Enter the Dragon? China's Higher Education Returns to the World Community: The Case of the Peking University Personnel Reforms

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Introduction

Peking University , colloquially known in Chinese as *Beida*, is usually seen as the best and most prestigious university in China. It is also viewed by many as the first modern university in China. The university has always been closely linked to China's modernization. Aiming to rank among the world's best universities in the coming decades, its leadership places great emphasis on internationalization as a strategy to move toward this goal. At the celebration of the university's 100th anniversary, the then Chinese President and the General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party elaborated the government's policy of "education and science to revitalize the nation," and called for China to establish world-class universities. He urged Peking University to lead the way.

Against such a policy backdrop, the university planned a radical overhaul of its faculty appointment and promotion policies in 2004. The reforms go far beyond the sphere of personnel itself, touching upon the crux of China's university education since the early twentieth century: a successful adaptation of European–American education systems has not been matched by continuity with the traditional Chinese spirit of higher learning. Despite the fact that there has been no shortage of an awareness of the need for such a match, the practice has always been particularly tortuous. The development of Peking University is a vivid portrayal of the issues in China's modern higher education (Hayhoe, 2005; Weston, 2004).

In today's China, discussions of university reforms necessarily involve tensions between short-term targets and fundamental educational goals, the ideal and the reality, the Chinese and the Western, the individual and the society. This chapter seeks to use the most recent personnel reforms at Peking University as an example to assess the costs and benefits of China's higher education reform in a context of globalization. A key question concerns the interfaces between the local, the national, and the international within the changing context (Marginson and Rhoades, 2002). China, as the largest country in the world with a sufficient center of gravity to operate with relative autonomy, is a particularly instructive case for analysis. Its repositioning in the global context is of major importance for the world. The reentry of Chinese higher education into the world community is an increasingly important event to both sides (Yang, 2002). The experience of proposed reforms at Peking

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University is enlightening in helping to identify directions and dynamics for the present Chinese university reforms. This chapter, unlike many studies of modern Chinese higher education reforms that focus almost exclusively on the post-1949 era, represents a deliberate attempt to trace current practices to their historical roots. It tries to break through the 1949 barrier to embrace the entire century. It reviews the remarkable historical achievements of Peking University and delves deep into the current reform endeavors.

History and Impact of Peking University

The subject of Peking University's early history is of wider interest than a purely historical one (Hayhoe, 2005). This is because the university was where Western and Chinese educational, cultural, and intellectual traditions met and were debated with a sustained depth and intensity by scholars steeped in China's own knowledge traditions, yet also holding doctoral degrees in philosophy, education, political science, and sociology from top universities in Europe and North America. Many prominent scholars including John Dewey, Bertrand Russell, and Rabindranath Tagore visited and gave lectures at the university in the early decades of the twentieth century. It was a place for Chinese intellectuals to craft a new base of authority to enable them to increase their influence in national affairs after the demise of the imperial examinations in 1905 and the collapse of the Qing dynasty in 1911 (Weston, 2004).

The predecessor of Peking University, the Capital College of the Qing Dynasty, was founded on June 11, 1898 (Wang and Guo, 2000), according to an order by Emperor Guang Xu. The College did not operate until December 30 due to the abortion of the One Hundred Days of Reform. It was then both the most prestigious institution of higher learning and the highest administrative organization of education in China. Yan Fu (1854–1921) was appointed to preside over it after the Qing dynasty perished in February 1912. In May 1912, the Capital College was renamed Peking University, and Yan Fu became the first president. By 1919, it had developed into the country's largest institution of higher learning, with 14 departments and an enrollment of more than 2,000 students. After the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937, and the resulting expansion of Japanese territorial control in east China, the university moved to Changsha and formed the Changsha Temporary University along with Tsinghua University and Nankai University. In 1938, the three institutions moved to Kunming and formed the National Southwestern United University. In 1946, after World War II, the university moved back to Beijing, with faculties of arts, science, law, medicine, engineering, and agriculture; a research institute for humanities; and a total of 3,000 students.

After the People's Republic of China (PRC) was established in 1949, Yenching University was merged into the university and the university lost its "national" appellation to reflect the fact that all universities under the new socialist state would be public. In the early 1950s, the government carried out a nationwide readjustment of colleges and universities with the aim of promoting higher education and quickening the training of personnel with specialized knowledge and skills, by pooling the

country's workforce and material resources. The university lost its engineering, medical, and agricultural faculties and was forced into the Soviet mould of "comprehensive university," with departments only in the pure sciences and arts. Its graduates typically became researchers, writers, and university teachers. In 1952, the university moved from downtown Beijing to the former Yenching campus. By 1962, the total enrollment had grown to 10,671 undergraduate and 280 graduate students. In 2000, Beijing Medical University was merged into the university and became the university's health science campus.

The university is now a comprehensive and national institution, consisting of 30 colleges and 12 departments, with 93 specialties for undergraduates, two specialties for the second Bachelor's degree, 199 Master's programs, 173 Doctoral programs, 216 research institutes or centers, including two national engineering research centers, 81 key national disciplines, and 12 national key laboratories. Traditionally strong in basic sciences, the university now pays increasing attention to the applied sciences. Its library is the largest of its kind in Asia.

The prominence of Peking University owes much to the charismatic chancellor, Cai Yuanpei (1868–1940), who formed the fundamental character of the university. Cai's exceptional scholarly standing as a Hanlin academician, his intellectual experience with German thinkers, his translation of Oswald Kulpe's synthesis of Hegel, Kant, and Hartmann into Chinese before his first visit to Germany, his two extended stays at the University of Leipzig, studying under psychologist Wilhelm Wundt, his major translation of philosopher Friederich Paulsen's System of Ethics, and his interest in Wilhelm von Humboldt's model of the university, combined to create a transcendental approach to knowledge, making it possible for him to be even-handed with respect to both Chinese and Western learning (Lin, 2005). These factors together positioned him perfectly for leading the university. His momentous years transformed the university from an official institution of the Qing dynasty, already rotten in thought and action despite the fact it had been established only recently, into a modern institution independent from government.

The university developed frameworks to enable Chinese and Western knowledge to coexist, particularly the humanities and social sciences. This was achieved under the guidance of a series of presidents including Yan Fu, Cai Yuanpei, and Hu Shi, who were either educated in Western fields of knowledge or specialists in Chinese learning, all thinking about the classical heritage in new ways, and who consciously fashioned the university as a center of cultural transformation. Under such leadership, the academic achievements were remarkable. Among them were the syntheses of Chinese and Western learning created by philosophers Liang Shuming and Xiong Shili. Liang developed his prototypes of the Chinese, the Indian, and the Western cultures as successive stages in human civilization, and saw the uniquely balanced blend of materialism and spirituality of Confucianism as a vital direction in the long-term future of world philosophical trends. Xiong developed a philosophical system to integrate elements of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Bergsonian vitalism. He saw the material world as in constant flux and envisioned a continuum between spiritual and material forms. Both theories have become increasingly relevant in today's discussions of the human future and thus internationally influential. Another example is the intellectuals from Peking University who led the New

Culture Movement and the May Fourth Movement. They combined traditional prerogatives with their calls for Western-style republican rights.

Compared with its reputation within the Chinese system, the university's standing in the world community is more disputable. In 2004, the World University Rankings conducted by the UK-based *Times Higher Education Supplement* listed Peking University as 17th in the world. The *Times* rankings have continued to rank Peking University highly: 14th in 2006 and 36th in 2007. In contrast, the annual Academic Ranking of World Universities by the Graduate School of Education (previously the Institute of Higher Education) at Shanghai Jiaotong University (2007) shows convincingly that in terms of research strength, Peking is ranked within the top 203–304. In the most recent 2007 rankings, Peking University was the 228th in the world.

The story would be completely different if academic reputation and actual influence were counted. In its 110 years of history, Peking University has trained numerous students and postgraduates, who are now scattered all over China. The bulk of them have become pillars of all aspects of society. Some have developed into statesmen, social activists, scholars, professors, scientists, writers, and managers of enterprises. The following comments made by Professor Chen Pingyuan from the Chinese Department during the centenary celebrations are illustrative:

> Universities have their own contributions to their societies. In terms of teaching and research, Peking University is not world-class yet. Where Peking University excelled was its impact on China's ideological and cultural developments throughout the 20th century. Its role in China's modernization process could well be beyond the reach of many world-class universities. … With regard to contributions to human civilization, very few universities in the world can compete with Peking University. This is because at this crucial moment when an old eastern giant country is rising, a university that can function as profoundly as Peking University does is extremely rare. (Chen, 2006, p. 114)

Contextual Factors of Peking University Personnel Reforms

The personnel reforms at Peking University did not operate in isolation. A number of contextual factors have exerted strong and direct influence on the reforms. They include the international situation of globalization and the changing higher education governance, the domestic social and policy context, and China's most recent move to build up world-class universities.

Globalization and the Changing Governance in Higher Education

Globalization, with its characteristic compression of time and space, is seen as the most fundamental challenge confronting higher education in its history (Scott, 2000). In response, higher education systems have undergone significant restructuring. Similar pressures, procedures, and organizational patterns increasingly govern higher education in nations with different social, historical, and economic

characteristics (Schugurensky, 1999). While the actual dynamics and pace of change has varied across national systems, recent policy changes implemented by governments in many countries are shifting from social democratic to neoliberal orientations. This shift is manifest most clearly in privatization policies, which assume that reliance on market dynamics is the most appropriate way of responding to the various crises facing states responsible for governing education. At the core of the changes is a redefinition of relationships between the university, the state, and the market. Neoliberal policies advocate a paradoxical mixture of deregulation and regulation of higher education and put the whole idea of autonomy for universities and academics into question in many countries across the globe (Ordorika, 2003). Modern universities have been subjected to intense pressure to change, from government authorities, students, employers, professional associations, and other external stakeholders. New requirements of policy and governance have emerged, resulting in the corporatization and marketization of higher education and greater demand for accountability.

There has been a global ascendance of market thinking and a growing emphasis on increasing the role of the private sector in higher education. Policies of neoliberal restructuring have become a core component of a new discourse of development, driven largely by market principles (Rizvi, 2004). This challenges the traditional condition of higher education as a *public good* and replaces it with the idea that higher education should be thought of as customer-focused business enterprises and "self-seeking corporations responsible for their own outcomes" (Marginson, 2006a, p. 12). The pursuit of economic benefits becomes the essential and prioritized goal for higher education, threatening the status of the original educational purpose that higher education should strive for, but also, to a certain extent, reducing the university's autonomy and academic freedom.

Neoliberal globalization promotes a distinct new world order which has revamped the role of governments and cut back the scope of their work. There is a fundamental change in the philosophy of higher education governance and the way universities are managed. The questioning of the state's ability to continue monopolizing the provision of higher education has led to the transformation of the state from "big government, small individual" to "small government, big individual" (Flynn, 1997, pp. 19–20). Different approaches have been adopted to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of higher education provision. Universities encounter far more challenges, are subjected to an unprecedented level of external scrutiny, and are much more governed by market ideologies and the corporate discourse of efficiency and effectiveness (Slaughter and Leslie, 1997). Market ideologies have burgeoned in the Chinese higher education sector, especially since China's entry into the World Trade Organization (WTO). The influence of supranational organizations is increasing. Over the last 2 decades, China has shared with many other countries the opening of universities to much greater public scrutiny and an expansion of expectations by both governments and societies, as the sector itself expands toward mass higher education (Yang, 2004). Greater accountability to external constituencies means that some of the traditional values of universities are being challenged (Kennedy, 2003).

Commodification of Education in China

Closely related to the neoliberal globalization is commodification. These terms share the belief in market ideologies; the attempt to introduce the language, logic, and principles of private market exchange into public institutions; and the control of corporate culture over every aspect of life. "Capital is in command of the world order as never before" (McLaren, 2005, p. 27). Economism comes to define the purpose and potential of education. The objective is to make public universities into commodity-producing enterprises – a process Rikowski (2003) referred to as "capitalization."

Commodification happens at administrative and instrumental levels. The administrative level requires running the institution like an enterprise, focusing on budgetary cost–effect, seeking resources, product evaluation, and corresponding adjustment, instituting new hiring policies, and forging a new relationship between teachers and students. The instrumental level treats the whole process of teaching and learning as cost–effect-driven, focusing on learning/teaching as a necessary step for producing a product, readjusting the purposes of learning and teaching, enforcing depersonalization in the whole process of learning/teaching, and creating utility-oriented curricular objectives. China's education policy, management, and governance are pressured to improve service delivery and better governance (Kaufmann et al., 2005). Chinese universities once relied entirely on government funding and their management was highly centralized by the state. Now they have been pushed by the government to change their governance paradigm to adopt a doctrine characterized by freedom and markets (Apple, 2000). The universities are also encouraged by government to engage in non-state sectors, including the market, the community, the third sector, and civil society (Meyer and Boyd, 2001).

It is now politically correct in China to advocate market-driven reforms in education. Good public schools are being sold to private owners in the name of economic reforms. The dominant view underlying China's policymaking is that it respects the laws of a market economy including business-style management, market-oriented operations, and commercially viable products. Such a view is favored by mainstream Chinese economists, who argue that it is correct to run education as an industry in order to lead China's education onto the right path. Issues involving supply and demand must be handled according to market rules, and education is no exception. They also stress that *user pays* educational development is an effective way to stimulate consumption and investment and hence economic growth (Lao, 2003).

The most prominent theme of China's education reforms has been building close links between education and the market. The 1985 Decision on the Reform of the Educational Structure reinforced this trend. As the market gained more significance in China, especially in the more developed costal and urban areas, more substantial reform policies were introduced to make structural changes in education, including the Program for Education Reform and Development in China (1993) and the Education Act of the People's Republic of China (1995). China's education policies are produced by economists to "meet the needs of a socialist economy." In 1992,

the Decision on the Development of Tertiary Industry stated clearly that education was part of tertiary industry and those who owned it and invested in it would benefit. The government raised the idea of education as a stimulus for economic growth in the Decision on Further Educational Reform to Promote Quality Education in 1999. Private investment on education was strongly encouraged. The Decision on Reform and Development of Basic Education in 2001 and the Decision on Further Reform of Basic Education in Rural Areas in 2002 provided further basis for the transfer of ownership from public to private.

The dramatic trend toward commercialization of education in China has mainly materialized in the mushrooming for-profit educational institutions, from primary schools to universities. As commercialization of education is an initiative of the Chinese government, education fees are a logical consequence of state policies. Universities are seen and managed differently. The commodification of education also involves changes in the meaning and experience of education: what it means to be a teacher and a learner.

Chinese Quest for World-Class Status Universities

Mohrman (2008) rightly points out that China's bid for world-class universities is similar to its accession to the WTO and its hosting of the 2008 Olympics. China is seeking the respect of others. What she does not elaborate is that the move is also a sign of the rise in Chinese nationalism. To gain international recognition in higher education would enable Chinese people to feel proud. It would help to wipe out the humiliation brought about by Western powers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The drive to create world-class universities indicates a change in the frame of reference in higher education policy; a fervent embrace of international norms, especially in the top layer of universities. Chinese universities once competed between themselves without looking out at their international peers. Only in the last decade have the top universities embraced a larger international sense of themselves (Marginson, 2006a).

The quest for world-class universities also reflects the larger changes in Chinese society, as China moves to engage with the outside world and reforms its economy to adopt market principles. To strive for world-class universities has been designated as one of China's key policy positions. Believing that first-class universities increasingly reflect a nation's overall power, the Chinese government is now committed to strategically promoting a group of Chinese universities with the potential to enter the world-class league within a decade and is investing heavily in them. It wants to attract the world's best scholars to build first-class research institutions and is eyeing particularly the Chinese knowledge diaspora. The desire to have internationally competitive universities provides impetus for China's best institutions to follow the lead of European and North American universities, from curriculum to financial practices to new governance structures. However, as observed by Mohrman (2005), the notion of world-class status within China seems largely

imitative rather than creative. In striving for international standing, top Chinese universities compare themselves with Oxford and Yale, although they lack the centuries-long history and financial resources of Western universities.

The Evolution of, and Contention over, the Personnel Reforms

On May 12, 2003, the drafting committee of the personnel reform working team at Peking University approved the first draft of its reform proposal, *Peking University Teacher Recruitment and Promotion Reform Plan (Draft for Soliciting Comments)*. Peking University then released the draft throughout its campus for comment. The reform proposal generated a great deal of controversy. It was listed as one of the most influential events of 2003 at the university (Wang and Zhou, 2005). Indeed, it was hotly debated in the academic circles nationwide, and even attracted international attention, especially among the Chinese diaspora around the world. The responses were far beyond Peking University managers' expectations, as was acknowledged by Min (2004b). Min Weifang was the University Communist Party Secretary, the university's executive vice president and also the Chairman of its Council, with a Ph.D. in the economics of education from Stanford University.

The Evolution of the Reforms

The winter vacation work meeting of Peking University senior managers in late January 2003 identified personnel policy as a primary target for educational reform. It made decisions on a few general principles, including removal of the long-standing de facto tenure of *iron rice bowl* (a Chinese term used to refer to an occupation with guaranteed job security, as well as steady income and benefits), avoiding academic inbreeding, and setting a limit to faculty members. After the meeting, a panel for personnel reform was established. It was headed by president Xu Zhihong. Vice President Lin Jiuxiang was deputy leader, and it included vice presidents Wu Zhipan and Lin Jianhua, director of Personnel Department Zhou Yueming, assistant to the president and executive associate director of Guanghua Institute of Management Zhang Weiying, and vice director Ke Yang of the Department of Medicine. An implementation panel headed by Zhang Weiying was set up, with designated responsibility for drafting the reform proposal (Shu, 2004).

The first draft was finally approved by the drafting committee after amending nine previous drafts and the university released it in May 2003. According to Zhang (2003), the rationales for the proposed reform were multidimensional. First, in order to achieve Peking University's goal of becoming an institution of world-class status by 2015, the university must have a world-class teaching and research force. There was a mismatch between the selectivity of students and their teachers: while Peking University always enrolled the best students nationwide, faculty members were only second class. Secondly, the achievement of the university was perceived

as low by the national and Beijing municipal governments, and probably by the wider society (Wang and Zhou, 2005).

The Plan consisted of two parts: fundamental principles and suggestions for implementation. The eight fundamental principles were:

1. Faculty recruitment and promotion reforms should introduce competition. Faculty recruitment should be on a merit basis and open to national and international candidates.
2. Faculty recruitment must be open, fair, and transparent, with term contracts.
3. Academic ranks include assistant lecturer, lecturer, associate professor, and professor.
4. To encourage the participation of professors in recruitment and promotion, the university will set up professorial boards for academic assessment. All professors in a department/school will be involved in recruiting new members and promoting current members. The external role in peer review will be strengthened, according to international practice.
5. To energize teaching and research staff, and lift the academic level and competitiveness, the university will regulate the number and timing of promotion applications from lecturers and associate professors. Further, there will be a merit-based competition for the positions, with one third lecturers and one fourth associate professors facing dismissal.
6. In principle, Peking University graduates from the same academic unit will not be directly recruited as faculty members upon their graduation. Continuing efforts are needed to improve the level of faculty qualifications. Newly recruited members must have a doctoral degree (or the highest degree in their fields).
7. Regular evaluation of the teaching and research performances of all relevant units will be conducted to improve academic achievement and academics themselves, and uplift the overall efficiency of the university. Those repeatedly failing to meet requirements will be given a specified time to improve their performance, restructured, or possibly eliminated.
8. The university will strengthen assessment of faculty members, and their work ethic.

There were 38 implementation suggestions in four groups: administration of academic positions, policies of recruitment and promotion, criteria for recruitment and promotion, and the organization and procedures for recruitment and promotion:

The Administration of Academic Positions

(a) Peking University manages faculty members differently based on the nature of the posts.
(b) There are two types of faculty members: teaching and research, and teaching only.
(c) Full professors hold tenure until retirement.
(d) The assessment and promotion of teaching-only faculty members is mainly based on their teaching performance.

Policies of Recruitment and Promotion

(a) Peking University adopts open recruitment for all academic posts. The precondition for new recruitment is vacancies. For departments/schools already with a full quota of full professors, recruitment should be approved by the university. In order to optimize resources and fully utilize faculty, the university encourages joint recruitment between departments/schools.
(b) Posts for lecturers are open nationally. Vacancies at associate and full professor levels are open externally and internally. Starting from 2003, half of the vacancies at full professor level are open to external applicants. Such vacancies must not be used for internal promotion.
(c) From 2003, academic units should no longer recruit new members from their own graduates of that year. Those that cannot achieve this immediately should report to the university the proportion of new recruits who are their own graduates. They should only proceed after approval is granted, and should gradually reduce the proportion to zero.
(d) Newly appointed faculty members must hold doctoral degrees (or the highest degree in their fields). New doctoral graduates should be appointed as lecturers in principle. Associate professors aged 40 and below and professors aged 45 and below currently working at Peking University have to obtain their doctorates before applying for promotion.
(e) Appointments at lecturer and associate professor levels after 2003 are on a fixed-term contract basis. Each term is 3 years. Lecturers can have at most two terms (6 years) at the level. Associate professors in science and medicine can at most have three terms (9 years); Associate professors in humanities and social sciences at most four terms (12 years).
(f) Newly appointed lecturers, after 2 years, have two opportunities for promotion to associate professor level within the contract period. Newly appointed associate professors, after 5 years, have two opportunities to be promoted to full professor within the contract period. The second application must be at least 1 year after an unsuccessful first application. If the second application is unsuccessful, whether the original contract has expired or not the contract terminates 1 year later. No continuing contract is offered. If the application for promotion is successful, a new contract is granted based on the new post.
(g) Each academic unit should assess their faculty members half a year before their contracts expire, and based on the assessment decide whether or not to continue the contracts. They should report their recommendation to the university's human resources department.
(h) Current faculty members (those with Peking University by 2003) are appointed by their academic units at their current levels, transferring into the new series of posts.
(i) Of current faculty, of those with bachelor degrees who have worked at that level for 6 years, and those with Master's who have worked at that level for 3 years, if they fail promotion to lecturer their contracts are terminated. For those assistant lecturers who have already reached the maximum length, they can have 1 extra year before required to leave their posts.

(j) Current lecturers working at Peking University for less than 2 years can, at most, apply for promotion to associate professor level twice within their service period of 2–7 years. Those who have been working at Peking University for 3–5 years can, at most, apply for promotion to associate professor level twice within their service period of 8 years. Those who have been working at Peking University for 6 and more years can apply for promotion to associate professor level once within 3 years starting from 2003. For all current lecturers with 0–5 years working experience at the level, their second promotion application must be 1 year after their unsuccessful first application. If they fail to obtain their promotion, they are required to leave their posts 1 year after the date of notice from the university.

(k) Starting from 2003, current associate professors working at Peking University have at most two opportunities to be promoted to full professor level based on the following:

- In science, medicine and engineering, those with 2 years or less experience within their 5–10 years service period; those with 3–5 years experience within their 5–12 years service period; those with 6 years and more experience within their 13 years service period.
- In the humanities and social sciences, those with 2 years or less experience within their 5–13 years service period; those with 3–5 years experience within their 5–14 years service period; those with 6 years and more experience within their 15 years service period.
- If the first application for promotion fails, the second promotion application must be 1 year after their unsuccessful first application. Those who had applied twice for promotion to full professor level and failed before 2003 can only apply once after 2003. Those who fail to be promoted to full professor level within the above service periods are required to leave their posts 1 year after the date of notice from the university.

(l) Faculty members obtain tenure after being promoted to full professor level and continue to work at Peking University until the retirement age set by the university. The university assesses their performance on a regular basis. Those failing to meet the criteria consecutively for 3 years will be required to leave their posts. The university allows them to apply for position at other levels. They are assessed against the requirements for such positions and if successful, sign new contracts. They can also leave the university.

(m) Teaching and research staff can apply for teaching only posts.

(n) Under two circumstances the university can dismiss the concerned faculty members including those with tenure: behaviors that break teachers' regulations or involve illegal activities; and those whose academic units have been disbanded.

(o) All full-time faculty appointed by Peking University must complete their tasks during work hours. Without the permission of the university, they must not hold substantial positions elsewhere, unrelated to university duties. Otherwise, they will be dismissed.

Criteria for Recruitment and Promotion

(a) Both recruitment and promotion must adhere to the principle that the main focus is on scholarship, with some attention also to teaching performance and social service. The maintenance of academic standards relies on a competitive mechanism, strict checks by the academic committees at all levels, and an ever-increasing requirement for quality.
(b) The university is guided by the principle that newly appointed associate professors and professors must have higher academic achievements than existing associate professors and professors, with the aim of progressively lifting the teaching contingent to world-class levels.
(c) Newly recruited lecturers and assistant lecturers should have solid knowledge of the theories in their academic fields. Their doctoral dissertations should make a significant contribution to new knowledge. They are expected to become excellent scholars in their fields.
(d) Newly promoted and/or appointed associate professors should publish major scholarly articles and books with significant impact. They are expected to be outstanding young scholars in their fields nationally, leading among their corresponding age groups.
(e) Newly appointed professors must be widely recognized as nationally or internationally leading scholars in their fields. Except for some special cases, newly appointed professors are expected to be able to teach in at least one foreign language.
(f) Good academic ethics have always been important in recruitment at Peking University. Academic ethics could be the sole reason to fail a recruitment and/or promotion.
(g) The academic committee of each academic unit should maintain detailed regulations regarding academic promotion, based on the general spirit of the university's reforms.

Organization and Procedures for Recruitment and Promotion

(a) The recruitment and promotion of existing faculty members should be based strictly on the procedures set by the university. It should be open, transparent, and on the basis of merit.
(b) Peking University adopts a system of administrative assessment and academic assessment in the recruitment of new faculty and promotion of existing faculty. Administrative assessment is at two levels: department/school and university. Academic assessment is at three levels: disciplines, disciplinary clusters, and university academic committee.
(c) Each academic unit should create committees responsible for recruitment.
(d) To maximize the role of professors in academic recruitment and promotion, all departments/school should set up professorial boards to provide their work units with a democratic assessment of questions of recruitment and promotion.

- Professorial boards assess the academic achievement, teaching effectiveness, potentialities and prospects of the applicant, the academic need for the applicant, and how the applicant compares with existing members in the unit at the relevant level.
- Associate professors are not qualified to be on the board for the assessment of applications for promotion to full professor level. Lecturers are not qualified to be on the board for assessment of applications for promotion to associate professor level.
- Departments/schools with more than 40 full professors can have more than one professorial board in their disciplinary areas. The department/school decides whether or not to have more than one board. If there is more than one, each board should have no fewer than 20 professors. Professors are entitled to be on any of the boards within their academic units. Each department/school can also invite professors from other departments/schools to participate in their recruitment and/or promotion assessment.

(e) Recruitment of new faculty members includes: advertising the post internationally and nationally, accepting applications, and initial selection by department/school academic committee or recruitment team. Finalists then come to Peking University for interview. This includes an academic seminar by the candidate delivered to the academic committee and other members of the interview panel, interactions between candidate and core faculty members in the department/school, solicitation of opinions widely from relevant faculty, and the opinion of the professorial board if recruitment is at associate or full professor level. The department/school academic committee or recruitment committee should decide whether the candidate is recruited. The university's human resources department provides final approval.

(f) The procedures for promoting existing faculty members include: submission of the application by the applicant (includes a summary of research work together with evidence in articles and books of the applicant's highest achievement); review reports from peers; a report on academic achievement by the applicant to the professorial board, consisting of all professors of the work unit, followed by discussion of whether the applicant has met the requirements and a vote by all board members. The department/school academic committee or recruitment committee decides whether the candidate should be recruited. The university human resources department provides final approval.

(g) Applications for new posts at full professor level, and for promotion to full professor, are assessed by peers. This is organized by each academic unit. There should be at least five peer review reports, including one to three from renowned overseas scholars.

(h) Applications should include the applicant's curriculum vitae, three references, and two to five publications by the applicant to demonstrate his or her academic achievements.

(i) Applications for promotion should be received 3 months before the academic committee members meet. The university announces the date of the

academic committee meeting and the deadlines for departments/school to submit applications, but does not provide specific timelines for applicants to apply or for the assessment at department/school level.

Composition of Academic Committees

(a) The Peking University academic committee consists of the academic committees at the department/school, disciplinary clusters, and university levels. The committees exercise their power by assessing applications for appointment and promotion. The committees at specific disciplines and disciplinary clusters are the basic assessors of the applicants' quality for appointment and/or recruitment. The university academic committee mainly makes decisions about institutional arrangements, and some major academic issues.
(b) At least one third of the academic committees at department/school level should be tenured professors from renowned universities overseas. Decisions made by the committee in the absence of overseas members are valid, except for promotions.
(c) The chairpersons and composition of the academic committees at department/school levels should be approved by the President.

The essence of Peking University's first personnel reform plan was to open up academic positions. This included a schedule to eliminate a proportion of teachers within a certain time frame, hoping the competitive mechanism of the market (especially the international academic market) would lead to improvement in the quality of teachers. The pressures for change came mainly from the government, wanting to transform Peking University into a first-class institution and providing extra financial support. The reforms were pushed forward at the highest level of the university. The approach was top-down, designed and orchestrated by economists who had completed their doctorates in major English-speaking countries (Wang and Zhou, 2005).

Although the first reform plan stirred up nationwide debate, the university's central administration was undeterred. Confronted with strong criticism and suggestions from within the university and from the wider society, and on the basis of constructive suggestions, the leading and implementation panels produced a second version of the reform plan for discussion. The university authorities also asked Zhang Weiying to post a painstaking explanation of the reasons for the six chief principles on the university's Web site. As the central administrators saw it, these were typical practices in foreign universities whether first or third class. But Peking University aimed to be first class. The reform was a crucial step toward that goal. It aimed to nurture national talent, especially world-rated innovative personnel in science and technology. The university was responsible for cultivating scientists, social activists, thinkers, and statesmen.

However, the second draft plan showed evident revisions and substantial compromises in comparison with the first version. There was an additional explanation of the legality and the legitimacy of the reform plan. It was stated that the reform would be based on the Education Act of the People's Republic of China, and the Higher Education Law. The references to the proportion for mandatory dismissal,

that is, one third of lecturers and one fourth of associate professors, were removed. In relation to the stipulation that, in principle, Peking University graduates from the same academic unit will not be directly recruited as staff members, the words "except for some special academic fields" were added. There was an additional clause stating that "those with twenty-five years of service at Peking University and within ten years of the retirement age set by the government could work at the university until their retirement." It was stated that the university planned to offer tenure to some associate professors, and accelerated promotion to some outstanding young performers. The statement that "half of the vacancies at full professor level are open to external applicants. Such vacancies must not be used as internal promotion" was deleted. The stipulation that "except for some special cases, newly appointed professors are expected to be able to teach in at least one foreign language" was eliminated. The requirement "At least one-third of the members of the academic committees at department/school level should be the tenured professors from renowned universities overseas" was replaced by "If conditions allow, departments/schools are encouraged to invite tenured professors from other renowned universities to become members of academic committees."

In sharp contrast to the responses to the first version, little attention was paid to the changes made in the second version of the personnel reform plan. The second draft represented a readjustment of interests among different groups. It aimed to stabilize the existing teaching force at the university. But the original objective, to use the market mechanism to reform teacher appointment and promotion, and through the substitution of teachers to obtain a domino effect that would restructure the academic system, ended largely in failure. As it was put by some at a meeting organized by the China Centre for Economic Research at Peking University on June 29, 2003, the "edges and corners" of reform had been worn away due to the deletion of stipulations on elimination ratios. The plan was likely to end up achieving nothing definite (Shu, 2004).

Between September and October, a third draft of the reform plan was produced and discussed at a meeting held to discuss academic staff personnel issues. According to the Peking University news network, unified understanding was reached at the meeting. Decisions were made to proceed with the reform. The university then officially issued the third draft and all academic units were required to form opinions with regard to implementation. The university's Eleventh Party Congress held on December 18–20 discussed the reform plan. However, the university authorities adopted a different strategy to that used during discussion of the first and second drafts. There was little publicity. Explanation of the plan was rare. Outside the university, it was difficult to access the text of the third version, and it remains so.

Peking University officially endorsed the Peking University Teacher Recruitment and Promotion Reform Plan on February 10, 2004, marking the official launching of the personnel reforms. According to Wang and Zhou (2005), there were many changes, especially compared with the second draft. The university adhered to the principle that talent resources are of primary importance. It was stated that faculty vacancies would be based on both overall control of staff numbers and needs at the academic unit level. It was stated that the relationship between Peking University and the appointees should be on an equal, voluntary, consultative, and unanimous

basis; and the right and duties of the university and its appointees were defined. It was stated that the university provides its faculty members with professional development opportunities. The official plan also stated that Peking University was to establish a specific committee to deal with appeals and complaints regarding academic recruitment and promotion.

In addition, full-time research positions were added into the category of academic staff. A mechanism to combine academic assessment, administrative supervision, and verification especially between different academic units was emphasized. The requirement that lecturers should be able to "make outstanding academic contributions" was dropped. There was a further classification of the requirement for associate professors with tenure, making it clear their performance should be clearly better than that of associate professors with fixed-term contracts. The stipulation that a doctoral degree was needed for promotion to full professor was eliminated. Departments/schools were granted autonomy in the setting of standards for appointing assistant lecturers and lecturers and for promotion from assistant lecturer level to lecturer level. More flexibility was granted for academics to move between academic posts of different categories (teaching only, research only, teaching and research). Departmental heads were required to be chairperson of professorial boards within the department. It was specified that the professorial board should consist of full professors and tenured associates only. The requirement in promotion applications for three to four references from renowned scholars was dropped. Current staff members who were with Peking University before the reform were given longer fixed terms.

Overall, while the final version of the reform plan managed to adhere to the basic principle of the original reform design, it was much more moderate. It made a number of concessions, and it incorporated some suggestions and criticisms, for example in relation to the rights and interests of faculty members, equality issues, and the duties and responsibilities of both university and appointees. The final reform plan left people with the impression that it started with great strength and impetus but in the end turned out to only scratch the surface.

In April 2004, implementation of the personnel reforms finally began. On April 6, the university's personnel department issued a notice on the university's Web site announcing that the university was calling for applications from scholars both within China and from overseas to fill 95 open professorial posts in the university's 28 departments and research institutes, apart from the medical school (Yuan, 2005). The recruitment was the largest, in terms of scale, in the university's history. While it was on almost all the major media, there was little reaction (Wang and Zhou, 2005, p. 32). The reforms had been set in motion and the effects remained to be seen.

The Contention Over the Reforms

Shortly after the draft plan was launched, the Beida Billboard Bulletin System was inundated with notes from both opponents and supporters. Almost all the six major

moves proposed in the draft plan were heavily criticized, and also strongly defended. The responses were fierce. Letters of complaint or support piled up on the desks of the panel members and jammed the e-mail box of President Xu Zhihong. Chinese media including the Internet, television, newspapers, and magazines carried reports and opened up special columns on this topic. Some international media carried reports and discussions of the issue. Academics from China and overseas participated in discussions organized by academic journals and professional magazines (Wang and Zhou, 2005). How could one institution's personnel reform plan, which may seem commonplace to many in Western universities, especially in the major English-speaking countries, arouse such strong concerns? First, Peking University is seen as a weather vane for higher education reform in China. It "is always linked with a sort of fervor, a moral behavior" (Shu, 2004, p. 60). Secondly, changes to personnel policy are an integral (and arguably the crucial) part of China's higher education reforms which are an important part of China's overall reform process. Thirdly, a teaching post at a Chinese higher education institution has traditionally been seen as lifelong employment, unless the employee resigns or seriously violates relevant laws or regulations.

Interestingly, the proposed reforms received strong support from other university leaders, such as Zhu (2004), president of the University of Science and Technology of China. They saw Peking University's policy as pioneering work and wanted to follow suit. The reform proposal was also well received by higher education experts including Professor Pan Maoyuan from Xiamen University and Professor Yang Dongping from Beijing University of Science and Technology. Ji Baocheng, president of Renmin University, stated that Beida's personnel system reform was an important step forward as China's higher education reform reached a critical time. He insisted that reform of the personnel system was the primary reform needed. A similar viewpoint was expressed by Hou Zixin, president of Nankai University (Yang et al., 2005).

In contrast, the most concentrated opposition came mainly from humanists and a few social scientists, especially within Peking University, or among its alumni (Chen, 2006, p. 1). The sharpest critics asked whether it was intended to reform or castrate Peking University. The issue was seen as a question of life or death concerning China's traditional culture, one of importance to the entire Chinese nation. This criticism raised the matter to the level of principles, and even accused the reform plan of breaking the law. The critics consisted mainly of young and middle-aged faculty members who were expected to be most affected. The proposed reforms would have substantially impacted the career of almost all of them. Their life tenure would have ended and up to one third of them may have had to leave their positions when the changes took effect.

President Xu Zhihong insisted that successful reforms do not have, and should not be expected to have, 100% support (Long, 2004). It would be enough if the majority of Peking University people supported them. In fact, the reforms did not lack strong supporters who connected to the passion, and the strong sense of mission and obligation, in the plan.

The Premise of the Reforms

To people at Peking University and those in Chinese higher education, the reform did not come as a surprise. Widespread dissatisfaction with how Chinese higher education institutions were performing both domestically and globally provided a clear motive for reform. In the case of Peking University, nearly all people on campus, both supporters and critics of the reforms, were critical of the current state of affairs at the university. The university's performance was seen as poor even by domestic standards. For example, in 2001 Tsinghua University produced at least 200 more publications indexed by the Science Citation Index than Peking University. The difference increased to more than 500 in 2002. About 80% of Peking University's research was produced by 20% of its academics (Zhang, 2003, p. 35). This judgment was shared by many. One established scholar and director of a major research institute at Peking University even said privately that by the standards of many research-intensive universities, only 30% of the university's full professors were up to par, let alone of world-class quality. This view summarizes the common understanding among the leaders of Peking University.

As put by Professor Chen Ping, a firm supporter of the plan, personnel reform was designed to attract people of academic excellence to accelerate the process of Peking University becoming a first-class university (Shu, 2004). The university needed "a first class teaching contingent" (Min, 2004a, p. 11). The ultimate goal was to establish a fair, just, and open platform for competition and draw talented personnel from the world over to the cultivation of talent for China. The reform also aimed to end some of the old practices of appointment and promotion in which the corrupt aspect of the Chinese *guanxi* and seniority were the main factors. After the second reform proposal was issued, President Xu Zhihong mentioned that one direct motive was the need for a mechanism for getting rid of poor-performing faculty. He stated that "the intended effect of the reform, to put it simply, is to do away with the current situation where everyone expects a lifelong tenure at the moment s/he enters Beida" (Shu, 2004, p. 64). This has been a knotty issue for higher education in China. Since the founding of the PRC, the university has maintained a personnel system that recruits faculty members mostly from its own graduates. Once graduates join the faculty, they have virtually secured positions with the university until their retirement. The proposed program borrows from the up-or-out rule observed by many universities in the United States. Its aims to attack the *iron rice bowl*. American universities give their faculty one chance whereas Peking University offers two. As explained by Zhang (2003), in most cases 6 years is long enough for a newly graduated doctorate holder to demonstrate capability. A small number of gifted people need a longer time to show their talent. They should be exempted from the rule if the recommendation to do so is sufficiently convincing. This is seen as reasonable both in practical and theoretical terms. For example, Professor Pan Maoyuan endorsed it in an interview soon after the first reform draft was issued.

Many people who criticized the reform proposal never denied the need for reform. As stated by Gan (2005a), one of the strongest critics: "It is as though the entire debate today were about whether Beida should or should not reform, but this

never was an issue in the reform! From the very outset, the debates surrounding the Beida reform were about 'how to reform,' and never about 'whether or not to reform'" (p. 62). However, since reference was often made to so-called world-class universities, especially American research universities, many related issues emerged. For example, what is a first class university? How should one judge and protect a great university's character, its history, and the spirit that goes into the very marrow of its bones? Is it possible for the university spirit to refrain from entering the market when all is led by market competition? These issues are more fundamental (Shu, 2004, p. 61). Based on different understandings of them, people formulated their rationales for the reform.

The Legitimacy of the Reforms

Of the six proposed moves, the one eliciting the most violent controversy was the regulation about eliminating unqualified faculty members. Young academics were the group least impressed by the reform plan. Compared to their colleagues at the university, this group, for a long time, had been most eager for reforms. They were also the main force both in teaching and in research work (Shu, 2004, p. 65). They questioned whether or not the university had the legal right to dismiss them. As employees of a Chinese national university, they were Chinese civil servants, belonging to the Chinese cadre system. In their daily work within the university, their treatment, including promotion, housing allowances, and medical care, were all aligned strictly with the corresponding administrative ranks of the Chinese civil service. For those with administrative roles, this was even more the case. This civil service system has been weakened and is now less emphasized. The market is being introduced into most aspects of society. In actual fact the cadre system is one of the most difficult aspects for the Chinese to reform. It is also the part that China is most keen to reform. The possible dismissal of some faculty at Peking University drew its legitimacy from a general ideology of reform, rather than specific state laws and decrees. It is worth asking the question of whether the proposed move is sufficiently grounded, in theory and in a strict legal sense.

There were not many people who asked this question, partially because years of reform rhetoric had legitimated the personnel plan, and partially because of the aforementioned widespread dissatisfaction with the current situation and especially personnel policies. However, it remains a serious issue for reformers to consider. Gan (2003, 2005a) raised this issue and questioned the Peking University authorizers, using evidence and examples from foreign countries and other Chinese universities. He cited the passing of the Education Reform Bill by the British Parliament in 1988 to illustrate the necessity for legislation by the state before actual university reforms. The intension of the British bill was to ensure that all British universities would have the power to dismiss any university professor on the ground of redundancy. He saw much similarity between the British experience and the proposed reform at Peking University, and called for

China to formulate university reform law to avoid violations of the basic rights and dignity of Chinese university teachers. He concluded that the proposed move to replace permanent appointments with fixed-term contracts did not have any legal grounds. The reform would be, according to him, illegal and therefore immature. Based on his comparison between Peking University's proposal and the British experience, he noted that it was irrational to link terms of appointment to promotion in the reform plan.

It is correct to base university reforms on a sufficient legal ground and ensure teachers' rights are well protected. However, in China's contemporary history, reforms have always been one step ahead of lawmaking. This is well acknowledged. Given such national conditions, Gan Yang sounded too idealistic. Even much needed modifications to the Education Act of the People's Republic of China and the Compulsory Education Act have just been put on the agenda. If university reforms had to wait for a law of university reforms, it might take another decade.

Another concern was about whether or not fair competition, a prerequisite for the reforms to succeed, would be guaranteed. The worry is well based given academic corruption in China (Yang, 2005). Performance assessment and promotion in Chinese universities are full of human manipulations and few are objective, honest evaluations. Often those adept in manipulation gain promotion quickly and easily. To minimize such cases, the reform plan amended the statute in two ways. It required the disbanding of any branch institute in the university if its rank in China fell out of the top ten (in some areas top five) and it introduced a board of professors as an auxiliary force to evaluate applicants for promotion. Only when an application achieved support from half the professors could the application be sent to the university academic board. This was widely welcomed, although some people questioned whether it was feasible.

The issue of the legality of the proposed personnel reform took the reformers by surprise. Due to Gan Yang's personal influence in Chinese academic circles, the question was a timely reminder. The second draft of the reform plan took the issue seriously and clearly explained the legal basis of the proposed reform. Zhang Weiying responded to Gan Yang's questioning directly. In his explanations, he wrote that "the reform was formulated with reference to the State Personnel Ministry's 'Opinions Concerning the Trial Implementation of Personnel Appointment in Public Institutions' promulgated on July 6, 2002, and in line with the actuality of Peking University" (Zhang, 2003, p. 37). The debate over the legality and legitimacy of the proposed reform was thus an important contribution to the Peking University personnel reform plan.

The Orientation of the Reforms

Some Chinese scholars outside the mainland supported the proposed personnel reform at Peking University. The strongest support came from a group at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST). The group consisted

of Kong Xianze, former vice president of the HKUST, Ting Pang-Hsin, Dean of the Humanities and Social Sciences Division of the HKUST, and Ding Xueliang, professor of China Studies at the Humanities and Social Sciences Division. They paid much attention to how Peking University would open up to the recruitment of overseas Chinese scholars. They emphasized the possible role of the Chinese knowledge diaspora in bringing China to the world and the world into China. They stressed the importance of external assessment especially by Chinese scholars overseas, and focused much attention on how Peking University planned to achieve this. They suggested that Peking University should connect to the international standard. Only thus could the university become the bellwether of progress toward first-rate world standards by mainland universities. Ding Xueliang (2003) remarked that the absence of overseas assessment was the weakest link in the proposed reform.

Their emphasis on conformity with international practice was challenged by others including Gan (2004, 2005b), Chen (2003a, b), Li L. (2003), and Li M. (2003). Citing Charles W. Eliot, who served as president of Harvard University for 40 years, Shu Kewen (2004), argued that a university worthy of the name must originate from native seeds and cannot be transplanted from one country to another in flourishing maturity. The development of China's universities could only, and should, be rooted in Chinese culture and society. Just as American universities are not replicas of foreign systems, Chinese universities should grow naturally in the Chinese social and political environments and manifest the aims and ambitions of the Chinese people. The questions asked included: What *are* first-rate universities? How do we foster and protect the unique history and spirit of a great university? Is it still possible to prevent erosion of the university spirit by the market? How?

Gan (2004) objects to the argument that Chinese academics must publish in English in the West to receive validation for their work. In the influential article "The Chinese Idea of Universities and the Beida Reform" he warns that because of the specious understanding of what is a world-class university, reform proposals designed to create world-class universities often ape American research universities at every step. By moving in this direction, China's universities are doomed to become "dependent fiefdoms" of American universities (p. 87). He continues:

> The fundamental problem of universities operated by Chinese is that basically there can be no mention of cultural self-confidence or cultural consciousness. In other words, they have far from established a Chinese idea of the university. (p. 86)

> The objective of reforming China's universities is to end as quickly as possible studying abroad in China and make PhDs trained in China itself the principal body of Chinese higher education – not to replace China's university teachers with American PhDs. (p. 95)

While some acclaimed the attempt to exploit the remarkable Chinese knowledge diaspora as strategic and timely in relation to the crucial next stage of knowledge economy development, Gan Yang saw it differently. In another article, he described Peking University's incentive to attract top quality academics of Chinese origin from abroad as "picking peaches" instead of "planting peach trees." He maintained that it would be almost impossible for the plan to achieve

its goal simply because there were very few scholars of Chinese descent overseas whose research standards were at the world's forefront (Gan, 2005b). Chen (2003b) disagreed with the reform plan's emphasis on English language proficiency and commented that what people who discuss university reform today lack is not an "international outlook, but an understanding of and a respect for 'traditional China' and 'modern China'" (p. 109). In a context of the neoliberal imaginary of globalization, with higher education policies seemingly converging toward a particular concatenation of neoliberal ideas (Rizvi, 2004), Chen noted there is no readymade reform system for China's universities to imitate. The European and American experiences need to undergo innovative modifications in order to be operable in China. In his view, the most crucial issue for university reform was that of the idea of the university (Chen, 2003a).

The most detailed critique of Peking University was from Li M. (2003). He argued that in the plan the attention to the differences between business and the university was superficial. The plan was based on a business logic. It treated Peking University as a state-owned enterprise, setting out to improve efficiency by introducing a mechanism of reward and punishment. The plan had little understanding of, and respect for, academic work. In Zhang's (2003) explanations of the reform plan, Peking University's glory and pride were largely set aside and Harvard University was referred to more than ten times. Li M.'s (2003) conclusion was that adoption of the economic logic could only harm Peking University's ambition to become a first-class university. Some scholars from other institutions also argued that the economic logic of the reform plan might drive faculty to work toward short-term goals and discourage those who would otherwise have concentrated undisturbed on teaching and research. One research fellow from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences argued that under the new policy the university would not tolerate intellectuals like Cao Xueqin (1715–1763), who silently developed the masterpiece *Dream of Red Mansions* over a 10-year period. This was especially worrying to scholars in the humanities, who were concerned that the reform used the standards of American commercial, legal, and other professional institutions to measure all disciplines. This raised questions about the kind of university Peking University would become, and about the future of subjects such as literature, history, and philosophy where Peking University had enjoyed special prestige.

It was argued by Professor Sun (2005), and confirmed by Rosen (2004), that most of the supporters of the reform plan were somewhat distant from or completely unrelated to Peking University while most of those with reservations about the reform plan were directly related to the university. He stated that although the personnel system was important, it was not the highest priority for reform. What should be on the top of the agenda was the establishment of a fair and effective academic evaluation mechanism, and an attack on Chinese universities as a system in which appointment and promotion were based on rank and official authority.

The most enlightening, meaningful part of the debate was the notion of the Chinese idea of the university. The argument here is that the fundamental mission of the Chinese university is a judicious combination of learning from Western university traditions and the ideological, intellectual, cultural, and educational independence of the Chinese.

The orientation of Chinese university reforms should be toward developing such a mission. There was support for this notion on both sides of the debate. Zhang (2004) responded to it in his *The Logic of the University*, pointing out that indigenization and internationalization are two sides of the same coin, but he also warned against "narrow-minded indigenization" (p. 100). The warning was not entirely baseless. For example, Gan (2004) expressed strong academic nationalism in his discussion of the Chinese idea of the university. He ended his remarks with the following:

> Beida! Raise your proud head and throw out your noble chest! You must not follow others so abjectly and subserviently! You should walk your path with self-respect and self-confidence for the sake of the Chinese idea of university. (p. 97)

This reflected a miscalculation of global dominance. It failed to acknowledge that the global–local nexus is a twofold process of give and take: a dynamic interaction between global trends and local responses, and an exchange whereby global trends are reshaped to local ends.

Looking retrospectively, the difference between the two sides is smaller than it first looked. No one was against international exchange or learning from foreign experience. No one advocated wholesale Westernization or colonization. The difference was in practical priorities.

Issues and Observations

Peking University's draft personnel reform plan became a hot point of discussion within the campus; and after it was made public, aroused widespread attention with recriminations, encomiums, and doubts, not simply because it was arbitrary, arrogant, and irresponsible as Gan (2005a) suggested. The responses to the plan demonstrate the complexity of China's university reforms. As an import from another culture, the notion of world-class universities must be adapted to meet the specific needs of higher education and society in China. At the same time, China is transforming from a command-and-control society to a market economy. In this context the adoption of foreign models readily becomes overly simplistic.

A number of issues emerged during the process of personnel reform at Peking University that illustrate China's long-standing struggle to strike a balance between dominant Western models and the carrying forward of its own rich cultural and educational traditions. These issues will now be discussed from a historical and comparative education perspective.

The European–North American University Model

The major expansion of universities from their European and North American heartland occurred after the mid-nineteenth century, mainly through colonialism. Countries that escaped colonial domination and that established universities during

this period adopted Western (European–North American) models, in some cases jettisoning indigenous institutions, as exemplified in China (Altbach, 2001). Chinese universities have looked to their most elite American counterparts for standards, policy innovation, and solutions to their own development problems.

The proposed personnel reforms at Peking University were based almost entirely on the perceived US experience, demonstrating an acceptance of American policies and practices. In the grafting of American policies onto Chinese university structures, thought is not always given to the cultural differences involved (Mohrman, 2008). Here Gan's (2005a) double point is relevant, that Zhang Weiying exhibited on one hand a lack of experience of US higher education, and on the other hand almost total reliance on an idealized American model. Today's university reforms in China are a combination of externally imposed standards that force China to adopt international (usually Western, and often American) modes of education and administration, with voluntary and often enthusiastic acceptance of foreign standards of academic excellence. Most of the international models for reform used by Chinese universities are based on the American experience and gained through educational exchange. This is particularly the case for the most prestigious universities such as Peking. Reformers at Peking University such as Min (2004a) cited Harvard and Stanford universities almost exclusively in legitimizing their policy, stating repeatedly that American research universities were the best in the world. When Zhang (2004) enumerated the reasons for granting tenure to full professors and some outstanding associate professors, he referred to foreign experience, especially American practice – for example, his arguments that tenure of this kind would provide established professors with security so they can concentrate on long-term basic research rather than work for quick success and instant benefits, and it would give young junior academics hope and encourage them to work harder and better.

However, in the process of borrowing, the foreign tenure policy lost its meaning. According to Chen (2000) the tenure policy promoted by the American Association of University Professors created in 1915 and the UK Association of University Teachers set up in 1919 was motivated neither by the desire for economic benefits nor lifelong employment. It was designed to protect ideological and academic freedom. It was a natural part of the long-standing idea of the university and shared the same roots as the modern university. It was not a favor from university authorities or a useful tool for them. Gan (2003) offered a similar criticism of the failure of the reform plan to express a serious interest in protecting academic freedom. This failure was not accidental: it showed that the advocates of the reform lacked knowledge of the policies practiced in the United States and the United Kingdom, which ironically had been used to legitimize the reform plan. Like Chen Pingyuan, Gan Yang insisted that the tenure systems in the United States and United Kingdom were designed to protect academic freedom not advance market competition. He found that the reforms at Peking University had failed to seriously consider neither the clear and rational American system nor the sensible British system.

The wholesale adoption of US plans may not be totally appropriate for a country with a very different history and cultural traditions. At a minimum, Chinese universities could benefit from studying the problems that have plagued American universities,

learning from examples of what not to do (Mohrman, 2005). There is an urgent need for critical examination of the long-term consequences of grafting American academic practices onto a Chinese base. US higher education is rooted in its own history, culture, and needs to serve American society.

The Chinese need to look at knowledge and its production outside China more critically. Will Chinese academics continue to look outside their borders for standards of excellence, implying that Western educational norms are superior and that Chinese universities remain inferior? This practice links to the long-standing issue in Chinese education that indigenous Chinese wisdom and imported Western knowledge have never been on an equal footing. It reminds us that real knowledge is only produced by certain particular countries in particular ways (Appadurai, 2001). Currently, China is insufficiently critical of the phenomenon of Western educational systems and structures that continue to define education for the rest of the world, and by extension, define what knowledge is and who may claim competence in it.

Cai Yuanpei's Legacy

Chinese universities generally lack unique institutional features. In this respect, however, Peking University has differed from others. Cai Yuanpei advocated free-thinking principles and an all-embracing approach, now seen as the most fundamental characteristics of the university. It was Cai Yuanpei who enabled Peking University to typify the transformation of Chinese education from ancient to modern form, giving vivid expression to conflicts and integration between traditional and modern. Remolded by Cai, the university has become a Western-model university established by the government while tied in many ways to the traditional system represented by Chinese academies (Hayhoe, 1996). Cai Yuanpei wanted to combine the Chinese educational spirit, especially Confucian and Mohist character building, with Western systems. His most dramatic reform initiative was to hire leading scholars with many different views and perspectives, under the argument that "all ideas grounded in reason deserve a hearing" (Weston, 2004, p. 123). By so doing, he attracted many dynamic personalities to the university and created conditions for lively academic debates. He placed philosophy, or epistemology, at the core of the university curriculum and sought to integrate all areas of theoretical knowledge in the arts and sciences, both Chinese and Western, on a transcendental plane. Of particular importance was the way in which this approach fostered an autonomous moral stance, whereby the university could serve national development yet avoid subservience to shifting political forces.

By challenging the status quo, Cai Yuanpei was able to synthesize valuable thoughts and ideas from China and the West, making Peking University a center for free and open scholarly thinking in the early twentieth century. As the contemporary Peking University senior managers saw it, the personnel reforms were designed to carry on this legacy of challenging the status quo.

Cai's impact has been everlasting and profound. The Peking University president involved in the reforms, Professor Xu Zhihong, stated that he respected Cai Yuanpei the most of all presidents in China and abroad, as a bold and decisive education reformer:

> President Cai was indeed a great man. Doing a good job of managing Beida under those circumstances was no simple matter. In fact, quite a number of professors in those days were very bad. But he instituted bold reforms after coming to Beida and brought in from abroad many conceptions of school operation that for those days were quite advanced. He brought in a large number of professors with new thinking and genuine learning. He completely changed the face of Beida. He instituted many innovations. For instance, Professor Cai was the first person to recruit female students. We advocate education for comprehensive qualities today, but President Cai long ago advocated [all-round development of] morality, intelligence, physique, and beauty. He was quite advanced for his time, but he himself was not satisfied because his conceptions were constrained in many aspects in those times. However, his conceptions and measures laid a very good foundation for Beida's subsequent development. (Long, 2004, p. 49)

Cai Yuanpei influenced many others both around and after him. Xu's assessment has been shared by others. One was Mei Yiqi who presided over Tsinghua University from December 1931 to August 1937, and built a solid base for the university's later development. He made the following remarks about university management and Cai Yuanpei:

> In terms of managing a university, I believe I should follow Mr. Cai Yuanpei's attitude of "all-embracing" (*Jianrongbinbao*) so that we can fulfill our mission of academic freedom. The so-called "new" and "old" in the past, and today's "left" and "right", should all be explored equally and freely in universities. This was why the old Peking University became today's Peking University. This should be the focal point for Tsinghua to become a great Tsinghua University in the future. (Huang, 1995, p. 331)

Another was John Dewey, the great American educational thinker. In an essay he wrote after working at Peking University for 2 years, Dewey compared Cai Yuanpei with the then presidents of Oxford, Cambridge, Harvard, and Columbia. Dewey concluded that in terms of professional knowledge, Cai was no match for the presidents of Oxford and Cambridge universities. But in terms of education, the British presidents were no match for Cai Yuanpei. The latter had remade Peking University and turned it into China's first university in a truly modern sense. This pushed forward reform and progress in the entire society (Feng, 1992).

When asked to list the most significant reason for Cai Yuanpei's success in implementing educational reforms at Peking University, Min (2004a) focused on Cai's international perspective and understanding. He stated that Cai Yuanpei was able to play a particularly significant role in Peking University's development because he had a broad world vision and a deep understanding of other countries. Others have paid more attention to Cai Yuanpei's learning and personality. Chen (2000) noted that Cai Yuanpei's reforms at Peking University were mainly in the humanities. Historians have argued that this was because most of the people in the humanities were incorrigibly obstinate and hindering Peking University's progress (Xiao, 1986). Chen argues that this interpretation is far-fetched. Even before Cai's arrival, some humanities scholars supported reforms and even participated proactively.

Cai's circumspection and farsightedness lay in other areas. First, Peking University planned to center itself on the arts (including social sciences and the humanities) and science. Its science started late while social sciences and the humanities had been particularly strong for some time. Secondly, it was much more expensive to focus on building the sciences as opposed to the social sciences and the humanities, especially when Peking University was still experiencing financial difficulty. Thirdly, the social sciences and the humanities could influence the ideological trends and social tendencies of the times more directly and effectively. Peking University would not have taken on an entirely new look and become the leader of the trend of the times within 2–3 years if Cai Yuanpei had chosen to deal with science first. Last, and perhaps more importantly, the remolding of social sciences and the humanities fell squarely into the interests and expertise of the president himself.

Chen (2000) points out emphatically that Cai had read widely in almost all the major areas of social sciences and the humanities. He had a well-thought-out plan for the reforms in these subjects. It would be hard to imagine that a scientist or an engineer by training, or even a social scientist or a humanist without a broad knowledge base and profound understanding like Cai's, could accurately seize the opportunity, hit out in many directions at once, and quickly lay a solid foundation for Peking University's development in the succeeding decades. Broad intellectual interests are a huge advantage for a university president. Cai Yuanpei was not seen as the best mind in China's academic circles in literature, history, philosophy, and ethics. His works in these areas were not necessarily regarded as irreplaceable. This, however, did not affect his eminent position in China's history of modern thought. His success reminds us that a scholar with a broad knowledge base is often more suitable as leader of a university than a highly specialized expert. This is a timely warning given that contemporary scholarship has become highly specialized and the knowledge base of individuals is becoming narrower and narrower.

Self-Examination and Global Positioning

At the celebrations of Peking University's centenary, many people wondered whether the university would be as glorious in another 100 years as it had been throughout its first 100. Indeed, its achievement has been the result of many special conditions. As the only university during the May Fourth Movement, it could lead the entire nation. More universities were established later and Peking University can no longer always outshine others. Peking University's humanities and sciences were once unmatched nationwide because of the amalgamation of the best programs into it during the national higher education adjustment of the 1950s. This glorious past is most unlikely be repeated. With other universities developing quickly, Peking University is under pressure. Today's Peking University is challenged by both its previous history of national achievement and the goal of becoming world-class (Chen, 2000, p. 213). While it is hard to predict what Peking University will become,

its future rests on how people understand the university and its environs, and how it is positioned strategically based on that understanding.

The first self-examination of Peking University is how it locates itself historically. Although many people had suggested dating its birthday back to much earlier times, Peking University decided to officially recognize the establishment date of the Capital College (1898). Its modesty, however, is underlined by its sophisticated ambition, which is to be a dynamic force in China's modernization. In contrast with the views of those historians and philosophers who criticized the mismatch between Peking University's relatively short history and China as an ancient civilization, its self-restraint was profoundly meaningful. From Peking University's perspective, it would be much more meaningful to be a pioneer in the introduction of Western learning than to be a genuine successor of the traditional Chinese *Taixue*. In this regard, to recognize modern Chinese universities as a concept borrowed from the West does not negate the rich history of Chinese higher learning. This was clearly noted by Cai Yuanpei in his preface to the *Autograph Album of Peking University's 20th Anniversary* in 1918 (Cai, 1984, p. 158). Twenty-three years later, Mei Yiqi (1941) made similar remarks.

The second self-examination of Peking University is how its people have viewed the university's achievements. As early as in the 1930s, Peking University enjoyed a good reputation. Its reputation was partially due to the underdevelopment of China's modern higher education, and partially to the influence of the May Fourth Movement. However, reputation was not always well perceived. Hu Shi (1922), for example, expressed his worry about "too much fame." He thought that the university would become weighed down by overcommitment to various social demands with the possible loss of its long-term goals. Further, a reputation easily obtained would make it more difficult for Peking University to realize the actuality of high achievement. He urged his colleagues at Peking University to "forget the undeserved reputation gained within recent years" (Chen, 2000, p. 13). While it is not an easy task to forget the reputation while carrying on the traditions, Hu's reminder is more relevant today. Lu Xun was approached to write something positive for Peking University's 27th anniversary in December 1925. He noted that "Peking University is always new, reformative, and pioneering." These remarks have since been favored by people at the university. But a few years later, in a letter to a friend, Lu Xun said "I cannot stop heaving a sigh when I see Peking University is now so corrupt" (Lu, 1981, p. 158). Compared with Lu Xun's sharp comments, his brother talked more calmly:

> I want to reiterate that Peking University should go her own way, do what others do not do, instead of what others have done. Peking University's style of study would rather to be simple and unadorned, than to be flashy but without substance and superficially clever. Too many things happened in the past two years in education circles in Beijing. They were always about overthrowing or supporting politicians. Thank God, Peking University has not been involved. It is to be hoped that it is not so in the future. However, this is only the passive side. There remains a positive work to do, to open up wasteland courageously and focus on unique research. Peking University has done some in this aspect. More needs to be done in future. I never think Peking University is superior. I just feel Peking University should maintain her own spirit, not to imitate others or copy other universities. (Zhou, 1936)

Zhou's early remarks were echoed by Chen (2006) 70 years later:

> While the academic achievements of Peking University could be questioned, its deep and profound embedding into China's modernization should never be a target for ridicule. … If someday in the future, Peking University is transformed into an institution well received by the West, with Nobel laureates, yet little relevant to contemporary developments of China's politics, economy, culture and ideologies, we then have little to celebrate. (p. 3)

Chen not only assessed Peking University's achievement, but its future development. The incumbent president of Peking University has made even more explicit comments:

> Establishing a world-class university is a lengthy process. Beida has already formulated a plan, which will require 17 years and consists of two phases, to attain the objective of becoming a world-class university. However, whether this objective will be attained in 17 years is constrained by many internal and external factors. We are very clear in our minds on this. The aims of the current reform are to make Beida more competitive, enable it to better attract the best teachers, attract the best students in the country and give them the best education, and make more contributions to society. Beida's objectives are based in first class international standards. (Long, 2004, p. 52)

A scrutiny of the history of self-assessments at Peking University shows interesting differences. Unlike the earlier reflections which paid close attention to intellectual inquiry and ethos, the present positioning is much more pragmatic and short term. This is partly due to the forces from outside China, and partly derives from contemporary social and cultural discourses within China. Since the late Qing dynasty, practical learning has always been prioritized by both high officials and intellectuals, in the discussions of China's path to prosperity. Another difference lies in the priorities given to traditional Chinese elements and imported Western elements. There appears to be an urgent need for today's university reformers to build up a good understanding of, and a respect for, both the contemporary and the traditional China.

Chinese Contributions to the Idea of the University

The century-old transformation of traditional Chinese academies into modern universities has aimed at conforming Chinese education with "international practice" (Chen, 2002, p. 80). The central purpose of China's modern higher education has been to combine Chinese and Western elements at all levels including institutional arrangements, research methodologies, educational ideals, and cultural spirit. That there are strong grounds for such a combination is well based. As argued by Hayhoe (2005), Confucian culture is both supportive of China's reforms and in line with the global trends toward a knowledge society. It has a remarkable capacity to accommodate other cultures and absorb some of their best elements into itself, integrating diverse streams of thought into an organic whole, as demonstrated by the introduction of Buddhism to China from India and its integration into Chinese cultural and educational development over a long period.

China has much to contribute to the world community, especially culturally. This has become more important at a time when the human society is confronted with serious issues of sustainable development, and cultural conflicts. Higher education has a critical role to play here. In its internationalization China's higher education should aim for this level of contribution. In this regard Peking University is particularly well positioned. As Confucianism responds to a range of problems and issues facing Western societies with increasing subtlety and persuasiveness (Tu, 1998), there is a possibility of a deep-level foundation for creative thinking about a global human future that brings together aspects of the Chinese and Western philosophical heritages; an approach to human persons, knowledge, and democratic development that is fundamentally different from those of Enlightenment thought (Hall and Ames, 1999), the neorealism of Samuel Huntington (1993), and rights-based liberalism (Hayhoe, 2005).

Such ideas open up hopes for genuine and profound forms of understanding and cooperation that embrace the spiritual, cultural, intellectual, and scientific aspects of knowledge and human life. They could enable us to move beyond the concepts of deterrence and the balance of power in neorealism, and the overriding emphasis on the free market in neoliberalism, to a dialogue on how to create a better world open to cultural and epistemological inputs from diverse regions and civilizations (Hayhoe, 2005). The passage of Chinese culture and epistemological traditions into mainstream thought, contributing broadly to global debates about the future of the human community, can facilitate a reassessment of the moral and spiritual responsibility of the university as a knowledge institution (Schwehn, 1993; Wilshire, 1990), and contribute to readdressing the under-theorization of the university (Marginson, 2006b). However, close scrutiny of China's current bid for world-class universities indicates that these goals are not uppermost. It would be unsurprising if future Chinese world-class universities lack substance.

Chinese scholars such as Gan Yang and Chen Pingyuan invest much hope in the potential contribution of Peking University to the materialization of the contribution of Chinese civilization to human society. Likewise Hayhoe (2005) remarks that:

> If China is to bring into the global community aspects of its rich educational and cultural heritage, which could open up new pathways through some of the current and potential dead ends, Beida is the place we are likely to encounter these ideas. If China is to create forms of democracy that are distinctive from those of rights-based liberalism in the West, Beida is the place where these are likely to be first conceived and debated. And it is the Beida of the 1920s, where there were relatively few constraints on academic freedom, that laid the foundation for all that has followed. (p. 578)

The present Peking University personnel reforms are part of China's national reform agenda and thus in continuity with reform since the nineteenth century (Chen, 2000). During the early years under the Qing dynasty, from establishment in 1898 to the 1911 Revolution, the imperial university experienced many ups and downs in putting into practice the then already popular vision of retaining "Chinese learning as the essence" while systematically incorporating the new knowledge essential to build the nation. The strategy was expressed repeatedly

and beautifully by influential scholar–official Zhang Zhidong, who took a last stand for the preservation of Chinese classical knowledge in its integrity, and for the integration of practical and specialist fields of knowledge from the West into this framework (Hayhoe, 2005).

While there are substantial differences and even conflicts between Chinese and Western approaches to scholarship (Weston, 2004), in the minds of some of China's most renowned intellectuals these conflicts could and should be resolved (Lin, 2005). China's long tradition of scholarship has its strengths and a great potential to contribute to the idea of the university. Wang (2003) views the American research university model as a house with rooms that are not connected to each other, resulting from its close historical links to the industrialization process, which led to the segregation of specialist disciplines, of research and teaching, of knowledge transmission and the cultivation of character, and of university and society. He suggests that basic Confucian philosophical principles are particularly important to achieving increased integration in the next phase of the university's development: the integration of humanity with the universe, balancing individuals, society, and the natural environment; the integration of learning with life, balancing individual goals with national and global goals; the integration of morality with knowledge, ensuring that moral formation is viewed as a core aspect of university education; the integration of knowing and doing, fostering capability for action as well as theoretical understanding; and finally, the integration of teaching and learning through a dialogic approach.

End Remarks

The Peking University personnel reforms illustrate the complexity of the internationalization of Chinese universities and how traditional Chinese academies are being transformed into modern universities. This lively experience illustrates how any discussions of reforms in non-Western universities invokes crucially important and academically fascinating issues of Westernization and indigenization. The reforms extend well beyond the personnel sphere and far beyond the university campus. They take in the fundamental issues underlying Chinese higher education reform. They illustrate tellingly what Chinese higher education is confronted with, and what it can bring to bear, in its process of reentering the world community.

The reform of higher education in China will have enormous impact on its own further development, on the future of universities in other parts of Asia, and on the rest of the world. The sheer size of China's population, its significant role on the world stage, and its rapidly growing economy are major reasons for this. China is increasing investment in its top universities and its leadership recognizes that outstanding universities can be engines of economic growth at a time when many Western countries are reducing investment in flagship universities and Japan is disinclined to increase the scientific capacity of its greatest institutions of higher education.

China's recent efforts are already paying off. China's universities beat India's in almost every international ranking. According to the Academic Ranking of World Universities conducted by the Graduate School of Education, Shanghai Jiaotong University (2007), China has Tsinghua University in the top 200; Nanjing University, Peking University, Shanghai Jiaotong University, the University of Science and Technology of China, and Zhejiang University in the top 300 while India had none. China features 14 times in the top 500 and India only twice. Unlike the situation in China, in India there are few special incentives to attract top-quality academics from abroad. Major universities in Hong Kong, Singapore, and Japan increasingly see China as a competitor in attracting and retaining good faculty. The same does not hold for India. While diasporic Chinese scholars are being lured back to universities in the home country, Indians seem more content to remain abroad (Aiyar, 2006).

Nevertheless, China has a considerable distance to go before its aspirations to create truly world-class universities are fulfilled. Chinese universities are confronted with two major challenges. The first is market-oriented short-term behaviors. In the present great leap forward in Chinese higher education, what has often been missing is attention to institutional establishment. An internationally recognized scholarly ethos may take longer to develop than many academic or political leaders in China are willing to admit. Simply buying state-of-the-art laboratory equipment or pushing for more journal articles will not guarantee the kind of intellectual atmosphere that has developed over centuries on European and American campuses.

The second major challenge for Chinese universities is the Chinese administrative system that is based on official authority and rank. After the 1950s, Chinese universities lost their independence in the political system. They have since been administered just like the other organs of the Chinese administrative machine. The implication of such politicization is that Chinese universities have become part of the Chinese administrative system, deeply embedded in the prevalent political culture. In terms of the way they behave and their accountability, Chinese universities leaders share much more with the other officials in the political system than with their international counterparts. They are more politicians than academic leaders.

China's universities have been able to improve their hardware considerably, while, as is always the case in China, the software building takes much longer. China's drive to build world-class universities should go beyond its current approach to internationalization, featured by seeking joint ventures or acquiring more star professors from overseas. Instead, Chinese universities should be aware of both the strengths and the weaknesses of the American system, and work to overcome its enduring obstacles such as the weakness of liberal arts education and bureaucratic power over academic freedom. China should also try to avoid the problems that have plagued the American educational system (Mohrman, 2005), as it adopts the American model of education. In order to be truly "world-class," Chinese universities need to develop their distinctive "Chineseness" that distinguishes them from others, both at home and abroad.

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