

Governance and Citizenship in Asia

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Aims and Scope

This series explores how citizenship is shaped by social, political, cultural and historical contexts and how it may be moulded to serve the nation state in the age of globalization. In these publications we see how governance relates to all aspects of civic life, including politics, public policy, administration, civil society and the economy, as well as the core values of society.

Titles cover themes including public trust and trust building, the role of civil society, citizens' rights and obligations, citizenship identities including those related to gender, class and ethnicities. Authors explore how young people are shaped by democratic and traditional value systems and the importance of citizenship challenges in the Asia Pacific region.

Research collaborations in this interdisciplinary series probe questions such as: What are the links between 'good governance' and new forms of citizenship? What is the role of citizenship education as a tool in state formation and the development of active citizenship cultures? How do we explain the distinctive features of governance and citizenship in Asian societies?

Through these publications we see that citizenship is an integral part of 'good governance' and that such governance ultimately enriches citizenship. Scholarly investigation and academic dialogue in this series describe the interdependence and mutuality of governance and citizenship.

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Wing-Wah Law

Politics, Managerialism, and University Governance

Lessons from Hong Kong under China's Rule
since 1997

 Springer

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Foreword

Education has frequently been seen as a prime vehicle for advancing democracy. And yet, world economies cannot be separated from the globalized contexts in which educational institutions are embedded. Simon Marginson, for example, has argued that academic governance has been transformed in Australia as the national government and individual universities each attempt to position higher education in a global context. David Kirp has demonstrated how markets are supplanting traditional academic values. Sheila Slaughter and Gary Rhoades have written about emerging forms of “academic capitalism” throughout the industrialized world. Peter Scott has observed that Great Britain’s universities struggle to remain relevant due to the reconfiguration of the labor market. I have written about forms of privatization in India and how the definition of quality in Central America is in constant tension with globally imposed criteria. And in this important book, Prof. Law writes about the latest developments in Hong Kong that have significant consequences for academic institutions there.

Throughout the world traditional academic disciplines are falling by the wayside, research is increasingly corporatized, and public funding for education is decreasing while competition is increasing from a variety of for-profit and nonprofit providers. Higher education in the twenty-first century has seen many changes—both caused by and resulting from globalization—that are not yet well understood. In an effort to contextualize globalization’s impact on higher education and to understand its implication for advancing democracy, two changes, in particular, are significant across national contexts.

One change pertains to the oversight of public and private sector institutions. As public institutions become more dependent on nongovernmental funding and more independent from the government agencies that created them, the state is refashioning its governance role in a curious manner. A second change has to do with what we expect of the faculty. What was once seen as the *raison d’être* of the academy—academic freedom—is undergoing significant reexamination. On the one hand, we have the government providing less monetary support but greater oversight. On the other hand, we have academics competing for support to conduct research but less able to carry out their tasks in a traditional manner.

These changes are neither well understood nor well documented. The changes also suggest contradictions. The state provides less funding and increasingly forces universities to rely on market mechanisms to survive. And yet, as government funding decreases, oversight and regulation increases. How is it that a governmental entity provides less funding in the past, but assumes greater control? One might think that if a funding agent provided less support, then the funder would have less say in the actions of the organization. The opposite is the case in Hong Kong and throughout the academic world.

Similarly, throughout much of the twentieth century, the assumption was that if faculty were left on their own, society would benefit. Professors not only taught classes and educated students for productive work in democratic societies, but they also engaged in important research that benefited society. The belief was that the free exchange of ideas furthered the advancement of society. Increasingly, however, the notion is that professors should be able to continue their work as in the past, but strict parameters are now placed on what they might investigate and say. The contradiction is a sharp turn from the previous direction of academic life.

Professor Law's book is critically important for two reasons. Hong Kong has been known as the location in Asia that has had the best universities in the region. Hong Kong University (HKU) has long been ranked as one of the world's best universities; to employ a term from a bygone era, HKU was the academic "jewel in the crown" in Asia. The result is that an analysis of higher education in Hong Kong is of interest to anyone concerned about higher education.

Professor Law masterfully points out that the changes that are occurring in Hong Kong in general are complex and troubling for the future of higher education in Hong Kong in particular. Because these changes are so interwoven with societal dynamics, we need a careful analysis of the changes over time. What we do not need in order to understand these changes are jeremiads or screeds that lobby for one or another position. Indeed, if I may employ a term that gets discussed in the text, what we need is a cool-headed analysis by an intellectual with the resolve of a professor with the academic freedom to investigate complex issues from multiple perspectives. Any intellectual concerned about higher education in Hong Kong will benefit immensely from reading this work. The complexity of the changes is patiently delineated even to those readers who may have little understanding of Hong Kong.

More importantly, perhaps, is how Law employs specific points to speak to the broader issues I have raised. Many of us who look at higher education across countries and regions have been writing about the trends that are changing higher education. What we all too frequently lack, however, are in-depth analyses that help us document how these trends are taking place "on the ground." In this respect, Law's text about the specificities of change in Hong Kong is critically important for those of us concerned about the role of higher education in supporting democracy. Law's work investigates the interplay of university governance, the managerial state, the market and its forces, and public higher education. Specifically, he has pointed out how the state is changing the historical dynamic of academic life in a manner that brings into question key concepts such as academic freedom.

Although the book explores these ideas through an intense examination of Hong Kong, many of the topics highlight the tensions at work globally. Performance-based funding (PBF), for example, is a central lever of policy reform in the United States. As with Law's analysis, what one finds in the United States is that PBF, even if well intentioned, does not bring about fruitful change, and instead shifts academic priorities away from key concerns. The result is the distortion of academic life, rather than its enhancement.

Similarly, the appointment processes of key administrative and governing positions that bring to light central tensions in Hong Kong are also the same levers government officials are utilizing in the United States and India. These managerial levers move the university away from its mission of equity and free inquiry, and toward one that supports government control. What the book highlights is an erosion of trust in traditional processes, and more a focus on how to support government policies. Rather than a buffer between society and the university, governance now is a tool of the government to support it in fulfilling its goals. The outcome is that rather than an organization removed from society in order that academics might gain objectivity to examine different phenomena, the university morphs into an organ of the government.

"Academic engagement" once meant that the citizenry could rely on academe to put forward analyses based on data rather than political persuasion. Professors were engaged with society in a manner so that the best possible objective analyses might be provided to thorny social and scientific issues. To be sure, legislative forums are going to have a political element to them as individuals debate the worth of a public policy. Historically, however, the role of the academic was to put forward as balanced a framework as possible on a topic so that the decision-makers might have the most informed information of neutral parties. The belief was that universities existed in large part so that academics might search for truth, and they would be supported in expressing those ideas regardless of where their findings led. What Law points out, however, is that such a dynamic is changing. His analysis is level-headed, thoughtful, and persuasive, and the book makes for very compelling reading, indeed.

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Preface

This book examines theoretical issues concerning politics, managerialism, and university governance within the specific context of Hong Kong since its return to China from Britain in 1997. My interest in exploring this research area can be traced back to my Ph.D. studies at the Institute of Education, University of London (now called Institute of Education, University College London) in the early 1990s. My Ph.D. thesis explored the tensions between economic modernization and the preservation of political and cultural identity in mainland China and Taiwan.

In my early academic career, I kept higher education, politics, and development as the main focus of my research. I was able to publish three articles on higher education in mainland China and/or Taiwan, one each in *Comparative Education Review* (1995), *Comparative Education* (1996), and *Asia Pacific Journal of Education* (1997). While keeping an eye on developments in mainland China and Taiwan, I researched the impact of Hong Kong's 1997 change from British to Chinese sovereignty on Hong Kong higher education during the transitional period (1982–1997). I disseminated my findings by publishing, in *Comparative Education* (1997), an article entitled *The Accommodation and Resistance to the Decolonisation, Neocolonisation and Recolonisation in Higher Education of Hong Kong*. After its publication, a well-intentioned senior colleague reminded me that one theme of the article, recolonisation—i.e., the emergence of China's central government as a political power center in Hong Kong and its use of national dimensions to co-opt Hong Kong academics (and other elites) to its service—was very politically sensitive.

For the 20 years following that 1997 article, I stopped researching and publishing on higher education—not, however, because of my colleague's benign warning, as I did not take it seriously and societal demands for political correctness were not as strong as they are now, but because the focus and direction of my research was diverted to other equally interesting and challenging research areas, including globalization, citizenship, and education reform in mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. I thought I most probably would not return to research on higher education, and therefore gave my collection of books on higher education to other colleagues.

In recent years, however, I began to feel a very strong need to return to researching higher education and therefore started a project on university governance and leadership situated in multileveled (local, national, and global) contexts. In part, I was motivated by the increasing pressure on universities to pursue world-class status and rising complaints about the negative influences of new management tendencies and new public management, in particular, on university administration and academic lives. I am a latecomer in this area. Because numerous studies have already examined these concerns, this book will briefly recapture similar concerns in the context of Hong Kong, albeit more from the perspective of university governance and leadership. For example, it will explore whether one aspect of new public management—the dominance of government-appointed external members in university councils for reasons of transparency and accountability—could become a conduit for political interference in university autonomy.

A more important impetus for me to write this book is related to the conspicuous increase in interplay between politics and higher education in Hong Kong in the 2010s. Such interplay is reflected in five interrelated events related to the political future of Hong Kong and involving university academics and/or students since 2013. The first and key event was the academic-initiated and student-led Occupy Central movement of 2014, in which tens of thousands of Hong Kong people (including university students) blocked major roads in important business areas for 79 days to force the central government to grant Hong Kong greater democracy—i.e., genuine universal one-person-one-vote suffrage in the 2017 Hong Kong Chief Executive election, without political screening of candidates. The movement ended in a confrontation between protesters and the police and was severely condemned by the central and Hong Kong governments as illegal.

The other four events, as this book demonstrates, can be seen as repercussions of the first event on higher education in Hong Kong. They are: the 2015 University of Hong Kong's appointment saga, in which the University of Hong Kong's council rejected the appointment of a liberal scholar, Prof. Johannes Chan, to a senior university management position, allegedly for political reasons related to social divisions in Hong Kong during and after the Occupy Central; the 2016 intervarsity campaigns by students and staff to attain greater university autonomy by abolishing the inherited colonial practice of the head of the city (i.e., the governor before 1997 and the chief executive since 1997) being the ex-officio chancellor of all public universities in Hong Kong; the rise of students' voices on different university campuses for Hong Kong independence and the struggles between student union leaders and their university administrations over freedom of speech and expression in exploring and discussing Hong Kong independence since 2016; and the education authority's unprecedented politically motivated scrutiny, in 2018, of the research and publications of a Hong Kong academic (a cofounder of the Occupy Central who has been accused of, but has denied, advocating Hong Kong independence), ostensibly to ensure his government-funded projects and publications had not been used to promote independence.

The challenges to Hong Kong universities by new international managerial fads and the city's changing political ecology seem to concern mainly their senior university management teams, academic staff, and/or students. However, university councils or governing boards, which are entrusted with supreme power over and fiduciary responsibilities for university governance and leadership, seem to be absent from the scene of these struggles, which brought some questions to my mind. Specifically, I wondered what were the roles of university councils or governing boards in leading and guiding their senior management teams to address issues arising from increasing pressure of new management tendencies on universities' administration and ecology, and from political events that might challenge academic freedom of students and staff and their role as public intellectuals in Hong Kong? How well did university councils or governing boards handle these issues? How far should they, as supreme governing bodies, be held accountable for their governance and decisions in handling these struggles?

This book is the first of its kind to document and examine the complicated interplay of managerialism, politics, and university governance in Hong Kong higher education. It also presents my reflections on the many contentious issues arising from these struggles and on the nature of university governance as a political exercise engaging in and interacting with various players and stakeholders in a multileveled world. It finally draws out some lessons from which other states with higher education systems similar to Hong Kong's can learn.

This research project is part of a wider project on inclusive leadership in Hong Kong higher education, funded by Hong Kong Research Grants Council (Project Number: 17605015). I am very grateful for the Council's financial support, without which this project and book would not have been possible. I would also like to thank the two external reviewers for their insightful comments and suggestions. My special thanks go to Prof. William G. Tierney, Wilbur-Kieffer Professor of Higher Education, University of Southern California for his encouragement and acceptance of my invitation to write the Foreword for this book.

Hong Kong, China

Wing-Wah Law

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About the Author

Wing-Wah Law is a Professor at the University of Hong Kong, Faculty of Education. His research contributes to the understanding of the interplay between globalization and localization on education and development in various areas, including educational policy, higher education, citizenship and citizenship education, educational and curriculum reforms, culture and leadership, and music education and social change. His work serves as a bridge for the exchange and development of educational research between China and the world.

Abbreviations

Public Universities in Hong Kong

| | |
|-------|--|
| CityU | The City University of Hong Kong |
| CUHK | The Chinese University of Hong Kong |
| EDUHK | The Education University of Hong Kong |
| HKBU | Hong Kong Baptist University |
| HKU | The University of Hong Kong |
| HKUST | The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology |
| LU | Lingnan University |
| PolyU | The Hong Kong Polytechnic University |

Other Terms

| | |
|----------|---|
| HKSAR | Hong Kong Special Administrative Region |
| HKSARCE | Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Chief Executive |
| AoES | Areas of Excellence Scheme |
| CPC | Communist Party of China |
| CPPCC | Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference |
| DVC | Deputy Vice-Chancellor |
| HKBA | Hong Kong Bar Association |
| HKFS | Hong Kong Federation of Students |
| MNE | Moral and National Education |
| NPC | National People's Congress |
| NPCSC | National People's Congress Standing Committee |
| NPM | New Public Management |
| PRC | People's Republic of China |
| PVC(ASR) | Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Staffing and Resources) |
| QAC | Quality Assurance Council |
| RAE | Research Assessment Exercise |
| REF | Research Excellence Framework |

| | |
|------|---------------------------------------|
| RGC | Research Grants Council |
| RPUG | Review Panel on University Governance |
| TRS | Theme-based Research Scheme |
| UGC | University Grants Committee |
| VC | Vice-Chancellor |