

# World Education NEWS & REVIEWS



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## International Trends

# Education Policy Changes in East Asia: 1990 in Review

by Glenn Shive, Ph.D.

East Asia in this review consists of the broader Sinic world of China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan and South Korea. It is the land of Confucius' legacy, and the scene of the most dynamic economies in the world. This cursory scan of education policy change in East Asia's year of the horse highlights events that suggest broader policy trends in the years to come.

## China: Sullen Stability after Tiananmen

Tiananmen was the great divide for China's education policy. The momentum for the reforms of the 1980s stalled as education leaders waited cautiously for new directions from the top. The waiting game will likely continue until the succession of senior Party leaders has taken its course.

Two basic goals remain in place: expanding free and compulsory education through the 9th grade and linking curriculum more closely to regional economic needs. But market-oriented approaches to higher education reform, including making the job assignment system more flexible, have been overwhelmed by the now dominant theme of stabilizing the present situation. Morale in Chinese universities suffers from political reprimand, economic stagnation and the non-return of many colleagues now studying overseas.

With a general policy turn to the

left, one sees more emphasis on military education, patriotism, political study, and the role of labor in the curriculum. The surge of political study during academic year 1989-90 has subsided, but efforts to link student learning to labor in grassroots China continue. Even if political study has not changed many minds, everybody knows where the line between academic life and political participation has been drawn.

Education's open door to the West has been rehinged since Tiananmen. In response to the U.S. and other nations who granted Chinese students visa amnesty, and to rising "study abroad fever" within, China set new national rules on students and scholars going abroad. Self-sponsored students must have worked for five years after graduation before they can leave, unless relatives overseas pay their way out. Officially sponsored scholars will not study for degrees, but spend shorter periods in non-degree programs in applied fields. These older, more established faculty are lower risk for non-return. China declares it now has the capability to train people in their own MA and Phd programs, and will use overseas study for mid-career upgrading.

The visa numbers since this February 1990 ruling show a clear decline in officially sponsored scholars coming to the U.S., but an equally clear increase in the self-sponsored people leaving China

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## East Asia Review continued

for the U.S. to study. This suggests that Tiananmen notwithstanding, large numbers of Chinese students will continue to arrive on American campuses each fall for years to come.

### Hong Kong: Higher Education vs. the Brain Drain

Tiananmen knocked the floor out of Hong Kong's confidence in its post 1997 fate. Emigration lines lengthened as the annual outflow jumped from 45,000 in 1989 to 62,000 in 1990. This means over 1,000 people leave each week. If departures remain stable, about 10 percent of Hong Kong's population will have emigrated by June 30, 1997. Critical losses are already appearing in the managerial/technical workforce.

Government has responded with a plan to double the number of undergraduate places in the tertiary system in four years from 7,000 to 15,000. Total student enrollment would grow from 38,000 to 58,000 to accommodate not 7 percent, but 18 percent of the age group. US\$210 million in capital costs and \$350 million in new recurrent costs have been dedicated to the confidence building scheme.

With demand high and supply restricted for higher education in the British colony, Hong Kong families have made a tradition of going overseas to university. About 35,000 Hong Kong students are in the U.S., U.K., Canada and Australia. The question is: will Hong Kong students stay home for university once new local places are made for them, or will overseas study continue to expand due in part to the international mobility that comes with foreign degrees? And even if they stay home for university, will the new supply of graduates be enough to fill the vacuum left behind by emigrants? How many who go overseas will return?

Even local universities doubled in size will be able to supply only 29 percent of predicted demand for graduates in the

workforce by 1996. With losses to emigration, Hong Kong expects a 34 percent shortfall in graduate manpower on the day of the hand over to Beijing rule. Doubling the universities may be too little too late.

### Taiwan: Expanding, Opening and Pluralizing

Taiwan plans to expand its 9-year free compulsory system to 12 years. The first of three years of staged implementation began in 1990. The entrance examination to senior high school will change from an entrance gate to a placement tool to be used in conjunction with previous grades and extracurricular activities.

In further opening to study abroad, Taiwan has eliminated the student passport and its restrictions in favor of one generic travel document valid for six years. Undergraduate and even high school students may now study abroad more easily. Boys who reach age 16 are obliged to serve two years of military duty (which may be deferred in some cases). Three-year tours have been eliminated. Ninety percent of the 10,000 students from Taiwan who go abroad each year have been graduate students. The younger set will grow in the years to come.

Reflecting political liberalization in Taiwan, the Ministry of Education has begun this year to revise the curriculum and texts for Sun Yat-sen thought and Three Peoples Principles education. A broader, more pluralistic study of civics will take its place.

### Japan: The Demographic of Internationalization

Higher education policy in Japan focuses on two key dates: in 1992 the cohort of 18-year-olds will peak, and then head downward fast; and in 2000 Japan wants 100,000 foreign students in the higher education system.

Japanese universities are responding

to domestic demography in the three ways U.S. institutions did a decade ago; adjust curricula to students' vocational interests, tool up for life-long learning and non-traditional students, and recruit international students to fill excess capacity and add uniqueness to campus life.

The changes will come from the private sector, which enrolls 80 percent of Japan's post secondary students. As they increasingly compete with one another for students, each school will try to offer distinctive programs to a more segmented market. Providing a study abroad experience in the context of a Japanese degree program is the strategy of the day. Of Japan's 364 private institutions, 83 already have exchange programs, mostly with the U.S. Meanwhile, over 30 American universities have opened branch campuses or extension programs in Japan.

Japan's Ministry of Education is changing its charter system for tertiary institutions to accommodate their mounting need for greater flexibility. Drafted in 1990, the liberalized accreditation rules will reduce fixed quantitative measures, eventually requiring more self-study by institutions of their own goals for curriculum design and enrollment targets.

As a world economic giant, Japan is becoming a major actor in international education. In 1980 Japan hosted 6,000 foreign students. In ten years this grew five times to 30,000. (Foreign students in the U.S. grew by only 22 percent in this period.) Central government budget for foreign students is about US\$200 million. Reaching 100,000 overseas students in the next 10 years will require a sustained 16 percent annual growth. Ninety percent of these students come from Asia; three-quarters from China, Korea, and Taiwan. Meanwhile, Japan sent 14,000 students abroad in 1980; in less than 10 years this has grown over 6 times to 84,000. (Americans who study abroad number only 66,000.) International experience is becoming an integral part of Japanese higher education.

*continued next page*

## Coming in Future Issues...

**SPAIN:** Our feature for the Spring issue by Erika Popovych will analyze recent changes. **OVERCROWDING IN EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES** and the implications for international education by Axel Markert will appear in "International Trends."

**HONG KONG** will double the size of its tertiary system within the next ten years. Dr. Yue-ping Chung, Chinese University of Hong Kong, is preparing a closer look at this thriving colony.

**MEXICO:** Alan Adelman, Institute of International Education Director/Mexico and Central America, will update us on changes in the educational system.



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## EAST ASIA REVIEW continued

### Korea: Assessments, Research, Textbooks and Money

Korea made three institutional changes in higher education in 1990. A new accreditation system will rank tertiary institutions, and publicize the outcomes in 1995. And the Ministry of Science and Technology has begun setting up 17 research centers at universities around the country as satellites of its new Taedok Science Town.

In 1990 the Ministry of Education also began work on a new national entrance examination to university. First due for use in 1994, the examination is supposed to measure aptitude for learning rather than memorized knowledge. Meanwhile, the high school entrance examination was

reintroduced in some areas in spite of public opposition.

In 1990 Korea also revised its textbooks in ethics and ideological education for primary and secondary schools. South Korea's rapprochement with the USSR, Eastern Europe and China, as well as opening toward "Nordpolitik" has required a new treatment of Communism in the schools. For example, Pyongyang is not depicted as an "enemy" but as a "partner for peaceful national unification."

This horse year of education policy in East Asia suggests a growing differentiation between colossal socialist China of the interior and smaller coastal capitalist societies on its periphery. After a decade of growth and liberalization, Chinese education has

entered a sullen stagnation. Meanwhile, its neighbors and co-carriers of Confucian heritage into educational modernity are expanding, opening and diversifying. The success of the periphery may once again challenge the failure of the center before another year of the horse gallops in.

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