

**Confucius and the Guru:
The Changing Status of the Academic Profession
in China and India**

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Being late starters in the sphere of modern higher education, developing countries find themselves in a difficult situation: on the one hand, they need to catch up with the rest of the world, particularly the advanced ones in the West; on the other, they confront the inexorable changes wrought by massification and globalization and their ever increasing integration into the world economy. The dilemmas involve serious policy challenges given that a growing proportion of the world's higher education students are located in developing countries: by the mid-1990s, 44 million of the world's 80 million students in higher education were in developing countries—despite the fact that only 6 percent of the population in these countries attained postsecondary degrees, while 26 percent in high-income countries have similar qualifications (Task Force on Higher Education, 2000, p. 111, p. 115). This part of the world is experiencing the highest rate of expansion of higher education.

By examining the developments in China and India, the “Asian giants” in higher education (Altbach & Umakoshi 2004),¹ this chapter² will discuss the problems and prospects of the professoriate in developing countries. These two countries together account for more than one-third of the world's population. China recently overtook the United States as the country with the highest enrollments, while India ranks in the top five. With their well-developed higher education systems, including some excellent research universities, both countries differ from many developing countries (Altbach, 1998). Conditions China and India share with many other developing

countries include the large number of low quality institutions, sometimes difficult conditions for study, and a shortage of funds at all levels. The main focus of this chapter is to explain the changing position of academics in these countries today, and the implications for higher education. This chapter will deal with such issues as constricting employment opportunities, deteriorating career prospects and working conditions, and changing role expectations.

THE CHANGING CONTEXT OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Both in China and India, and in developing countries generally, higher education has traditionally enjoyed considerable state patronage. However, over the last two decades, higher education has been thrown into a vortex of change, inevitably impacting the academic profession. China has undergone a pronounced shift from a command economy to a market economy (albeit while still within the socialist framework) and from a predominantly bureaucratic culture to a competitive corporate culture. In India, the stimulus for change has come with the 1990 adoption by the government of structural adjustment reforms influenced by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

The structural change in the Chinese higher education system since the 1990s has centered on the large number of state-driven mergers. In 1998, China's 1,022 regular public higher educational institutions enrolled 1,083,600 students. Total enrollments at higher learning institutions, including adult education institutions, amounted to 6,231,000. During 1992–1995, more than 70 public (state-run) institutions merged into 28 universities, and over 100 institutions set up cross-institution consortiums. As of 2000, a total of 612 higher education institutions merged into 250. Operationally, these changes—heavily influenced by Western ethos and practices—have significantly impacted the academic profession, which hitherto carried the stamp of traditional Chinese cultural values and norms. The introduction of the “post system” in academic appointments, in contrast to the existing “title system,” represents a case in point. This new system reflects the move from a

predominantly bureaucratic to a competitive corporate culture in Chinese higher education.

Another reform of the Chinese higher education—particularly noteworthy, considering the unwavering socialist foundations of the Chinese state—consists of the introduction of *minban* (non-state-run) or private universities and colleges. By the beginning of 2001, about 2000 institutions existed in this new sector in Chinese higher education, though “with a lower level of student enrollments and a less stable faculty” (Chen, 2003, p. 108). The employment and service conditions at these institutions are different from those in the public institutions.

In India, structural adjustment has meant a scaling back of state patronage and a simultaneous privatization of higher education. However, the government itself is confused and has been dithering about the policy to be adopted on this matter. State investment in education in India has always failed to meet the needs of “education for all.” Structural adjustment has meant a drastic cut in public expenditure on higher education: between 1980-1990 and 1994-1995, higher education’s share of the central government’s five-year plan expenditure decreased from 12.6 percent to 6 percent; whereas the same in non-plan expenditure declined only from 14.2 percent to 11 percent (Tilak, 1996). Overall, the allocation for higher education, which had peaked at 28 percent in the Fifth Five-Year Plan (1974-1977), has steadily declined in the successive plans to just 8 percent in the Tenth Five-Year Plan (2002-07), which is the same as the allocation in the First Five-Year Plan (1951-1956). The annual growth rate of public expenditure on university and higher education, which was 13.1 percent between 1980-1981 and 1985-1986, fell to 7.8 percent between 1980-1981 and 1995-1996 (Shariff & Ghosh, 2000, p. 1400). Thus, the state, which had hitherto been the dominant partner in funding higher education, is finding it increasingly difficult even to maintain the same level of funding for higher education.

The gradual withdrawal of the state from higher education in India has been accompanied by its inability to address the need for reforms within the

conventional higher education. The National Policy on Education (1985) and the Program of Action (1986), and their review by the Acharya Ramamurti Committee (1991) were all pre-structural-adjustment reform initiatives. Neither the phenomenal fall in the demand for conventional graduate courses, nor the remarkable spurt in the demand for courses in such areas as computer science and information technology, biotechnology, and management studies, was anticipated.

The unwillingness and inability of the state to invest in the new areas of education explain the growth of private institutions. These institutions, also referred to as “self-financing institutions,” are of uneven quality—ranging from a small number of centers of excellence to roadside teaching-shops. These new entrants to the arena of higher education raise questions of autonomy and accountability (since they do not depend on state funding), on the one hand, and issues concerning teachers (like qualifications and recruitment, career options, pay and working conditions, etc.) on the other. Thus, private initiatives in higher education are fraught with serious implications for the academic profession.

Both in China and India, the general context of higher education has been undergoing change. While in the Chinese case the transition has been regulated, in the Indian case it is one of gradual withdrawal of state patronage in an unregulated market. What do such scenarios mean to the academic profession in the respective countries? What are the conditions and prospects of employment relations for academia?

CHINA: UNFINISHED REFORM AND PROFESSORIAL UNCERTAINTY

Problems of Overstaffing and Understaffing

For almost 50 years, since the beginning of the socialist system of planned economic and social change, teachers were appointed in China under a “tenure system.” Under this system, once hired, academic as well as auxiliary staff were provided with what the Chinese called an “iron rice bowl”—that is, a secure job for life. All teachers received more or less the same salary regardless of their qualifications and contributions. Over the decades, this

system of appointment resulted in problems of overstaffing, incompetence, and inefficiency. In 1998, the faculty-student ratio was 1:11.2. While the problem of overstaffing cut across the system of higher education, it concerned with nonteaching or auxiliary staff, rather than the teaching staff.

The problem of overstaffing has worsened with the merger of higher education institutions. The rationale for mergers was to produce economies of scale, delegate more administrative power to the local authorities, and render institutions more comprehensive. "If a smaller, less-renowned institution merges with a larger, prestigious one, the new entity usually takes the name of the latter as well as its standards for faculty appointments" (Chen, 2003, p. 109). Given their generally lower level of competence, with mergers, faculty members from the smaller institutions are obviously placed in a disadvantageous position.

Mergers have also resulted in the downsizing of the professoriate: some positions are eliminated with their corresponding staff and some faculty are retrenched or reassigned or forced to find work at other institutions or in other professions. For example, "After Central Technical Arts College was merged with Tsinghua University in 2000 . . . only 6 of the 12 English teachers at the former were retained in the English Department of Tsinghua University. The rest were forced to find work at other institutions or in other professions" (Chen, 2003, p. 109). It is not surprising, therefore, that while the teachers at smaller institutions are generally unenthusiastic about the mergers, their students welcome it.

While overstaffing exists throughout higher education, almost every institution also suffers from a shortage of competent faculty. The latter has to do with the expansion of higher education, which has accelerated since the early 1990s:

The number of first-year-students at regular higher learning institutions increased 47.3 percent, from 1.084 million in 1998 to 1.597 million in 1999. Enrollments at adult learning institutions increased 15.7 percent, from 1.001 million to 1.158 million, and the number of

graduate students increased 17.6 percent. Total student enrollments doubled between 1990 and 1999. The gross enrollment rate of the 18-to-22 age cohort increased from 3.9 percent in 1992 to 9.1 percent in 1997, to 10 percent in 2000, and is expected to rise to 15 percent in 2005 (Chen, 2003, p. 109).

For the professoriate, the fact that institutions now have more students than they can handle has led to an increase in class-size and workload. Without the help of teaching assistants, the quality of teaching is an obvious casualty. Not surprisingly, most professors follow what the Chinese call the “duck-feeding” method—teachers delivering monologues and students taking down notes passively; a system with minimal interaction between the teacher and the taught. The most acute understaffing is reported in the local vocational and adult learning institutions, which have also experienced rapid expansion during the last decade, and in institutions located in small cities.

Understaffing is compounded not only by relatively low salary levels but also by the lack of opportunities for professional development. As Min notes “while basic salaries of university faculty were comparable to those of other professionals with similar educational qualifications, faculty remuneration was lower because of larger bonuses given to employees in companies, especially in joint venture firms” (2004, p. 75). Many well-qualified, competent faculty members are dissatisfied with their jobs, and tend to leave them as and when they get the opportunity. That is, the professoriate is affected by “brain drain.” For the same reasons, teaching does not attract the best talents from universities. In fact, research universities affiliated with the Ministry of Education or other ministries suffer from the same weakness. Furthermore, under the conventional tenure system it is not easy to remove the incompetent teachers either.

The laws enacted by the State Council determine the qualifications for teaching positions. The Teachers’ Qualification Law of 1995 stipulates the minimum qualification of a master’s degree for faculty below the age of 40. In fact, the qualification levels of teachers are still low: in 1999, only 5.4 percent

of faculty held a doctoral degree, and 24 percent, a master's degree. The system permits pronounced inbreeding, with senior faculty and administrators tending to employ their own students. Very little mobility exists in the academic profession, which gives the many underqualified teachers who entered a low-salary but high-security jobs little incentive to work hard. Many of these staff have retired or have been pushed out in the process of modernization.

From "Title System" to "Post System"

Recognizing the importance of quality higher education in a rapidly globalizing world, the Chinese government has embarked upon a program of reform in structure and orientation. The main objective of this reform is to make the system of higher education internationally competitive, and the strategy is to raise the quality of the faculty. Now at the experimental stage, once the program of reform is implemented across the institutions of higher education, it will have profound impact on the professoriate. While the Chinese government and the ruling elite have the power to implement the reform, their commitment to systemic and sustained reform remains an open question.

A hallmark of higher education reform in China, signifying a radical change in the system of recruitment for academic profession, has been the implementation of a "post system" in place of the conventional "title system" of tenured employment. In 1998, the Ministry of Education introduced the post system of academic appointments on an experimental basis in two universities—Peking University and Tsinghua University. Each of these universities was given a special annual grant of 1.8 billion Yuan or U.S. \$ 222 million) for three years. Twenty-five percent of these grants were earmarked for faculty development. Academic positions are divided into three categories (A, B, and C in the descending order), with each category containing three ranks. Above the top category (A) is the special category of internationally known scholars. The rank-related subsidy is predetermined and divided into

two parts: only 70 percent is paid to a faculty member each month, and the remaining 30 percent is paid after a faculty review at the end of the year.

Xiangming Chen lists four main objectives of this reform:

(1) to break away from the “all-tenure” system with its “iron rice bowl syndrome”; (2) to separate one’s title from one’s rank so that competent people can be hired for the right posts even if they do not have a certain title; (3) to link one’s salary with one’s post, thus widening the gap between different salary scales; and (4) to downsize the faculty by reassigning surplus people to other jobs (2003, p. 113).

Unless they are competent enough, no teachers, including full professors, will be selected for the category they desire. Thus, teachers who are not competent enough will get only the basic salary for their title and no subsidy. The performance appraisal of teachers also has a provision for punitive action for nonperformers, and three professors at the prestigious Tsinghua University were reportedly dismissed because of negative student evaluations and “poor performance.”

Since 2000, the post system has been implemented in other universities including Fudan University and Shanghai Transport University. Shandong Agriculture University abolished the title system, and the savings resulting from expenses earlier incurred on superfluous personnel were diverted to increase the support for faculty with posts.

The post system and the associated rank-related subsidies are reportedly motivating the faculty to work harder than under the former title system. It is also expected to enhance to the professional development of the faculty and commitment to their work and institution. Considering the generally low basic salaries under the title system, the financial position of teachers with proven qualifications and capabilities has steadily improved. This has been a welcome development considering that the cost of living has risen over the decades, whereas the rise in the basic salary has not been commensurate.

However, for the vast majority of the teachers, who are by and large less qualified and less competent, this reform has meant closed doors. Their salaries being low and the cost of living rising, many of them are forced to look for additional jobs outside the university. Those who have been laid off due to downsizing resulting from the introduction of the post system have reached the end of the road. Of course, the downsizing has affected the administrators, auxiliary staff, and Party officials more than faculty members. For the university leadership, the reassignment of surplus staff and faculty has been a great challenge.

As noted earlier, attracting competent people and improving faculty capabilities have been on the agenda of reform. The Ministry of Education, other ministries, and institutions have carried out several recruitment campaigns. Awards, both in kind and in cash, have been instituted to improve the competence levels of the faculty. Opportunities for advanced study and research are being extended to competent faculty. Model programs—such as the 3-T (top talents, top university set up, and top scientific achievement) initiative of Shanghai 2nd Medical University—have been instituted. Even overseas teachers have been invited to teach and do research in some Chinese universities.

The Growing Private Sector

These reforms in higher education have all addressed the public universities. Besides the public sector, China now has a rapidly growing private sector in higher education that is entirely financed by nongovernmental sources. Since the early 1990s about 2,000 private institutions have been established mostly in the “practical fields of study.” While the Ministry of Education oversees the establishment of private higher education institutions, it prescribes no hard and fast rules about the number, title, ranks, or salary of the faculty.

Accordingly, private higher educational institutions offer a different model for faculty appointments, namely, the contract system. Teachers are appointed on contract for a given term, usually one year. In some cases full-time teachers are hired on monthly contracts or are paid by the hour. Part-

time teachers are as a rule paid by the hour. Faculties at these institutions, irrespective of their specific contractual appointments, are generally not provided with additional benefits to their salary. Even so, the faculty salaries at private institutions are higher than those in their public counterparts.

It must be noted that a majority of the faculty at private institutions are part-time appointments. These institutions tend to hire as full-time teachers retired professors from public universities. Moreover, except for the few institutions accredited by the Ministry of Education, private institutions do not provide opportunities for promotion. These institutions maintain high teacher-student ratios. The teachers find themselves required to help the institutions with multiple tasks like accounting, counseling, etc., in addition to teaching.

Continuity and Change

The reform measures in higher education, no doubt, produce some positive consequences. The efficiency and effectiveness of teaching and research have improved. The criteria for appointment and promotion have become more fair and transparent than before. Apparently, however, while the old problems are being solved or dealt with, new ones emerge. The persistence of the mentality associated with the old title system causes dissatisfaction and resentment among faculty, who now feel deprived by the reforms. Tensions have also arisen among different institutions—as, for example, between prestigious research universities (such as Peking University or Tsinghua University) and less-well-known universities and institutions. Obviously, prestigious institutions have a competitive edge over the others.

The fact that the program of reform draws on Western ethos and practices raises questions about its compatibility with traditional Chinese cultural norms. In a country where traditional culture advocates “peace, harmony and contentedness,” the new system, premised upon competitive efficiency, has engendered social tensions. The new system, which has introduced ranks and pecuniary differences among faculty, contradicts the idea of “social justice” hitherto emphasized by the socialist ideology.

Realizing the adverse implications of such tensions, attempts, both formal and informal, are being made to contain them.

The size and diversity of China's higher education system make it difficult to generalize about the academic profession. This chapter examines mostly academics in the relatively high-prestige sector of an increasingly differentiated academic system. This discussion focuses less attention on the large number of academic staff, many with only bachelor's degrees, who are teaching in provincial institutions, or on the many part-time teachers. This chapter also does not point out some of the basic realities of many universities, including limited academic freedom, especially in the social sciences, and a governance system that gives limited power and autonomy to the professoriate.

In China, rapid expansion of higher education, a desire by the Chinese government to improve the qualifications of academic staff, growing institutional diversity, and accountability-based management are all creating a changing environment and increased pressure on the academic profession.

INDIA: THE DECLINING PROFESSION

Declining Employment Prospects

The unbridled expansion of higher education in India during the 1970s and 1980s, resulted in an unprecedented demand for teachers. Responding to this demand, India has experienced a 16-fold increase in the number of teachers in higher education over five decades; the total number now stands at 321,000. This development does not, however, indicate a state of healthy growth, strength, or vitality of the academic profession. Not only has the prospect of employment as a college or university teacher diminished, but security of employment, once taken for granted in the academic profession, is also becoming more problematic. As early as 1983, the National Commission on Teachers (1985) found that only 70.7 percent of university teaching staff and 68.5 percent of college teachers enjoyed permanent employment with all statutory benefits. Other faculty and staff constitute either "temporary" (with

no guarantee of continuation) or ad hoc (appointed as a leave replacement for a short period of time) lecturers. New categories of teachers such as “part-time” lecturers (who teach for a specified number of teaching hours per week) and “guest” lecturers (who help the college or department “to complete portions of the syllabus”) have been added. Such teachers are paid on an hourly basis, and they do not enjoy the other privileges that accompany a permanent or even a temporary or an ad hoc appointment.

The decline of employment prospects in the academic profession relates to the combined effect of structural adjustment reforms and the market forces operating within higher education. The expansion of conventional arts and sciences courses seems to have outstripped the demand for them by students, with some colleges (most Indian first-degree students study at colleges affiliated to a university) facing a severe decline in enrollments. For some private colleges assisted by grant-in-aid from the government, it has even become difficult to find workloads for teachers in these fields.

Most state governments have imposed an embargo on the recruitment of teachers. This has meant a freeze on the establishment of state-supported colleges, a downsizing in the number of permanent teachers at existing colleges, and most effective use of resources by redeploying teachers through a policy of transfers. In addition, most state governments have also introduced “voluntary retirement schemes” (giving incentives to teachers to retire from permanent service before they reach the compulsory retirement age). State governments are contemplating lowering the retirement age for college and university teachers. Not surprisingly, temporary part-time teachers have become a standard feature of higher education in India.

The downsizing of the academic profession through freezing of recruitment, redeployment of excess staff, appointment of guest lecturers, etc. is now a pan-Indian phenomenon. Moreover, this trend is not confined to the conventional liberal arts and sciences colleges but has affected some technical education institutions too. However, in such fields as computer science, information technology, and biotechnology, where the expansion has been

most rapid, there is a dearth of qualified teachers. Medical education suffers from the most acute teacher shortage.

The bulk of the teaching community, however, is engaged in general education. Employment opportunities here have almost dried up, and those seeking entry into the profession have been employed on a part-time or ad hoc basis. That existing teachers find it difficult to get adequate workloads does not augur well for the academic profession. State policies of downsizing the profession will likely adversely impact the already low morale and commitment of teachers.

Traditionally, a preserve of the higher social strata, the academic profession has enjoyed a prestigious reputation. However, the rapid expansion of higher education, combined with state policy of protective discrimination, has altered the social profile of the profession. A significant proportion of the candidates belong to the scheduled castes (former untouchables and related groups), scheduled tribes, and other backward classes (the traditionally disadvantaged sections of the population identified for special benefits and concessions). The new entrants into the academic profession, in many cases the first generation in their caste and community groups to have acquired postgraduate qualifications, basically lack exposure to the cultural moorings of the profession and are confused about the ethos of a profession in decline. Women still constitute only about one-fourth of the teachers in higher education, although in some fields in the humanities and social sciences their numbers are much higher, and lag behind in academic leadership roles.

Parochialism and inbreeding have become integral practices in higher education. Educational institutions run by minority religious communities have always shown preference for candidates belonging to their own religion or sect, and similarly those dominated by particular caste groups have shown bias in favor of their caste fellows. Universities and state governments also prefer candidates from their own geographical region. In fact, the adoption of the state language as the medium of instruction in many colleges and universities precludes eligible candidates from outside a given state.

The University Grants Commission (UGC), the national government's main funding and regulatory agency for higher education, supports interinstitutional mobility of teachers to help infuse fresh blood into a system that would otherwise become stagnant and induce cross-fertilization among the different institutions. While inbreeding inhibits mobility, other impediments exist. Moving from one institution to another reduces one's chances of promotion, which discourages lecturers and readers from leaving the institution in which they are working. State government regulations covering teachers' retirement benefits are rigid, making senior teachers wary of moving out of the state in which they are working.

Deficient Professional Preparation

Studies on college teachers have invariably emphasized the sad deficiency of academic preparation of the people entering the profession and their declining commitment to it. This lack of qualification no doubt has a lot to do with the deplorable standards of master's and doctoral level education. For decades most master's degree holders easily found employment at colleges, or even at universities, with absolutely no training in or orientation to teaching, and with doubtful aptitude for that vocation.

To ensure proficiency in the subject and aptitude for teaching or research on the part of candidates aspiring to become teachers, the UGC introduced the scheme of the National Eligibility Test (NET). Many state governments have been permitted by the UGC to conduct a State Eligibility Test, which is treated as equivalent to the NET. As a screening mechanism, the NET is a step in the right direction. Despite these efforts, standards of post-baccalaureate education remain generally low. Professions such as architecture, law, and medicine require their prospective recruits to undergo a specified period of internship. Even a high school teacher needs to obtain the bachelor of education degree. To become a lecturer at a college or university, however, no prior training or experience is necessary.

While this anomaly is recognized by many, educators do not agree as to the additional qualifications that should be required for entry into the

academic profession. Insistence on a research degree (Ph.D. or M.Phil.) has become counterproductive. The rush for enrollment in doctoral programs, following the UGC's decision in the 1970s to make a Ph.D. the minimum qualification, has resulted in a deterioration of the quality of doctoral research at universities.

Regardless of the importance of qualifications and screening at the point of entry into the profession, the need for postinduction training and periodical professional enhancement can hardly be exaggerated. Starting in 1987, the UGC established at least one Academic Staff College (ASC) in each state with the mandate to improve standards of teaching through "orientation courses" (focusing on pedagogy and social relevance of education, for young lecturers) and "refresher courses" (providing up-to-date information on the content of various disciplines, for senior lecturers).

The ASCs conducted programs to orient the new entrants into the profession and improve the knowledge and skills of those already in it. To instill a sense of seriousness, an element of compulsion has also been introduced: Those entering the profession are required to attend an orientation course before they complete their probation. Professionals in service must attend two refresher courses to become eligible for career advancement or promotion. As with all initiatives carrying a compulsory element, the original objectives underlying the establishment of ASCs are lost and the courses have been ritualized.

The dwindling recruitment to permanent posts at universities and colleges has reduced the enthusiasm for orientation courses. However, the situation concerning refresher courses differs given the large number of teachers seeking career advancement and the ASC's facilities are limited. To meet the demand for such courses, the UGC has been providing grants to departments at universities without ASCs to organize refresher courses. In addition to the ASC refresher courses, university departments and disciplinary associations have organized "self-financed" courses. Most refresher courses, whether they are organized by the ASCs or university

departments (UGC-sponsored or self-financed), are conducted as a formality and they generally lack the advanced academic orientation expected of them.

Besides the ASCs, the UGC established the College Science Improvement Program and the College Social Science and Humanities Improvement Program to enhance the quality of teachers. Permanent teachers desirous of acquiring doctoral qualifications receive paid leave for two or three years under the Faculty Improvement Program (FIP). Teachers interested in pursuing research are offered grants for minor and major research projects. Financial assistance is extended to teachers to attend seminars, symposia, and workshops. Promising young teachers with a research proclivity are offered funds under the Career Award Scheme, and the renowned among senior teachers are given National Associateship.

While they are expected to improve the quality of teaching and thereby benefit students, these human resource development schemes do not seem to have yielded the expected results. Most teachers do not avail themselves of the opportunities for professional development. Even those teachers who have made use of the FIP or other facilities have at best obtained only a research degree, but not implemented their advanced training in the classroom. Some teachers who have participated in the FIP are reported to have spent time on activities other than research. Similar complaints have been raised about the provision of sabbatical leave for university teachers. Not surprisingly, the UGC has now become more restrictive in awarding FIP fellowships.

Career Prospects and Working Conditions

While professional development and teaching performance have seldom concerned teachers or their associations, the issues of salary, career prospects and service conditions have always ranked high on their agenda. In fact, the teachers have often blamed inadequate salaries and unattractive career prospects for the deterioration in the status of the academic profession. In absolute terms, if not in relative terms, with the revised pay package promulgated by the UGC in 1998, teachers obtained the best deal ever,

especially considering the nature and extent of their workload and the little accountability that is demanded of them. While the UGC pay package has been accepted in principle across the country, significant variations exist in its implementation by different states.

The academic profession has traditionally been pyramidal in structure, with more lecturers than readers and more readers than professors. This has meant that irrespective of the academic achievements and professional development, after a specified span of service, the teaching faculty were destined to stagnate. To offer opportunities for vertical mobility to teachers at multiple stages in their career, the UGC has incorporated a career-advancement scheme based on the professional development of teachers. While this scheme is well thought out, its implementation cannot be taken for granted, especially considering the failure of the unsuccessful merit promotion scheme that has been ended.

The UGC pay package fixed the retirement age for university and college teachers at 62. While the UGC is categorical that “no extension in service should be given,” it has allowed the universities the option to re-employ a superannuated teacher up to age of 65 years in certain cases. However, only the central universities (those directly funded by the national government) have accepted the recommendation to set the retirement age at 62. State governments have retained the existing retirement age (58 for college academic staff and 60 for university academic staff), as they fear that it would lead to agitation by government employees demanding a similar revision of the retirement age. Given the growing unemployment rate among the educated, it would be indefensible for any state government to raise the retirement age. More important, when state governments have meager resources for higher education and are consciously pursuing a policy of downsizing the number of teachers, (including through early retirement incentives), raising the retirement age would be unthinkable.

The UGC’s new pay package also set the number of teaching days and the workload of teachers. A minimum of 180 “actual teaching days” per year has been stipulated for universities and colleges. Universities are to devote 72

days and colleges 60 days for admission formalities and the evaluation of students. The workload of full-time teachers has been fixed at not less than 40 hours a week for 30 working weeks (180 teaching days) in an academic year. Of these, 16 hours of direct teaching have been set for lecturers and 14 hours for readers and professors.

These regulations have received unenthusiastic acceptance by the academic profession and based on past experience are sure to be observed more in theory than in practice. For instance, university and college calendars formally include the official number of “working weeks” and “teaching days” and the stipulated duration of vacations. However, in connivance with their teachers unions, some universities have cleverly introduced midterm holidays called as “breaks” rather than “vacations.” There is little accountability with regard to the required number of teaching days. With delayed admissions, innumerable official and unofficial holidays, and strikes by students, teachers and the nonteaching staff, the loss of working days is quite high.

State governments imposed specific workloads on grant-in-aid colleges to ensure that teachers will have a certain number of “direct teaching” hours—a policy necessary for downsizing the number of teachers and redeploying or firing excess teaching staff. Fearing downsizing of staff, however, some university departments have inflated the workloads, by creating dummy timetables.

Whether the number of direct teaching hours (16 hours per week for lecturers and 14 hours for readers and professors) is a pedagogically sound norm does not seem to concern the academic profession or the UGC. Of concern, instead, are the issues of teacher truancy and absenteeism, since rather than regularly teaching the classes allotted to them, many teachers are not even on site at the institution for the stipulated five hours a day. Attempts by concerned vice-chancellors, principals, and department heads to police teachers have not yielded the desired results.

Performance Appraisal

Evaluation of the performance of its members is sadly lacking in the academic profession. Traditionally, the quality of teaching has not been a criterion for teachers to be recognized and rewarded. In practice, promotions seem based almost exclusively on seniority in service. The lack of objective indicators of performance may well undermine the effectiveness of a career advancement scheme.

Some states (e.g., Karnataka) have instituted annual “best teacher” awards, although they provide little motivation or incentives to improve teachers’ performance. It is true that good performance by the students in the examination may provide some credit (and satisfaction) to teachers, either directly or indirectly. However, poor student performance is seldom used as a basis to admonish or punish teachers. Except at a few top universities and the Indian Institutes of Technology and Indian Institutes of Management, peer review or student evaluations of teachers is virtually non-existent in most colleges and university departments. Any proposal for such forms of review or evaluation would be vehemently opposed by teachers unions.

The National Policy on Education envisaged the creation of an open, participative, and objective system of teacher evaluation. It even contemplated laying down “norms of accountability,” “with incentives for good performance and disincentives for non-performance.” Subsequently, the UGC announced a format for “self appraisal” by teachers, both at the time of entry into the profession and annually thereafter. However, this process has either not been initiated or has been perfunctory. In response, the UGC has now made “consistently satisfactory performance appraisal reports” mandatory for career advancement.

Academic Autonomy and Professional Organization

Barring a few rare exceptions, academic autonomy is reasonably secure in India. In fact, the instances of teachers abusing it are plenty, and these take many forms, such as non-performance of role obligations (teaching and research), resisting change in curriculum and pedagogy, indulging in

malpractice in evaluation, and others. This calls for governmental intervention, just as it raises the question of professional obligation of teachers.

Private tutoring by college teachers is one issue that has attracted critical attention of governmental authorities and members of the public alike. The rise of “shadow education” conducted through “coaching classes” is closely related to the falling standards of formal education. With the existing colleges being unable to teach effectively and the students wanting to sharpen their competitive edge, private tuition has become a vital supplement to classroom instruction and is thriving. Since teachers involved in coaching classes are, by and large, formally employed in colleges on a full-time basis, private tuition raises the question of professional ethics.

The UGC has always been critical of the college and university teachers engaging private tutoring, but has not been able to do anything about it. State governments have been ambivalent about private tutoring: while in principle, they are opposed to it, some states have introduced special coaching classes for students belonging to the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other backward classes. Others have issued administrative orders banning private tuition and coaching classes, but find it impossible to implement the ban. Teachers’ organizations are silent over the whole issue.

After a prolonged period of political apathy, the teaching community has been gradually politicized. This trend started in the mid-1970s. That this politicization coincided with the decline of the profession is a matter of concern. It is not that academia has become an arena of party politics or ideological battles, though in some universities even this has happened. Rather, “the politics of scarcity” has more direct bearing on the academic profession now than ever before, and is the main motivating force for professorial militancy. To date, however, teachers’ unions have not been especially effective in improving conditions for the academic profession.

Practically every university has one or more teachers’ unions, euphemistically called organizations or associations, to distinguish themselves from the working class trade unions. The growth in the number of

such unions does not necessarily denote a healthy development for the profession. There has been fragmentation of organizations and often conflicts among them. Such a proliferation of teachers' unions through a process of fragmentation and segmentation has weakened the teachers' movement and hindered their professionalization. Studies on unionization of teachers have revealed that it "does not necessarily ensure their collegial participation or promote professionalization among them" (Jayaram 1992:161-162).

Teachers' unions are generally weak. Even the All India Federation of University and College Teachers Organizations (AIFUCTO) does not command the mass support it once did. Given the middle class focus on working conditions, salary is the only issue on which teachers can be mobilized. On a closer review it appears that whatever strength teachers' unions manifest is not due to any intrinsic qualities, but due to the soft attitude of the government toward them. It is amazing that even when teachers go on prolonged strikes, the principle of "no work, no pay" has seldom been applied to them.

The pattern of agitation by teachers is by now well established: It consists of protest rallies, mass or relay hunger strikes, marching to chief/education minister's house, abstention from work, and finally the boycott examination work. Going by how the government has dealt with strikes by much stronger unions of employees in the telecommunication, postal, insurance and banking sectors during the last few years, teachers cannot take the material success of their strike for granted. Let alone an all India agitation, even state level agitations are running out of steam.

The Decline of the Professoriate

With the structural adjustment reforms and liberalization of the economy, the state is gradually shedding its responsibility for higher education. The UGC has been virtually reduced to a mere fund-disbursing agency, incapable of enforcing its own recommendations. Educationally, the Indian university system has progressively become marginalized. Being outside the purview of

the UGC and to a large extent, of the state governments, the emerging private educational sector may be more successful, but it is too early to assess this.

The decline of the academic profession which was noticed over a quarter of a century ago is now almost complete (Shils, 1969). Entering the profession with no prior professional preparation other than a postgraduate degree, assured of tenure, doing unchallenging work without much accountability, teachers in colleges and universities have been largely reduced to the lowest common denominator. Every laudable policy to improve the situation has been merely ritualized. It is true that the situation is better in some centers of excellence, the institutions of national importance, and a few university departments and colleges. They are, however, drops in an ocean of mediocrity.

Ironically, the improvements in pay scales and career prospects have come at a time when the profession is at a low ebb. Teachers are largely happy with the pay package, but they are also worried about the gradual withdrawal of state support for higher education. In the meantime, both politicians and the general population have the general view that college and university teachers are a pampered lot, probably being paid more than they are worth. Without question, the profession of the guru has fallen from its pedestal.

CONCLUSION: THE PROFESSORiate AT A CROSSROADS

In both China and India the academic profession is in an uncertain transitory phase. In China the academic profession is caught between the push and the pull of a state-centered socialist ideology and the old bureaucratic controls on one hand, and the socialist market economy and the new corporate culture, on the other. The professoriate in China faces the challenge of deciding what to keep and what to discard from its traditions, what to adopt and what to modify from the trends of modernity from the West, and how to decentralize an excessively centralized system without creating chaos. In India, with the state gradually withdrawing from the sphere of higher education and

dithering about long-term policy, the academic profession faces an uncertain future.

In China, reform measures for public universities and the new private sector in education have brought about greater academic autonomy, attention to quality, and increased transparency in the career advancement of teachers, though the old forces of central planning and official interference are still at work. In India, the partial loss of traditional job security has been accompanied by the diminishment of academic autonomy. In both China and India, there is an increased emphasis on quality, something that was largely ignored under systems of state control and patronage. The emphasis on quality should at least partially be credited to market forces and the internationalization of higher education.

Notes

1. Established in 1898, modern Chinese higher education has expanded rapidly over the last 100 years. There are now “more than 3,000 universities and colleges—including 1,225 regular full-time universities and colleges, 686 adult higher education institutions, and 1,202 new private universities and colleges. The system encompasses 13 million students and over 1.45 million staff members, 554,000 of whom are faculty members” (Min, 2004, pp. 53-54). In India, though modern higher education was established as early as in 1857 as part of the British colonial enterprise. At the time of independence (in 1947), however, there were only 20 universities and 496 colleges catering to 241,369 students. During the next 55 years, India built up a massive system of higher education. In 2001-2002, there were 323 university-status institutions (178 state and 18 central universities, 18 medical and 40 agricultural universities, 52 institutions “deemed-to-be universities,” 12 institutes of national importance, and 5 institutions established under state legislature acts), 13,150 colleges, and about 900 polytechnics. The system now employs 350,664 teachers and caters to about 8,275,000 students (though estimated to be covering hardly 8 percent of the population in the relevant (17-23) age group) (Jayaram, 2005).
2. In preparing this chapter, we have drawn heavily on Chen (2003), Jayaram (2003), and Min (2004).

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