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THE CHINESE PROFESSORIATE IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

Self-perceptions, Academic Life, Gender Differences and Internal Differentiation

Abstract. Globalisation is influencing universities worldwide through market competition, thereby radically reshaping the face of the university. It has also changed how Chinese universities operate, and has begun to create a culture of competition, corporate managerialism, efficiency and accountability in China's higher education system. As China becomes increasingly integrated with the rest of the world, the Chinese professoriate is gaining stronger links with the international academic community. This study looks at the contemporary academic profession in China. While disparities are obvious, findings demonstrate some similarities with the practice of other nations. China's case is particularly instructive for comparative analysis, because it is the largest country in the world, and thus, has a sufficient centre of gravity to operate with relative autonomy, while, at the same time, China and its academics are no longer immune from external forces. While they are making themselves increasingly felt, they also have to confront new challenges. Within a context of economic globalisation, the very essence of the university in China is changing in ways that China's university teachers care more and more about their material life, with less and less time given to either their students or to their seeking knowledge. It is, however, largely those who are already in positions of influence that profit by the existing practice. Equally evident are tensions within China. Among them the most prominent are striking internal differences between higher learning institutions in various regions, and even between different disciplines within one institution.

1. INTRODUCTION

The academic profession faces significant challenges worldwide (Altbach, 1996; Welch, 1997a). Financial pressures have contributed to ever-increasing demands for accountability. The privatisation of public higher education and the expansion of private academic institutions in many countries have changed the configuration of academe. Internationalisation of the professoriate is a rather little studied phenomenon, but is receiving increasing attention within a context of globalisation (Welch, 1997b).

Many signs (among which, the two most recent are the exponential growth of Internet use in China and China's accession to the World Trade Organisation) indicate that China's Open Door policy[1] is only going to continue. This means that China cannot be immune from external forces, and is increasingly confronted with an international context. China is a particularly instructive case for analysis, not only because there is a current gap in the literature on the Chinese (mainland)

[1]After being closed to international intercourse for decades, China adopted its policy of opening to the outside world at the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee of the Communist Party of China held in December 1978.

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professoriate, but also because it is the largest country in the world and thus has a sufficient centre of gravity to operate with relative autonomy.

This study presents an analysis of the contemporary academic profession in China. It is mainly based on findings from a research project conducted at 17 higher education institutions in Guangzhou in 1998. It also borrows data from an ongoing research project starting from 1999, which has included fieldwork in universities in Shanghai, Beijing, Wuhan, and Urumqi, and involving 50 interviews, and data from 333 academic and administrative staff questionnaires. It is, too, based on the author's longstanding personal working experience as an academic at a Chinese university, and on primary as well as secondary sources of information about the current situation in China. The discussion is presented in an international context because similar issues affect higher education worldwide, and a comparative perspective can shed light on Chinese realities.

2. FOWL'S BEAK OR OX BUTTOCKS?

In ancient times China contributed significantly to the development of world science and technology. Today's China, however, lags behind industrialised countries. The reason lies partly in the international knowledge system---the people and institutions that create knowledge edge, and the structures that communicate knowledge (Altbach, 1998). Any knowledge that does not belong within the system is not knowledge, simply because it is not circulated internationally. This helps to explain why indigenous Chinese scholarship is not treated seriously. Much current research in China, particularly in the social sciences, cannot win sufficient recognition because of its overwhelming reliance on traditional Chinese modes of knowledge exploration.

The worldwide scientific communication system is centralised by the research-producing nations. It is estimated that only about 3,000 of the 100,000 scientific journals worldwide are indexed by the Institute for Scientific Information (Altbach, 1998, p. 193). The overwhelming majority of them are edited by scholars in major Western countries, who act as the "gatekeepers" of science (Coser, 1975). Thus norms and paradigms that are influential in the academic and scientific systems of the large industrialised countries dominate the world. In addition to linguistic issues, Chinese scholars work within a very different research tradition, and hence find it especially difficult to get published in these international journals. The publishing system for books is quite similar. The most recent innovations in scientific communications, databases, and information networks are also located in the industrialised nations, especially in the United States.

On the other hand, China is a science and technology giant among developing countries with relatively well-developed basic scientific and technological infrastructures including scientific laboratories, universities, a network of scientific journals, and large numbers of scientists and researchers. China has, particularly recently, promulgated ambitious scientific plans, and has taken scientific development seriously (Li, 1996). By focusing on extending its scientific base, supporting scientific research and higher education, and ensuring that the best scientific personnel do not leave the country, China's scientific research has been

sustained at a reasonable level (Thulstrup, 1992; Hayhoe and Zhong, 1995; Zhong, 1998), although to a more limited degree in the natural sciences, engineering, agriculture and perhaps medicine.

This study reveals that Chinese academics have very different perceptions of their status in the international knowledge system: some deceive themselves as well as others, by ignoring the striking differences between China and the developed countries; some resist the centre-periphery set-up radically and emotionally; while most of them lack sufficient understanding of the relationships between the Chinese and international academic communities. This is less true in science and technology; but it is strongly the case in the social sciences and humanities. Researchers in the latter fields face a challenge of paradigm shift from the traditional Chinese research tradition to the most internationally accepted Western. This difficulty need not mean negation of Chinese traditions; but even the further development of Chinese research traditions should be on the grounds of a mastery of the Western tradition, too (Yang, 2000). However, my survey found that most Chinese social sciences and humanities researchers were not well prepared for this. While the urgency has been apparent for quite some time, some have not even realised the need, or passionately refused to accept the fact that China must function in a context of international inequality and scarcity. Such denials by Chinese academics, however, form important limits on scholarship development, due to their possible effects on subjectivity and reflexivity of academics (Goodwin and Nacht, 1991).

For Chinese scholars, to avoid being marginalised yields the following dilemma: on one hand there is no effective way to avoid marginalisation except by joining the world community which leads to reliance on foreign scholars, and returned scholars and students, in the process of knowledge transfer and intellectual contacts. On the other hand, this yields increased dependence on the international knowledge network, and in some ways reinforces China's peripheral status, by emphasising the mainstream international knowledge (Altbach, 1998), at the expense of indigenous forms of scholarship and understanding.

Managing the transition will certainly not be easy. Indeed the difficulty has caused many middle-aged academics to flinch. This generation, the lucky students who entered universities soon after the Cultural Revolution, eagerly absorbed knowledge from abroad, and became the backbone of Chinese scholarship. In the 1980s they were delighted to participate in the integration of Chinese scholarship with the international community. Now, many such people have changed. They show no interest in the integration, or even resist it.

Why has their previous desire for new knowledge, and reform, flagged? The main reason is that they have seen how difficult the integration will be for them, and how costly it can be in time and energy. The shift of research paradigms, and the need to acquire English and/or other foreign languages in order to publish, seem to pose an almost insuperable barrier to most of them. Therefore their attitudes have changed from active participation to indifference, or in some cases, even obstruction, because they do not want their positions to be threatened by returned students and others with more international achievements.

This situation in many cases leads to an inward-looking attitude. In the words of one respondent from social sciences, who typically represented the academics of his generation (around 45 years old in the late 1990s):

> "My own feeling is that the zeal for internationalisation has cooled down these days because we begin to realise that it is not so mysterious any more to have international publications as it was at the beginning of our opening to the world. International publications are not necessarily better quality than Chinese publications. It may not be that difficult, nothing extraordinary to have them" (Interview SCNU/3).

Another respondent, a returned Ph.D. in Psychology told me he regretted that he had spent so much more time, in order to have the same or even fewer publications than he would have had in China, because he had targeted international journals (Interview SCNU/5). A third respondent, a well-known figure in the Chinese educational studies circle, but with no international reputation, said to me, "Why bother to seek international achievement? China is huge, and we can have our own knowledge network. It is wise to be a fowl's beak, not an ox's buttocks". His reference was to an old Chinese saying, meaning that it is preferable to lead in a petty position than to follow behind a greater leader. But is such an attitude really sustainable? It may only be possible for those who are already in the senior ranks, and even they may find themselves threatened.

3. ACADEMIC LIFE AND THE MARKET

There is a story about General Dwight Eisenhower's introduction as Columbia University's president. He opened his remarks by saying how pleased he was to meet with the "employees" of Columbia. Professor I. I. Rabi, distinguished senior faculty member and future Nobel Prize winner, rose and said with measured dignity, "Sir, the faculty are not the *employees* of Columbia Univerity, the faculty *is* Columbia University (O'Brian, 1998, p. 15).

Indeed, the Enlightenment view perceived academics themselves as the university (Halsey, 1995), needing no external forms to contain their activities. A university was a site where people seek the truth, and make it known. Society had a vested interest in supporting such institutions because the disinterested pursuit of knowledge was the basis of social progress. The possibility of a university was rooted in universal human nature. The impulse gives rise to esoteric knowledge and a custodial function for a selected body of adepts or specialists. This view saw the academic profession as "nothing but intellectual" with a "world-rejecting ethos" (Hunter, 1994, p. 99); it existed "outside economic exigencies and beyond the limits of accountability" (Symes, 1996, p. 135).

Nowadays, however, the nature of academic work is increasingly difficult to define. While it is often defined by its intellectualism and scholarship as academic

work still underpins scholarship (Hort, 1996), academic work is becoming more varied, to the point at which, according to some, professional identity for an academic is difficult to sustain. It is indeed difficult to generalise about the professoriate.

The coexistence of different perspectives has been noted in other parts of the world, as well as in China. Burton R. Clark (1987) points out that the professoriate is made of fragmented components. Even within China, significant variations exist. Most faculty in prestigious, key universities have strong international connections, and are much more cosmopolitan in their approach than their counterparts in provincial institutions. The life of a full professor of biology at Peking University is thus very different from that of an assistant professor of the same discipline at Xingjiang University. The difference can be equally striking even within the same region or institution. The life of a professor of civil engineering is very different from that of a professor of Chinese classical literature within one institution (see below).

One commonality, however, is the growing pressure of the market. Links between government policy in higher education and economic reform are becoming increasingly explicit in China. Emphasis on business practices has not always promoted academic collaboration; indeed, in many cases it has increased individualism at the expense of community (Currie and Newson, 1998). Thus, arguably, the benefits of marketisation and privatisation have been overstated; they yield major problems as well as benefits (Marginson, 1995; Smyth, 1995), and lead to poor morale among many academic staff (Ball, 1990; Welch, 1998).

Allied to this is an attack on tenure. Worldwide, the tenured workforce will soon be in the minority, and the conditions associated with tenure are under relentless pressure in industrialised countries (Burgess and Straghen, 1996). Likewise, in China the “iron rice bowl” or guaranteed employment with associated benefit such as housing and health care, will not exist much longer, since the government is determined to reform the internal operation of universities in the name of efficiency. As in other countries (Meek, 1995; Kennedy, 1996; Grigg, 1996), the collegiate model of governance is being replaced by a managerial one. Deans and Presidents are under great pressure, to achieve results in a context of rising competitiveness, and demands for greater efficiencies.

While academics already inhabit universities that are rapidly changing, being restructured, and adopting practices internationally that are more commonly found in business (Currie, 1996; Currie and Newson, 1998), the Chinese professoriate have not as yet felt compelled to internalise a deeper awareness of globalisation processes. They do not feel an urgency to ask why universities and the governments regulating them are choosing this particular direction for reform (Hort, 1996). An overwhelming majority of them see the recent development as inevitable, although many find it unappealing and miss the lifestyle of traditional Chinese scholars (which allowed more time for reflection, and was generally less demanding).

Some of the negative features of the free market in the economic and social spheres are also seen in the academic sector. In particular, academics’ commitment to teaching and research duties has been diminished significantly. As one interviewee who had just had three years overseas experience told me:

> "It is now a free market economy; its impact on academics is obvious. People need to survive first. I think people are attaching more importance to their material life. Now many academics face a struggle for survival. This does not mean they have no food. But they need their own house. A house at least costs between 80,000 to 100,000 *Yuan*. If they rely fully on their wage, that's several hundred *Yuan* per month, it is impossible to have one. So it's very natural for them to shift their attention to things other than their teaching and research duties. I am sure the hottest topic in Chinese campuses is not scholarship, but housing. Once you have your own housing, you need to spend a great deal (more) on decoration and furniture. Believe me, the catchword in the coming ten years or so will be: 'Have you got your own house?' and 'How much do you spend on your house decor?'" (Interview SCNU/3).

The interviewee himself spent nearly 200,000 *Yuan* on decor and fittings for his house. I was told by his university that he had earned this money in the United States, when he was normally a visiting scholar, but in fact an owner of a Chinese restaurant.

My interview with the aforementioned returned Ph.D. from Japan, now a full professor and head of a department with doctoral programs, was conducted just after this respondent had successfully competed for the post of Director of the University's Personnel Department. His choice of this career path was based more on economic than academic rationales, because to be a director of a personnel section can mean to have more power and income (often hidden) than that of a full professor.

Against this background, a combination of greed and laziness is another negative feature becoming more prominent in Chinese universities. While many academics desperately seek economic benefits and seniority, they may also pursue every means to avoid hard work. This contributes to impetuosity and to poor quality research. Mistakes and superficiality can be readily found in many research publications which, ironically, are fomented by the academic promotion system. While, in theory, publications reflect the writers' academic level and should be a secure basis upon which to seek promotion, in practice, many Chinese academics improvise publications only for the sake of professional promotion. Further, because most Chinese scholarly journals are not refereed, publication relies heavily on one's personal contacts with editors. While the international arena is also not immune from this problem, it is at least less pronounced.

4. GENDER DIFFERENCES

Inequalities between genders are noticeable in the academic profession worldwide. The pioneering International Survey of the Academic Profession originally developed under the aegis of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching found that gender disparities were marked among the whole population in

each of the countries and systems covered (Australia, Brazil, Chile, Egypt, Germany, Hong Kong, Korea, Israel, Japan, Mexico, the Netherlands, Sweden, Russia, the UK and USA) (Altbach, 1996). More recent studies demonstrate that opportunities to travel and study abroad actively discriminate against women academics (Welch, 1997b). Research concerning the position of women on the general staff in universities also shows that women are predominantly clustered in the lowest levels of the university hierarchy (McLean, 1996).

Indeed, throughout China, a larger proportion of female academics in China's higher education institutions hold lower academic titles than men, which thus impacts unfavourably on their academic careers. Statistics show that women formed 12% Professors, 21.9% Associate Professors, 32.7% Lecturers, and 41.37% Teacher Assistants of the total full-time faculty in Chinese universities. Of the composition of the 119,683 female academics, 28.97% were Teacher Assistants, 44.4% Lecturers, 17.48% Associate Professors, 2.45% Full Professors, and 6.7% without any academic titles (Wei, 1995, pp. 82-83). More recent statistics present a similar picture (see Table 1 below). Clearly, most women do not hold senior positions.

Table 1. Percentages of female faculty in Chinese universities in 1999

	Total	Female faculty	Percentage
Full professors	39359	5933	15.07%
Associate professors	125900	37896	30.1%
Lecturers	156390	65359	41.79%
Teacher assistants	83196	39855	47.9%
Instructors	20837	9931	47.66%

Source: Ministry of Education, 2000, pp. 12-13.

Moreover, the present Chinese retirement regulations compound this problem, setting the retirement age of women academics at 55, compared with 60 for men, thus meaning that female academics have an effective working life five years shorter than their male colleagues. This, together with another fact that childbirth care takes a huge chunk of their time from work, causes female Chinese academics to be placed in a particularly unfavourable position in the competition with regard to the time available to them.

Persistent inequalities exist in the mobility of academic women in Chinese universities. Although the history of Chinese women studying abroad can be traced back to the late nineteenth century, only a limited number of women were enabled to study abroad. Women academics have fewer chances to conduct research, attend international conferences or lecture abroad. In Northeast Normal University, for example, the percentages of all women academics, who travelled abroad, were 16.2%, 12% and 11.6% respectively in 1995, 1996 and 1997 (Northeast Normal University International Affairs Office, 1997). This is largely the case nationally.

For historical, cultural, social and economic reasons (Shakeshaft, 1986; Jayaweera, 1997; Zhang, 1997), women are still undervalued, relative to men. To most female Chinese academics, it is the cultural factor that stands out. The traditional idea that men are superior to women is still deeply rooted in most

people's minds, including government officers and younger generations. While this perception has led to gender inequalities, it also naturalises them to a degree (despite official rhetoric regarding gender equity), and hence is difficult to eradicate. The persistence of traditional gender stereotypes means, in practice, that men's lives are seen as more oriented around careers, while women's are typically seen as hinging more upon family and domestic concerns. This effectively still prevents women from participating fully in social and work activities.

Such findings are underlined by nearly *all* female academic interviewees; both very successful, senior academics, and the ordinary teaching and research staff. One female Associate Professor from an Institute of Higher Education said:

> "Women experience far more difficulties in participating in international activities. I want some overseas experience, as a Visiting Scholar, in order to have a better understanding of Western culture. But this is not easy: in fact, it is very difficult in China, if you want your family to be better-off. You need a senior professional title, your own home, and so on. These all take time. Two years ago I wanted to go abroad, but I did not have a sufficiently senior academic rank. For those (women) who have not married or with no children, it's much easier. After marriage, family is the biggest obstacle. My husband has his own career (also an academic), and I've got a child to look after. My husband also wants to go abroad. But he doesn't care about it so much" (Interview SCNU/8).

As universities worldwide are increasingly starved of funds, problems in higher education are deepening in many countries, and the academic profession is in crisis almost everywhere (Altbach and Davis, 1999). In this context, it is female academics who carry heavier burdens in terms of social and familial expectations, who will suffer most (Currie and Newson, 1998). Thus Chinese female academics lose out to their male colleagues in opportunities to further their studies at home and/or abroad, in obtaining research grants, and in many others aspects, and compete with male academics on an unequal footing.

5. INTERNAL DIFFERENTIATION

Imbalanced regional development within China has been a social problem for thousands of years. It is being aggravated, rather than reduced, by the current transformation from the planned to a free market economy, and by the shift in regional development policy since 1978 (Hu et al., 1996). Consequently, higher education development, as both a stimulus for and an outcome of change, differs from region to region due to very different socio-economic conditions and tasks (Pan and Wu, 1990; Ding, 1995).

Regional financial disparity has an evident effect on universities. Higher education institutions in better-developed areas are much more likely to receive significant assistance and investment from various organisations, particularly the

private sector. Institutions in poorer areas, by contrast, often lack such support and feel powerless to build up quality teaching and research programs. The differentiation between the national 'key' universities, which are directly under the Ministry of Education (Cheng, 1998), and their more everyday provincial higher education institutions cousins, is then apparent. Better-resourced institutions in more affluent regions can take much greater advantage of opportunities to secure more international publications and collaboration.

For example, both South China University of Technology (SCUT) and Zhongshan University (ZU) are national 'key' universities located in Guangdong, a Southern gate of China adjoining Hong Kong and Macau, which established an early lead in opening itself to the outside world (Vogel, 1989), faster implementation of free market economic practices, and accelerated regional development. Among SCUT's research articles published in 1996, 38 were indexed by the *Science Citation Index* (SCI), 40 in the *Index to Scientific and Technological Proceedings* (ISTP), and 39 in the *Engineering Index* (EI) (South China University of Technology, 1997, pp. 100-101). In the same year, ZU had 92 scientific articles published in internationally recognised scholarly journals. The number of articles that were both included and cited by SCI reached 87, while the EI included 63 articles by ZU staff. In sharp contrast, Xinjiang University, which is located in the much less developed far west of China, had 11 by SCI, 5 by EI and 2 by ISTP in 1997. The numbers were respectively 5, 2, 1 and 2, 2, 1 in 1996 and 1995 (Welch and Yang, 2001).

Taking Mathematics research as an example, an interviewee, the Director of Academic Affairs Office at ZU, expressed the different approach adopted by elite universities:

> "As to mathematics research, for our University, a leading finding in China is almost meaningless, (it is) only when it is acknowledged as internationally pioneering that it can have real value" (Interview ZU/3).

This was echoed exactly in another interview with the Dean of Mathematics at Peking University, who claimed:

> "As the Dean, I am not interested in anything that is regarded as first-class within China. Our goal is targeted at world-class research products. We plan to be able to place our Faculty among the world top 50 in the coming 5-10 years" (Interview PEK/3).

Most academics in provincial universities, however, continue to work behind closed doors without much attention to international development in their fields. The situation is much more serious in humanities and social sciences, where a surprising number have recently gained higher degrees with little knowledge about what is going on with their areas of study outside mainland China. Reasons elicited from the interviewees were: the profound lack of foreign language reference journals and books (regrettably, an on-going problem, due both to financial stringencies and the

rising prices of foreign books and journals), little or no substantial scholarly communications, and lack of incentives to work toward internationalisation.

Another element of internal differentiation is the diversity among disciplines. The overall picture is that international communication is much better implemented in the natural sciences and engineering than in arts, humanities, and some social sciences. While in some science departments, international contacts are becoming increasingly popular, an utterly different scene is presented in arts and humanities, and social sciences. The overwhelming majority of international research projects were found to be within the natural sciences. Of the staff surveyed in Guangzhou with international research projects, 50% came from natural sciences, while another 21.43% were from Engineering (Yang and Welch, 2000).

This finding is in agreement with the bibliometric study carried out by the Institute of Scientific and Technological Information of China (1990, p. 4), which showed disparities among various areas, in terms of their visibility in domestic and international scholarly communities. Natural scientists tend to orient themselves to the international community, and tend to adopt common methodologies; therefore they are more able to pursue joint work with foreign colleagues. In the social sciences and humanities, by contrast, there is a big gap between what the Chinese regard as worthwhile scholarship, and what interests the predominantly Western researchers in the international community.

Moreover, barriers such as deficiency in foreign languages, and relative lack of funding pose more serious questions for these latter areas, given the lower funding priorities attached to the social sciences by the Chinese government (as in many other countries). Another barrier is the Chinese government's discouragement of interest in certain social sciences and humanities research topics, because of their potential threat to the legitimacy of existing power structures. Lastly, foreign scholars sometimes contend that certain Chinese scholarship is inferior or too parochial (Zhong, 1993).

Chinese academics, who take pains to publish in an international language, write with international readerships in mind. For disciplines in humanities and social sciences, however, the choices of research themes and the methods of presentation of the results are often chosen from domestic viewpoints and with domestic references, as well as having a domestic readership in mind. They thus attract less international attention. Researchers publish their research almost exclusively in Chinese, while in the natural sciences and technology, more emphasis is placed on disseminating research results in an international language, predominantly English (Yang, 2000; Zhong, 1993, 1998).

These disciplinary disparities have a direct effect on international exchange in various subjects. In science, engineering and technology, there are significant opportunities for increasing present levels of collaboration between overseas universities and those in China that already have well-developed expertise in these fields. Such exchanges are far less common, however, in the social sciences, due to the more discrepant ideologies, paradigms and discourses inherent in these fields, and higher dependency on language to convey their meanings (Zhong, 1998). Opportunities to co-operate with international partners or win grants from external resources are much more limited (Zweig and Chen, 1998).

Such disciplinary differentiation within various faculties, even departments, has led to new problems. It undermines the university's capacity to operate as an integrated whole, and causes tensions among its staff. Two interviews conducted within the same university illustrate this tellingly. One interviewee from Chemical Engineering made the following comment:

> "Nowadays in China, we can barely support ourselves if we fail to be granted research funds from the governments. If we can't co-operate with industry, we won't live a good life. I think money means intelligence these days. The first priority must be money. It can also be utilised as the sole criterion for university development" (Interview SCUT/1).

Another interviewee, a professor of English, also stressed the importance of finance, but from different perspective:

> "Our situation is very different from the engineering departments. The most fundamental difficulty in the process of international communication is our financial situation. Each year I receive at least three or four conference invitations. I can't go because I can't afford the airfare. I went to the University of Hong Kong in September 1997, but that was because they paid all the fees for me. Our Foreign Languages Department has been granted a research project by the National Social Science Foundation. As you know, it is very competitive, less than 10 nationally, but it is about 20,000 *Yuan* only. As a foreign language department, we should have some foreign newspapers. This year we can only afford the Hong Kong-based *South China Morning Post* which costs us 4,000 *Yuan*. Last year I received an invitation from the City University of New York. They offered me a single airfare. But I still couldn't go because I was unable to find support for the return leg of the journey" (Interview SCUT/5).

6. CONCLUSIONS

These are hard times for the academic profession. Specialists also differ as to the future of the academic profession. While some maintain that academics conform, retreat or behave ritualistically (Jary and Perker, 1995), and 'mutely accept' the changes to their professional practices (McMurty, 1991, p. 216), others believe that academics are clever people, with rebellion and innovation as their forte, and frequently stand in strategic locations on the 'implementation staircase' (Trowler, 1997).

While prediction is fraught with difficulties, it seems clear that increasing government intervention in higher education, together with the growth of corporate managerialism have diminished academic autonomy and established a more overtly

hierarchical structure within and between universities, accompanied by increased differentiation within the academic profession itself (McCollow and Lingard, 1996). At a time when all workers within universities to a lesser or greater extent now have to dance to the tune of the economy, this has led to an emphasis upon the utilitarian rather than transformative value of knowledge; it is now no longer sensible to speak of a single academic profession (Kogan et al., 1994). In this context, it is junior, female and minorities groups that suffer most from the on-going higher education reform (Nixon, 1996).

Chinese academics are confronted with double centre-periphery configurations. Internationally, a small segment of the professoriate from major research universities in major countries are characterised as the "research cadre," the arbiter of most of the scientific disciplines, and members of the various disciplinary decision-making elites. Within China, those national key universities in capital cities such as Beijing, Shanghai and Nanjing occupy positions of influence, dominate the mainstream journals, and publish more.

With growing globalisation and market-orientation evident in higher education, Chinese academics feel increasingly ill at ease and less secure. The international trend towards globalising universities, as elsewhere, forms a bigger threat to female academics, to those in the fields that have less direct relevance to markets, and to those from provincial universities. Nonetheless the pressure for further market reforms, and further internationalisation, is likely to be unrelenting.

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