.20	141.20	27.2	148.30	3.44	2.3
1984	692.80	183.20	26.5	193.90	5.22	2.7
1986	968.80	244.60	25.2	263.30	7.20	2.7
1988	1,407.40	280.30	19.9	313.70	8.20	2.6
1990	1,856.40	355.00	19.1	391.70	8.90	2.3
1992	2,665.60	392.80	14.7	453.90	11.80	2.6
1994	4,500.60	521.80	11.6	579.30	18.60	3.2

Source: China Educational Statistical Yearbook, 1978–1994 (Wang, 2001, P. 20)

public services like education. Although the state did not at first explicitly support the re-emergence of private higher education, decentralization and diversification policies provided room for private education to return, grow, and eventually be formally recognized in policy and law as a supplement to public higher education. The state's reluctant recognition of the legitimacy of private higher education was both a response to national needs and a reflection of the state's policy to let market forces constrain public services.⁵²

Private education also received a significant boost from powerful bottom-up social forces. Since 1978, the breathtaking transformation of China's economy has required a greater diversity of trained young people. At the same time, the booming domestic economy, with an annual GDP increase of nearly 10 percent over two decades, has greatly increased national income (see Table 2). In addition, the Chinese government has pursued policies that have facilitated redistribution of income more favorable to individual families. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, about 30 percent of GDP was state revenue, 25 percent went to enterprises, and 45 percent went to individual families. By the mid-1990s, only 10 percent went to the state, 20 percent went to enterprises, and 70 percent went to individual families.⁵³

The gap between the great demand for higher education and the incapability of public institutions to satisfy it built a solid market niche for private education and substantially stimulated its growth. Investing in private education also served as an incentive for "educational entrepreneurs" to establish private

52. See LIN, *supra* note 30, at 146–55.

53. Weifang, *supra* note 21, at 12–13.

Table 2. Annual per capita income, 1980 to 1999 Unit: *Yuan* (1 Dollar=approximately 8.3 *Yuan*)

Year	Net income of rural residents (<i>Yuan</i>)	Disposable income of urban residents (<i>Yuan</i>)
1980	191.3	477.6
1985	397.6	739.1
1987	462.6	1002.2
1989	601.5	1375.7
1990	686.3	1510.2
1992	784.0	2026.6
1994	1221.0	3496.2
1996	1926.1	4838.9
1998	2162.0	5425.1
1999	2210.3	5854.0

Source: National Bureau of Statistics, China, 2000

schools. Although private universities may not legally generate private profits (i.e., all gains must be reinvested into education), virtually all private university leaders have been involved in profit-taking schemes.⁵⁴ Publications, with titles like *A Place for Profit in China*, are ubiquitous in the domestic and international media and refer to the lucrative business of private universities in China.

Top-down, bottom-up, and supply/demand factors propelling the development of private education, as well as the changing role of the state in education planning, reflect a number of global decentralization and recentralization patterns. Adopting variants of neoliberal policies, nation-states around the world have been shifting fiscal responsibility for higher education from central to lower levels of government and from the public to the private sector through the diversification of resources.⁵⁵ As a result, the higher education sector generally receives much less direct financial support from central governments than it did during the 1960s and 1970s. In turn, as institutions of higher education pay more of their own way they have become more diverse, creating missions tailored to the needs of their constituencies.

VII. THE CONFLICTING MISSIONS OF PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION IN CHINA

At their most basic, the missions of universities can be classified as economic, political, cultural, and social.⁵⁶ The economic mission of Chinese univer-

54. LIN, *supra* note 30, at 159–61.

55. See Bray, *supra* note 27, at 204–224.

56. See, e.g., Torsten Husén, *The Idea of the University: Changing Roles, Current Crisis, and Future Challenges*, in HIGHER EDUCATION IN AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE: CRITICAL ISSUES 3 (Zaghloul

sities in the era of market socialism has been to sustain and stimulate national economic development by training highly qualified citizens and by providing innovation in science and technology.⁵⁷ The political mission of Chinese universities includes the education of citizens with both a strong sense of national identity and a world perspective. The cultural mission, to engage the Chinese citizenry in the knowledge of its civilization and of humanity, is essentially a question of what is most worth knowing. Clarifying the relative importance and interrelationship of the local and the global is fundamental to both political and cultural missions, and represents a particular challenge in China, where the state's aim is to integrate students as future elites into the current political system, assuring its future.⁵⁸

Finally, the most critical social mission of Chinese universities, in the famous words of Carnegie, is to create "ladders upon which the aspiring can rise." Market socialism has widened the gap between China's haves and have nots. Currently, China ranks in the bottom third of the world's countries in terms of income distribution.⁵⁹ Its GINI coefficient (a measure of income distribution that rates economies between zero for absolute income equality and one for absolute inequality) has risen from 0.18 percent in 1978 to 0.51 percent in 2002. The need for Chinese universities to critically evaluate the redistributive power of globalization has never been more pressing.

A. Economic Missions

Private universities in China are noted for addressing a limited economic mission. One of their perceived advantages is flexibility in responding to the needs of enterprises and the demands of labor markets. Private universities primarily offer "hot" majors like economics, finance, and computer science to attract students desirous of marketable skills and credentials. Yet, while private universities attribute their success to their adaptation to market demands, their problems also stem from this adaptation. Because the survival of private institutions relies on student tuition

Morsy & Philip G. Altbach eds., 1996); *UNIVERSITIES AND GLOBALIZATION: CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES* (Jan Currie & Janice Newson eds., 1998); Marek Kwiek, *Globalization and Higher Education*, 26 *HIGHER EDUC. IN EUR.* 27 (2001).

57. See *Action Plan to Vitalize Education in the 21st Century*, *supra* note 18.

58. See HAYHOE, *supra* note 7, at 9.

59. See Human Development Reports, China, *available at* http://hdr.undp.org/statistics/data/cty/cty_f_CHN.html (last visited Jan. 26, 2005).

and enrollment, private universities privilege instrumental knowledge and low-cost, quick-return courses, neglect basic science and humanities, and then, by definition, fail to live up to their promise of being “real” universities.⁶⁰

B. Political and Cultural Missions

In terms of the formal curriculum, most private universities have paid little attention to their political and cultural missions. The curriculum is dominated by fairly narrowly defined skills training, with the exception of classes in political ideology. Humanities courses remain undeveloped because they are considered “cold” in the higher education market. However, private universities’ peripheral status, precarious financing, and need to closely monitor and respond to the concerns of parents have resulted in a strong implicit curriculum driven by the need to insure student safety and the ideological status quo. The desire to maintain harmonious working relations with government officials who are often distrustful of private institutions, as well as to assure parents that their money is being well spent, thwarts the “flexible spirit of innovation” that is lauded as the primary advantage of private institutions.

Finally, we have noted that private higher education has greatly expanded the scale of higher education in China. In 2002, private universities educated 1.72 million of the 10.4 million students enrolled in the regular higher education sector. However, private universities usually charge fairly high tuition and fees that are affordable only by students from middle-class or affluent families. According to the state’s figures, 13 percent of urban families belong to the “middle class,” the definition for which is an annual income of 100,000 *yuan* or about \$1,200 a month. That amount is almost five times the average income of individuals in Shanghai, China’s wealthiest metropolis.

In sum, private universities generally fall short of fulfilling the overall missions of universities. In this context, there are questions to be asked of the central government. How much weight will policymakers (and state regulations) give to the private higher education sector in the next few years? Will private higher education remain the “step-kid” of the Ministry of Education?⁶¹ If the state de-

60. See generally Jing Lin, *Private Higher Education in China: A Contested Terrain*, 36 INT’L HIGHER EDUC. 17, 17–18 (2004), available at http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/avp/soe/cihe/newsletter/News36/text010.htm.

61. LIN, *supra* note 30.

cides to treat private higher education as a legitimate part of the educational system, then it might consider offering private institutions financial support, particularly for the development of general education and basic science and humanities curricula.

In contrast to the state's affirmative rhetoric, which we would describe as largely symbolic, state support, especially at local levels, lags far behind. The state acknowledges it needs private higher education as social demand for education continues to grow. But its "suspicion of the private nature of such schools and its uncertainty about its political effects" is an obstacle to the full integration of private higher education into the national education system.⁶²

Jandhyala Tilak's analysis of extreme, strong, moderate, and pseudo-privatization efforts worldwide throws a comparative spotlight on the Chinese state's ambivalence about supporting private higher education.⁶³ "Extreme" privatization efforts refer to near total privatization of the higher education sector with little intervention by a government. "Strong" privatization efforts refer to the recovery of the full costs of public higher education. "Moderate" privatization efforts refer to public provision of higher education with a reasonable level of financing from nongovernmental sources. Finally, "pseudo-privatization" efforts refer to higher education institutions that are privately managed but government-aided.⁶⁴ Only moderate efforts produce consistently promising results, primarily because they support cost-sharing and communication among states, families, and societies.⁶⁵

Tilak's conclusion assumes that higher education is a quasi-private good. In general, this description fits the Chinese context. In 2002, China's first Private Education Law was promulgated with great fanfare and high expectations. Unfortunately, the law has since come to be viewed as "a double-edged sword, aiming both to promote and regulate private [education]."⁶⁶ In a recent review of the condition of private higher education in China, Jing Lin reported that just over a year ago, "participants at a conference in Nanjing bemoaned the fact that the

62. Zhao, *supra* note 48, at 19.

63. Jandhyala B. G. Tilak, *The Privatization of Higher Education, in HIGHER EDUCATION IN AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE: CRITICAL ISSUES*, *supra* note 56, at 59.

64. *Id.*

65. *Id.*

66. Fengqiao Yan & Daniel C. Levy, *China's New Private Education Law*, *INT'L HIGHER EDUC.*, Spring 2003, at 9, 10, available at http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/avp/soe/cihe/newsletter/News31/text005.htm.

‘winter of private education’ had set in.”⁶⁷ Conference delegates argued that the new law not only failed to clarify and protect the rights and autonomy of private universities, but also paved “the way for government schools, state banks, and local governments to combine resources to edge out private universities.”⁶⁸ The leaders of private universities chafe under restrictions that prevent them from admitting students until after public institutions do and prevent them from issuing degrees. They feel undermined as public universities, using public resources, set up profit-making “second-tier colleges” that will compete for their potential students. They see the rise of second-tier colleges as a clear violation of the 2002 law, which establishes that private schools and universities are to be privately established and administered.⁶⁹

Faced with mixed messages from the state regarding their value and legitimacy, private universities must develop clearer missions. One well-known private university in Shaanxi Province, aspiring to a position of leadership and eventually to numbering among one of China’s prestigious universities, has gone farther than most private universities in this process. The university’s short term aim is to provide its students a general education and a campus culture that creates for students a “happy home.” The institution’s three-pronged strategy includes: (1) placing limits on quantitative development (the rapid expansion of enrollment to bring in tuition income that was the key to their survival in the past decade) in favor of quality; (2) emphasizing market-oriented professional and low-cost majors, while trying to provide students with a general education that includes concentrations in the arts and sciences; and (3) balancing the desires of parents and students and the regulatory hand of the state in order to create a safe, yet relaxed, campus culture that allows for student exploration and self-management.

VIII. PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE DISTRIBUTIVE OUTCOMES OF GLOCALIZATION

China has made the largest single contribution to global poverty reduction of any country in the last two decades.⁷⁰ Nevertheless, during that same period, China

67. Lin, *supra* note 60, at 17–18.

68. *Id.*

69. Interview with private university presidents in Shaanxi Province, China (June 2004).

70. See WORLD BANK, CHINA: COUNTRY ECONOMIC MEMORANDUM: PROMOTING GROWTH WITH EQUITY, at ii (2003), available at <http://www.worldbank.org.cn/English/Content/cem%202003-en.pdf> (last visited Jan. 26, 2005).

also experienced the most rapid increase in income disparity of any country ever tracked by the World Bank. This paradox regarding the distributive outcomes of market socialism presents Chinese educators and policy makers a significant context for deliberating whether universities, vital to the stability of society, can help fulfill the state's commitment to equality of social and educational opportunities.

As higher education prices itself out of the reach of many Chinese families, the public has begun to question just whom universities are supposed to serve.⁷¹ Enrollment corruption scandals at prestigious public universities have drawn the ire of the public.⁷² A widely publicized incident at Beijing University of Aviation and Aerospace involved two professors who demanded that a father pay 100,000 *yuan* before his daughter was admitted. Private universities are also vulnerable to strong criticism, not only because of their high tuitions and unabashed profit-seeking, but also because many have built sprawling campuses by buying up the land of farmers and village schools, disrupting the lives and education of poorer rural citizens.

By the end of the 1990s, all college students had to pay their own tuition.⁷³ Although estimates vary, Rui Yang calculates that at that time:

[W]hen student fees were still relatively low, a student needed at least 10,000 to 10,500 *yuan* annually for a 10-month academic year, already an astronomical amount for many families. A survey in Shandong showed that only 8.01 percent of families could cope with the whole amount on their own, 22.43 percent could only manage half, 43.68 percent could afford less than one-third, and 10.2 percent felt absolutely helpless.⁷⁴

71. China has made some important quantitative strides in opening up higher education. For example, the last decade has seen an increase in participation of girls and women at every level of schooling. For the first time, in 2000, the proportion of female students in colleges exceeded 40%. Girls outnumber boys as first year college students in Shanghai and in Beijing.

72. See Wu Zhong, *Lessons in Greed*, THE STANDARD, Aug. 23, 2004, available at http://www.thestandard.com.hk/thestandard/..%5Cthstandard%5Ccolumn_detail_frame_col.cfm?colid=7&articleid=387.

73. See JAMIL SALMI, *STUDENT LOANS IN AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE: THE WORLD BANK EXPERIENCE* (1999), available at http://www1.worldbank.org/education/lifelong_learning/publications/student_loans.pdf (last visited Jan. 26, 2005).

74. Yang Rui, *Lost Opportunities in the Massification of Higher Education in China*, INT'L HIGHER EDUC., Summer 2002, at 16, 17, available at http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/avp/soe/cihe/newsletter/News28/text009.htm.

Student loan programs, first developed by the state in the 1980s to serve financially disadvantaged students, are available to a growing number of students. Commercial banks also provide loans to students. Yet, the lack of both an effective personal credit system and a tradition of borrowing have hampered the promotion of student loans.⁷⁵

Recently, sensational media reports about “how college becomes a killer” have documented the tragic costs of the unequal distribution of higher education. Some of the stories are about students who take their own lives when their dreams of higher education are smashed by poverty. Other stories feature desperate parents who, unable to fund their children’s tuition “atone for their guilt” by committing suicide.⁷⁶ Sun Shoujun, a farmer in northeastern China, left a sober note to his son before drinking pesticide.⁷⁷ Jing Tongshi was unable to pay his daughter’s tuition and likewise poisoned himself.⁷⁸ A Beijing mother, unable to find money for her daughter Zhang Xi, stood outside a local hospital holding a placard reading, “For sale: my kidney for my daughter’s tuition.”⁷⁹

Comparative educators sometimes argue that:

[t]here exists much more political and even financial space for governments to condition the way globalization is brought into education than is usually admitted. . . . That states generally choose not to be responsive to more equitable versions of knowledge production is at least partly the result of ideological preference rather than helplessness in the face of new competitive pressures and new, globalized thinking.⁸⁰

China presents a case in point. While devolution of authority in the governance of higher education has increased educational opportunities and flexibility, it has also allowed the state to pass the buck on stubborn social justice issues.

75. See Li Yong-Yan, *College Education: A Luxury That Can Take Your Life*, SOUTH CHINA MORNING POST, Aug. 31, 2004, available at <http://asianews.it/view.php?l=en&art=1385> (last visited Jan. 26, 2005).

76. *Id.*

77. *Id.*

78. *Id.*

79. *Id.*

80. MARTIN CARNOY, GLOBALIZATION AND EDUCATIONAL REFORM: WHAT PLANNERS NEED TO KNOW 83 (1999).

IX. THE STATE, HIGHER EDUCATION, INTELLECTUALS,
AND THE "NEW TRANSNATIONALISM"

The commodification of education will have major implications for how we think about schooling and the university, the ownership and transmission of knowledge, and indeed the role of citizenship in modern society. The implications are immense, both for nations and for the globalization and internationalization of education.⁸¹

The glocal forces that exacerbate social and educational disparities in China will thrive in an era of new "transnational higher education, in which academic institutions from one country operate in another."⁸² China has become a key player in global educational entrepreneurship. Chinese parents send their children abroad to be educated by the tens of thousands.⁸³ Chinese universities are marketing Chinese language and culture programs aggressively to international students desirous of a study abroad experience in China.⁸⁴ Foreign institutions are eagerly setting up shop in China, managing jointly-run degree programs and franchising degrees to Chinese institutions. The speed at which Chinese universities have internationalized has caused one observer to remark that "China is perhaps the world's most complex, overhyped, and underanalyzed market for transnational higher education."⁸⁵

Of course, glocalization trends have also positively shaped education. Policies to strengthen the humanities and social sciences in China are a direct result of the internationalization of higher education. The Chinese state, supported by the World Bank, continues its policies of turning China's brain drain into a "brain gain."⁸⁶ Over 60,000 Chinese students study in the United States. Their ability to communicate in English and Chinese is shaping global patterns of the

81. Altbach, *supra* note 4.

82. Philip G. Altbach, *Higher Education Crosses Borders: Can the United States Remain the Top Destination for Foreign Students?*, CHANGE, MAR/APR. 2004, at 18, 22.

83. Yang Rui, *China's Entry into the WTO and Higher Education*, INT'L HIGHER EDUC., Summer 2001, at 9, 9, available at http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/avp/soe/cihe/newsletter/ihe_pdf/ihe24.pdf.

84. *See id.*

85. Richard Garrett, *Foreign Higher Education Activity in China*, INT'L HIGHER EDUC., Winter 2004, at 21, 21, available at http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/avp/soe/cihe/newsletter/News34/text012.htm.

86. Five special issues of *Chinese Education and Society* have been devoted to this subject during the last 4 years.

production of knowledge, not only in science and technology but increasingly in the social sciences and humanities.

China's reform and opening era has been characterized as a struggle to balance the needs of two civilizations, one spiritual, one material. Education is conceptualized as part of spiritual civilization, and an underpinning of a new social ethos that could ameliorate the negative social, moral, and environmental consequences of the strong nation, get-rich-is-glorious forces of market socialism. At the urging of Jiang Zemin, who introduced the concept in 2002, China's constitution was amended this year to include a third category called “political civilization.”⁸⁷ Will “political civilization”—still vaguely conceived but alluding to the rule of law, human rights, and increased democratic participation—inscribe a space, separate from, but overlapping, the material and spiritual domains, in which Chinese universities might redefine public initiative and social action?

Nelly Stromquist argues that “[t]he university's attainment of its positive potential will require a social protagonism most intellectuals have seldom had to engage in.”⁸⁸ Whether Chinese intellectuals might rise to this challenge remains to be seen. It is striking how relatively relaxed Chinese educators and policy-makers have been regarding the marketization of schooling. Most seem to accept at face value that universities must serve as “coordinators for further global economic integration.”⁸⁹ To date, few Chinese academics have devoted their scholarship to testing the premise that “[g]lobalization might create more challenges than opportunities for China” or that “[t]here is danger in failing to make a conscious decision to resist, negotiate, and transform globalization practices.”⁹⁰

This lack of critical evaluation of the processes of glocalization might be explained by the social context in which higher education reform began. David Zweig has argued that reforms came first from the central government, but “[l]ike water to a man dying of thirst, global resources offered China's universities and intellectuals resuscitation, rejuvenation, and even a source of life for new organizations.”⁹¹ Wang Yuechuan takes a different approach by examining

87. See generally CAO SIYUAN, *THE ABC'S OF POLITICAL CIVILIZATION: A COMPENDIUM OF CHINESE POLITICAL REFORMS I* (2003) (discussing the concept of political civilization), available at <http://www.cipe.org/pdf/publications/fs/cao.pdf>.

88. STROMQUIST, *supra* note 3, at 130.

89. Postiglione, *supra* note 39, at 157.

90. Yang, *supra* note 83, at 9, 10.

91. DAVID ZWEIG, *INTERNATIONALIZING CHINA, DOMESTIC INTERESTS AND GLOBAL LINKAGES* 162 (1992).

the legitimation crisis Chinese intellectuals have faced as their role in Chinese society has shifted from sometimes vital, sometimes paralyzed social conscience to entrepreneur in a world of corporate managerialism.⁹² Although a recent comparative survey of academics indicated that relative to their counterparts worldwide, university professors in China have “a stronger sense of professional obligation to apply their knowledge to serve society,”⁹³ Wang concludes that, in today’s China, “there are perhaps only professionals, no intellectuals.”⁹⁴

We would argue that Wang’s assertion is premature. However, the time has arrived for a critical review by China’s leading scholars of the missions of higher education and the “values of the national and social common good that must be protected and preserved in a globalized educational environment.”⁹⁵

92. See VOICING CONCERNS: CONTEMPORARY CHINESE CRITICAL INQUIRY 38 (Gloria Davies ed., 2001).

93. Gerard A. Postiglione & Jiang Minghe, *Academic Culture in Shanghai’s Universities*, INT’L HIGHER EDUC., Fall 1999, at 12, 13, available at http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/avp/soe/cihe/newsletter/News17/text7.html (last visited Nov. 11, 2004).

94. VOICING CONCERNS: CONTEMPORARY CHINESE CRITICAL INQUIRY, *supra* note 92.

95. Altbach, *supra* note 4, at 2.