University Accountability Practices in Mainland China and Hong Kong: A Comparative Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This article reports findings from research about the tensions between global commonalities and localised differences in accountability policies and practices in Mainland China and Hong Kong. Based on empirical data, it indicates complex and dynamic interrelationships in globalising processes. There is resentment among academics in both societies toward the externally derived accountability practices and China and Hong Kong have both failed to strike a balance between the state, markets and universities. The findings remind us again of the crucial importance of local contexts in international policy borrowing. The theoretical framework adopted in this article brings together a hybrid of critical and post-structuralist perspectives to inform the analysis of policy, and allows for a macro or 'bigger picture' at global, regional and national levels, as well as micro-level interactions within individual institutions to be examined simultaneously. In-depth understanding was gained by collecting data in case study universities in different settings. Both documentary and interview data were collected from each case study institution. Quotes are used extensively to allow respondents' voices to be heard, and an audit trail is provided with respondents coded for each institution.

Introduction

Accountability policies have featured in recent educational reforms in many countries, signalling new relationships between the state, markets and educational institutions. Despite different national and localised contexts, a number of common 'global' trends have been identified in the policy domain. Many scholars have argued that globalisation strengthens the grip of economic competition and carries neo-liberal norms to every corner of the world. Further, the neo-liberal globalisation agenda has reduced government funding of public universities and has begun to unravel the notion that universities exist for the public good. University managers have been forced to restructure their institutions to avoid fiscal decline (Eggins, 2003). The university is increasingly subordinated to capital and to the state on behalf of capital, and the erstwhile collective mission of public universities and the liberal personal formation of students are subordinated by market competition and weakened by consumer subjectivities.

However, the transformation is not complete, nor is it solely engineered from above by managers and governments, let alone universal forces of 'capitalism' and 'globalisation' (Marginson, 2006, p. 46). Simultaneously context-specific differences are also evident. This article reports findings from research about the tensions between global commonalities and localised differences in accountability policies and practices in Mainland China (hereafter referred to as China) and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (hereafter referred to as Hong Kong).

With empirical data collected at the research sites, this study aims to contribute to the literature on globalisation and higher education where one major problem is the tendency for arguments to be based on sweeping generalisations and abstract theoretical assertions insufficiently connected to specific historical examples and evidence. There are still too few studies of the implications of globalisation processes grounded in detailed examinations of particular historical and geographical times and spaces (Yang, 2002). Empirical studies are especially lacking in the Asian region. This article therefore aims to make a contribution to redressing the global research imbalance.

The Contexts

Similar to the situation in many parts of the world, there have been sustained calls in China and Hong Kong for more streamlined governance structures including smaller councils, fewer committees, appointed rather than elected deans and heads of schools and greater devolution of resources with line responsibility (Chan & Mok, 2001). These changes are to develop "a stronger management model that is more akin to practices in the private sector" (Sutherland, 2002, p. 6). In both societies, there is a desire to be competitive internationally and to look to the policies of other countries to determine the best way to develop 'world-class' universities. To achieve this, both governments have adopted policies of decentralisation to allow more autonomy and flexibility to universities to induce greater creativity. However at the same time, they have introduced controls and regulations through accountability.

With its entrance into the World Trade Organisation (WTO), China has significantly increased its position internationally as a socio-economic and geopolitical force, as it has shifted from its isolationist, politics-oriented policies to open door, economic-oriented policies. This change was accompanied by major reforms in higher education to support a drive to modernise the nation (Agelasto & Adamson, 1998). China's practice has been described as a 'deregulated state model' or an 'interventionist state model.' This model is exemplified by the central government's policy push for university mergers (Mok, 2005b) to achieve economic benefits with an assumption that larger units, based on economies of scale, would yield qualitatively stronger academic institutions, better management and more cost-effective use of administrative resources (Yang, 2000), echoing the situation in many other parts of the world (Harman & Meek, 2002).

In a 'deregulated state model', the central government maintains a relatively tight control over higher education policies (Hawkins, 2000), and also introduces market mechanisms to reduce the burden of financing higher education alone (Kooiman, 2000). The rhetoric of efficiency is fast gaining momentum in China (Kwong, 1997), where universities are under immense pressure to generate revenue. As the Chinese government moves towards greater delegation of some powers to its universities, it also attaches more importance to 'social supervision' as a way of ensuring the quality of higher education in the longer term (Xu et al., 2001).

China started to adopt policies of decentralisation in the mid-1980s with the Decision on the Reform of the Educational Structure issued by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Central Committee (1985). It put emphasis on local responsibility, diversity of educational opportunities, multiple sources of educational funds and the decentralisation of power to individual institutions to govern their own affairs. In 1993 the Programme for Education Reform and Development in China jointly issued by the CCP Central Committee and the State Council reaffirmed this policy and suggested that the central government play the role of macro-manager through legislation, allocation of funding, planning, information service, policy guidance and essential administration, while universities independently provide education geared to the needs of society under the supervision of the government.

By the late 1990s, through implementing a series of policies of decentralisation and marketisation, the Chinese government had initiated fundamental changes in the orientation, financing, curriculum, and management of higher education (Agelasto & Adamson, 1998). Through donations and loans, some supra-national agencies have begun playing an increasingly prominent role in promoting this market ideology. The influence of the World Bank's financial power has led to its strategic collaboration with the central government (Drake, 2001). The OECD, although with less direct institutionalised involvement, has also been influential in China's higher education policy-making. While the WTO's potential effect is yet to be realised (Robertson et al., 2002), its impact on Chinese universities will be more significant via its influence on China's economic reforms.

In Hong Kong, the government has initiated policies to redefine the functions of its universities, introducing quality assurance mechanisms, diversifying funding sources, and reforming university governance systems (Mok, 2005a). Block funding and triennial budgets were introduced in the 1990s in Hong Kong, along with strengthened performance reviews and incentive funding to make universities more competitive internationally. Thus, again, enhancing university autonomy has not necessarily led to reduced state control. The introduction of stringent measures to hold universities accountable to the government and the implementation of various kinds of quality assurance activities indicate recentralisation. Although Hong Kong is less state-centric in its approach to economic and social change than China, having modelled its universities on the relatively autonomous British universities during its colonial era and embraced a more free-enterprise approach, the state does appear

to have become more interventionist. The government and its University Grants Committee (UGC) are using the mechanism of 'steering from a distance' to influence the direction of higher education policy (Mok & Lee, 2002).

The UGC began its quality assurance processes with the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) and then the Teaching and Learning Quality Process Review (TLQPR) and Management Review. The RAE was based on a model from the UK when Hong Kong was still a colony and it involved an assessment of the quantity of articles published in international peer-reviewed journals by departments and universities as a whole, instead of on an individual basis. The TLQPR focused on the processes that are believed to produce quality teaching (Massy, 1997). The Management Review examined management practices in the development of strategic plans, resource application, service delivery, and information systems. The introduction of these reviews puts pressure on universities to change their internal procedures to be more in line with the outputs and principles recognised by the external reviewers.

In both China and Hong Kong, the state remains strong. However, the impact of globalisation may have altered the state into a more 'competitive state' and led to the introduction of market forces within a framework of public sector management. Both have drawn on the rhetoric and practices of new public management to deliver their accountability policies.

Methodology

The theoretical framework adopted in this research revolves around Ball's (1994) concept of a 'policy cycle', as modified by Vidovich (2002). The (modified) policy cycle distinguishes three primary contexts of a policy process for analytic purposes: 'influences,' 'policy text production,' 'practices/effects.' The context of influence is where interest groups struggle over the construction of policy discourses; the context of policy text production focuses on the who, how and what of the policy text as it is being produced; the context of practices/effects is where policy is subject to multiple interpretations by practitioners at the micro level. Later, two more contexts of 'outcomes' and 'political strategies' were added to re-focus on macro-level effects of policies, especially in relation to changing power relationships between the different institutions of society. This conceptual approach brings together a hybrid of critical

and post-structuralist perspectives to inform the analysis of policy. It allows for the macro or 'bigger picture' at global, regional and national levels, as well as the micro-level interactions within individual institutions to be examined simultaneously. Therefore, the dialectics between 'the global' and 'the local' are foregrounded.

In analysing accountability policy processes in China and Hong Kong, we gained in-depth understanding by collecting data in four case study universities in different settings. In each society, we chose universities that reflected different types of institutions within the sector. The University of Hong Kong (HKU) and City University of Hong Kong (CityU) in Hong Kong, and Nanjing University (NU) and Nanjing University of Science and Technology (NUST) in China were purposively selected to represent 'old/traditional' and 'new/technological' universities respectively. Although different types of universities in each society are represented, there is no intention to claim generalisability of findings to all universities in the two societies. However, readers are invited to reflect on the 'bigger picture' themes emerging from the case studies and to make their own judgments about potential transferability to their own context (Walford, 2001), as case studies can constitute heuristic devices that can provide 'food for thought' in other settings.

Both documentary and interview data were collected from each case study institution during 2003-04. Documents were obtained at both national and institutional levels. There were 21 interview respondents in the two Chinese universities and 39 in the two Hong Kong universities, and interviews were conducted in Chinese and in English in the two regions respectively. Respondents represented a range from relatively junior to senior staff and they came from a range of disciplines across sciences, arts and humanities. After initial analysis of individual case studies, cross-case analysis was undertaken to identify common themes evident across universities within and between societies, and also importantly, to identify differences within and between them. Themes emerging from a meta-level cross-case analysis provide insights into rapidly evolving policies on accountability in higher education within a context of globalisation.

Findings

Findings are reported separately below for accountability in research and accountability in teaching, with subsections on China and Hong Kong

within each to facilitate comparisons. Quotes are used extensively to allow respondents' voices to be heard, and an audit trail is provided with respondents coded for each institution.

Accountability in Research

China

Rigorous mechanisms have been introduced to assess research productivity in the Chinese case study institutions, with an emphasis on publications and research grants. In China, publications are ranked in a clearly defined hierarchy of journals, with international journals in English at the top, followed by leading national journals, then the 'core' journals in each academic field (distributed both nationally and provincially), and provincial journals at the bottom. The introduction of these measures was generally accepted by academics at NU as this quote illustrates:

> *If a university wants to promote its reputation, research must be emphasised because it can be seen [measured]. The reputation of a university has a direct relationship to its ability to acquire resources. (NU2)*

Most respondents noted that research funds were playing a relatively bigger role when assessing productivity in recent times as 'the market' was assuming greater importance. In China, both the amount and source of funds are considered when measuring research productivity. Research grants from the national level are the most prestigious (and weighted more heavily), followed by provincial funds. One respondent noted, "The national science fund is counted five times. So if an academic has 100,000 yuan in national natural science funds, it is counted as 500,000 yuan research funds" (NUST8).

An elaborate system of rewards and sanctions has been developed to foster research productivity and thereby induce Chinese universities towards performing more competitively on the global scene. The majority of respondents identified the most potent rewards for research grants and publications in terms of money for personal use by academics. In relation to research grants, one respondent noted that it is common for 25% of a research grant to be allocated to a personal account for private use. Similarly, personal financial rewards for publications in prestigious English-speaking journals have been sizeable, especially for the most

prestigious journals such as *Science* and *Nature*. Financial incentives for publications have varied significantly between universities and across departments within universities, as reflected in the case study institutions. One respondent at NUST explained:

> *If your paper is published in a leading journal such as Social Sciences in China, some universities give 100,000 yuan for the reward but in our university the reward is only 300 yuan. (NUST7)*

At one faculty in NU, "If publishing a paper in first-tier periodicals, the award is 2,000 yuan, in the core journals it is 800 yuan" (NU6), but in another faculty: "an academic would be given 1000 yuan if published in that first-tier periodical, and for a core journal it has just increased from 200 to 500 yuan" (NU8). In general terms: "If the quality of the journal is higher, the money will be more" (NU4).

However, more recently, across China, this system of financial rewards for publications and grants is being phased out, to be replaced by 'post allowances,' which include formalised contractual expectations of specified levels of research productivity (and teaching workload), with sanctions for non-compliance. As shown by both case study universities, the requirements for 'post allowances' at all levels differ from institution to institution. Yet the function remains similar: if an academic is not publishing enough, it can mean that her/his post allowance may be reduced by 10-20%. There was almost unanimous agreement amongst respondents that the mechanisms for research accountability have significantly increased the pressures on academics to perform at higher levels.

There are some consistent issues emerging from respondents about accountability in research, including concerns about quality versus quantity of publications, lack of defined journal procedures for assessing papers for publication, dominance of English-speaking journals and the consequent effect on Chinese research, the short time frames for measuring productivity, disciplinary tensions in research performance indicators and the impact of *guanxi* (building particular interpersonal relationships for patronage) on research activities.

The issue about quality versus quantity is colourfully illustrated by one respondent:

> *To pass the assessment to become a professor, one must have 6-8 articles, but it's only the number that counts. Some famous*

people may only have several articles in their whole life but each is a milestone. Those 'nasty' articles are useless. It is like forcing a gentlewoman to be a prostitute. (NUST8)

The negative effects of quantification of research outcomes as well as tensions between sciences and arts/humanities are further exemplified below:

The measure for evaluating research outcomes is quantification. It is from the logic of science. The spirit of the arts has been thrown away. The advantage is that it is easy for leaders to do assessments. The disadvantage is that it is easy to ignore the quality of outcomes. But if you say pay attention to quality, how can it be measured? (NU11)

Another major concern was how people could use the system to produce more papers that previously would have resulted in a single publication: "Actually people in China cheat. You can write it in one paper or you can write it in three papers. A lot of people find different ways to try to publish more" (NU12).

The following comment demonstrates the importance of *guanxi* in obtaining publications:

The phenomenon of papers being published because of guanxi is very serious. In domestic publications if you do not know the editors, they will not even take a look. The process of sending a paper to several authorities in the field [peer review] is just beginning in China, in the first-tier periodicals. It is lamentable when the human relations factor [guanxi] mixes into it and has a dominant position. (NUST7)

Concerns were also raised by respondents about the observation that many Chinese journals only publish papers from the highest ranking universities and others have little chance of being published, as illustrated by this example: "The main articles published by the *Journal of Computer Science and Technology* are from Tsinghua and Peking [Universities]. It is very difficult for others to be published" (NUST8).

Most respondents raised the issue of the unfairness of needing to publish in English to gain prestige for their research. They noted that Chinese research agendas and priorities are not always welcomed in international journals and therefore Chinese academics have difficulty in securing prestigious publication. The flow-on effect is that relevant

localised Chinese research becomes undervalued. Accordingly, tensions between disciplines were evident over research performance indicators, as academics in science and technology are able to publish more in prestigious, international English journals than those in humanities and social sciences. Furthermore, science disciplines are more likely to be able to obtain funding from industry. Competitive differences between disciplines also translate into competitive tensions between universities, as in our two case studies where respondents at NU which emphasises liberal arts and humanities were more likely to be critical of the science/engineering style productivity measures which favoured universities such as NUST. There are other ways, too, in which publication counting fragments the higher education system and exacerbates competitive tensions, as emphasised by one respondent: "Originally an academic writes a paper to serve academe. It is not for any specific university. Now it has become universities scrambling for outcomes" (NUST7).

Despite concerns expressed by respondents about the types of issues identified above, on the whole, academics in the two cases were more opposed to the specific measures employed than the general notion of accountability for research performance, and they argued that the methods of assessment should be more refined.

Hong Kong

The Research Grants Council (RGC) established under the UGC allocated a portion of its resources based on the RAEs for the first time in 1991. RAEs assess departments on the basis of the quality of their research output. University staff members submit samples of their best research products and 13 panel members including local and overseas experts assess these items to determine their quality. A portion (about 20%) of a university's block grant is dependent on its performance in the RAE. This mechanism helps to differentiate Hong Kong universities into 'research-intensive' versus 'teaching-only' institutions.

The majority of participants in this study wanted fewer research reviews. While Hong Kong-born participants were more likely to want fewer RAEs than those born overseas, the harshest criticism came from the latter. A British-born professor attacked the very foundations upon which the UGC decided to engage in the RAE exercise:

The RAE was invented to reduce the number of individuals that would apply for funds and to develop differential research

activities in universities. It is a method of exclusion. The RAE is a governmental mechanism to divide and conquer, of the most obvious and blatant kind. Instead of dealing with the problem of inadequate financing of the universities, you invent the RAE [Research Assessment Exercise] which takes a lot of time and of course, it doesn't work. It's blatantly ridiculous in my view. (CityU108)

The focus on particular prestigious international journals at the expense of more localised publications, the emphasis on quantity of publications over quality, and a tendency to benefit scientists more than others all echo the situation in China, although Hong Kong academics offered much more criticism, as reflected in the quotes below:

We are concerned that the evaluation criteria may lead to local and regional journals being further neglected. ... you want to encourage scholarship that is relevant to the community you are living and working in, particularly for the social sciences. Yet this RAE exercise in the eyes of our colleagues is too much of a paper exercise, more for administrative purposes, rather than really enhancing scholarship. (CityU104)

It seems to have a negative impact on scholarship per se, encouraging people to publish articles that are so-so, leading to a glut of publications, many with little substance or originality. There is no Humanities Index. These measures benefit the scientists more than the social scientists and those in humanities are particularly disadvantaged by this system. Humanities subjects are often culture-bound and area-specific whereas the sciences have no boundaries. (CityU105)

The rule of the game is that one will get more recognition with more publications, which is quantity before quality. Another problem is that arts research is more often than not individual research that takes longer to do. The medical and science professors work in teams and their research publications bear a long list of authors. Arts colleagues end up with fewer publications and have been ridiculed for not being as productive and for not doing collaborative research. (HKU107)

People try to publish quantity. So sometimes they cut a paper into different bits and submit it to different journals. Thus one

paper can generate five papers. In the past, you would submit it as a whole. (CityU112)

Also emphasising the issue of the quality of research, an American-born professor went further to suggest that he "could look good by publishing lots of articles but this pressure had not been good for his research because he had given up his major research projects that took a long time to complete" (HKU105).

Similar to the response in China, some Hong Kong academics commented on the shift of effort away from teaching and students to research, as reflected in the quote below:

With this pressure for research somehow we have to cut back the time and energy we spend on teaching. Honestly, sometimes I really have to hide myself from the office, stay at home. We will have to cut back the time we spend on teaching and it will definitely have an effect on the relationship between staff and students and it will also affect the collegial and friendly atmosphere in the department. (CityU101)

With the focus on research assessment, teaching becomes a kind of punishment, as shown by the following comment:

My teaching load has gone up every year for the past four years. They differentiate between active researchers and non-active researchers. Somehow they think that active researchers are doing well in their research and should be given the reward. So teaching becomes a punishment for those considered inactive. (CityU107)

The link between research performance and personal reward or sanction in Hong Kong is not as direct as that in China. It is mainly through promotion and not through personal payment for each publication or grant. There is a concern about scholarship *per se* and the loss of intrinsic desire to do research, as evidenced by the following quotes:

A lot of staff members are under great pressure to produce more publications and they are required to do more research. It means their salary or benefits are linked to their research output. Some colleagues have a very outstanding publication record and they are promoted. (CityU102)

A loss is in the originality, in the control and excitement you feel about doing your own research. There is nothing internal now that drives me to finish an article. I think the problem with accountability in Hong Kong is that they take it to mean 'countability' not answerability to reason. You have to prove your merit to a bureaucracy that can only credit countable items. (HKU105)

These comments from both China and Hong Kong indicate a great deal of concern about the long term consequences of research assessments that use quantitative performance indicators and compliance measures rather than any attempts to create an authentic research culture in universities.

Accountability in Teaching

China

In 2000, the Ministry of Education (MOE) in China appointed a specialist group to develop a program for evaluating undergraduate teaching. External assessment began in 2002 and by 2005 over 180 universities and colleges had been assessed. The rest will be evaluated by the end of 2007. After that, all institutions will be assessed every five years. Provincial governments also engage in teaching evaluations. Within universities, both students and senior academics evaluate teaching performance.

There are both national and provincial awards for excellence in teaching. However, teaching awards usually only involve a small amount of money for personal use, and respondents largely saw them as token gestures, compared with rewards for research grants and publications. At the institutional level, the MOE might force a university to stop recruiting students in particular programs if teaching is not deemed to be of a suitable standard. For individual academics, in extreme cases, poor evaluations from students and senior staff could result in their removal from a teaching position. At NU, "If you do not improve you are shown a 'yellow card'. If there is a 'teaching accident,' you are shown a 'red card.' If there are several teaching accidents, the problem will be serious" (NU5).

As with research, accountability for teaching is changing towards a system of penalty for 'poor' performance rather than reward for 'good' performance. Some respondents believe that if a teacher scores poorly on student evaluations and 'peer' observation, this will be reported to the faculty and that teacher is likely to have his/her post allowance reduced by 10-20%. Also as with research, respondents did not have a very clear understanding of how readily such sanctions are put into practice, given the relative newness of this reform.

Key issues amongst respondents about teaching performance measures included the effect of *guanxi*; the difficulty of defining and measuring 'good' teaching; the pressure from public shaming of teachers deemed to be 'poor;' and the lack of quality control over postgraduate teaching/supervision.

For many respondents, there was no apparent relationship between teaching scores on formal evaluations (from students and academic 'peers') and rewards for good teaching, such as promotion. Again *guanxi* was seen to significantly interfere with any attempts to render teaching assessment procedures transparent. For example, one respondent noted that recognition and promotion on the basis of teaching quality "depends on how an academic builds relationships with the leaders. This is a very corrupt phenomenon" (NUST7). However, the phenomenon of *guanxi* in teaching assessments was mentioned much less explicitly and less often at NU than at NUST.

The difficulty of defining and measuring 'good' teaching was raised as an issue by most respondents. Compared with research, there were very negative reactions toward teaching evaluation mechanisms, although most respondents maintained that some form of teaching evaluation was important. The validity and reliability of measurement instruments were in question, as well as the seriousness with which students and academic colleagues completed checklists of teacher competencies, as reflected in these quotes:

The university asks students to tick the boxes. There are dozen of items to tick. I do not think that students take it seriously. Some of them are very impatient and do it carelessly. It is hard to see the credibility it has. (NUST8)

We are required to observe each other. Some teachers are very busy and they have no time to go to the classes of colleagues; what they do is to tick the form without observation and hand it in. (NUST8)

A number of respondents commented on the pressure resulting from the public 'shaming' of teachers deemed to be of 'poor' quality. For example at NUST: "The scores given by students will be released in public every year, therefore teachers feel more pressure" (NUST6). Even at NU where teaching evaluation scores are not publicly available: "For a teacher who does not teach well, firstly the teacher will feel embarrassed. Students would go to the teaching administration office and say that if next term the subject is still taught by this teacher, they would not attend class. It is invisible pressure but stronger than visible pressure" (NU10).

The lack of quality control over postgraduate supervision was identified as an issue by many respondents. Postgraduate supervision is seen as research, not as teaching. It is largely ignored in teaching performance measures. Further, the nature of the relationship between supervisor and student is not seen as conducive to such formal evaluations as indicted by one respondent: "In China, the relationship between the supervisor and student is considered to be 'like family' and therefore student complaints about supervisors are rare, although they will complain in private, not in public" (NU10).

Hong Kong

In terms of teaching in Hong Kong, each university maintains external (usually overseas) examiners who look at course structures and examine the assignments and exams that are submitted by students in most units every year. While such traditional mechanisms still exist, new accountability mechanisms such as the TLQPR are becoming significant. The results of our interviews showed that academics did not object as much to the TLQPR (which focuses on processes rather than outcomes) as they had to the RAE in Hong Kong. The overall feeling was that the TLQPR had a positive impact on improving teaching. However, responses suggested there was little staff development support to improve teaching and if one was a good researcher, then poor teaching would be overlooked.

When asked about the measures introduced to evaluate teaching, the most frequent response was student evaluations in the form of teaching surveys. Many also mentioned peer reviews. There were schemes in both case study universities to reward teachers, such as Teaching Excellence Awards at both the faculty and university levels, with monetary prizes. For those who were seen as very poor teachers, the

sanction was the lack of a contract renewal, an increment, promotion or substantiation.

Overall, there are clear mechanisms, rewards and sanctions that accompany teaching evaluations in Hong Kong. A professor at CityU noted this as follows:

I think everybody takes it very seriously because especially when they say that the outcomes will inform funding. I think when they say that, everybody agrees that we should take teaching seriously and nobody objects. I think the TLQPR gives you the push now, with the carrot and the stick. I think it helps formalise a lot of mechanisms. It really brings it out as an important issue on a day-to-day basis. We all agree that we have to teach well. (CityU116)

However, compared with research, the link between teaching performance and personal rewards or sanctions is weaker. This echoes the situation in China, although sanctions there are much more substantial.

I don't think it [TLQPR] is effective because of the overriding emphasis placed on research as opposed to teaching. It is not common for this university to penalise individuals for poor teaching. (HKU107)

If you want to achieve merit in teaching, then you will put in a lot of energy, resources, time, and effort so that hopefully you might be able to get the award for teaching excellence. But not too many people get that award and not too many people are even motivated to get it. As long as they are doing quite well and not being complained about by students, I think that's it. (CityU107)

I think for departments that have been performing, it is a good exercise. I don't think it has any impact on departments that have not been performing. There are no punitive measures. No matter how well or how badly you do, it has minimal resource impact. (HKU109)

Similar to their Mainland Chinese colleagues, Hong Kong academics also expressed their concerns with the fact that teaching excellence would not be as important as research publications in getting promoted, and higher teaching loads were used as a negative sanction for those who did not publish enough. They were also concerned about the

difficulty in evaluating teaching, as demonstrated by the following comments by a senior manager and a professor from HKU:

> *I think people accept the processes in place but the difference is how much importance should be attached to the processes and how much we should look at the outcomes. Outcomes are hard to determine. The UGC has tentative indicators that show what is not acceptable but whether these are good indicators, for example income from graduation, is doubtful. (HKU111)*

Concluding Remarks

Our comparisons between China and Hong Kong demonstrate the complex and dynamic interrelationships in globalising processes (Vidovich, 2004). There is a dialectic between global trends and local responses, a process of give-and-take, and an active exchange by which international trends are reshaped to local needs. The interplay between 'the global' and 'the local' means that forces from the local and the global could collide on the one hand, or exogenous forces could adapt to local conditions on the other. Our findings show that there is much national and local variation, and we interrogate the merely descriptive and schematic description of the impact of globalisation on universities in the face of a highly complex problem (Marginson, 2006).

Our findings confirm the great anxiety among academics generated by the penetration of a corporate culture into the university. The new accountability mechanisms in both societies are introduced in a context of commodification of education, which involves changes in the meaning and experience of education, what it means to be a teacher, a learner (Ball, 2005), and a researcher. The fact that market measures have been embraced much more in China, a country still claiming to be socialist, with a highly centralised higher education system, deserves special attention. This study finds that, by far, the commodification of education has affected the universities in China much more seriously than in Hong Kong, due to China's shortage of the necessary institutional infrastructure support.

Another contextual factor that is important in interpreting our findings is the policy rhetoric of building 'world-class' universities: very much a dominant discourse in East Asia, especially in China and Hong Kong. The prevailing rationale provided by governments for introducing

accountability in both societies is to create 'world-class' universities that are led by the major ones in the US and UK and shaped by Anglo-American linguistic and cultural hegemony. This reminds us again of the crucial importance of local contexts in international policy transfer: what is 'good for the goose' may not necessarily be 'good for the gander.'

Indeed, our findings indicate that there is a lack of focus on the local policy context (Steiner-Khamsi, 2005) due to a policy agenda steered by globalisation (Currie, 2003), and emanating from the powerful external. Policy makers in both societies are taking on external (often American) approaches uncritically rather than developing their own (Yang, 2006). An insightful comment was made by a scientist and senior manager at CityU (Hong Kong) who questioned the effectiveness of the reviews especially those that use outside experts because they do not have the cultural knowledge of Chinese universities and how they operate in Hong Kong:

I don't think it actually helps a great deal. Personally I think management is more of a cultural thing. Although universities in Hong Kong and universities in Australia have a lot in common but when you're dealing with people, I think Chinese are quite a bit different from Australians. And you send in some expert from the UK or from the States or anywhere and you try to understand how this place is run. They say, "You should do this and you should do that." I don't think that works. I really don't think it was effective. It was a waste of money as far as I'm concerned. (CityU109)

Governments in both China and Hong Kong have imposed a more managerialist ethos on universities. Even though universities were supposedly given more autonomy to run their own institutions, the overall effect of these managerial accountability mechanisms has been to implement a 'new public management' regime that was introduced by outside experts and imposed from the outside, top down. Both, however, have failed to strike a balance between the state, markets and universities. One major reason for their failure has been the ignorance of local conditions and actors. There is, thus, an urgency to stress local needs in an era of globalisation, as illustrated by the following comment by a professor in Hong Kong, a response that may sound similar to those that his colleagues in the Mainland might voice about external forces on China as well:

Hong Kong is in a peculiar situation in that until 1997 it was a British colony and the RAE and the TLQPR are mirror images of what's going on in the UK. So it's not so much a response to global trends. I think Hong Kong needs measures that are more in tune with its own circumstances. (CityU106)

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