

## Education

This session will consider issues and questions arising from the CHOGM 2011 Communiqué (<http://bit.ly/ueOhqK>) and the Commonwealth Civil Society Statement, also presented to CHOGM (<http://bit.ly/tbodl3>).

### Problems

All countries are exposed to the current economic and financial crisis. Many have been facing recession which is likely to continue into 2012. In some cases, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is expected to shrink markedly and unemployment to rise sharply.

This is likely to affect education and training through multiple channels with impacts on:

- public budgets, with non-education measures crowding out education spending and with spending cuts within education
- shifting demand for education at different levels, from early childhood education and care through to adult learning
- education providers dealing with the quality of learning environments
- shifting enrolment patterns
- cost-drivers and rigidities; and financial strains
- labour markets and the demands for skills

Short-term responses could include:

- incorporating education elements in fiscal stimulus and budgetary packages
- using evidence to focus budgetary reductions on measures that have less impact on quality
- maintaining equity and protecting the most vulnerable
- providing transitional measures in the labour market

Medium-term responses could include:

- clarifying what competencies education systems need to provide to support economic and social wellbeing
- improving the efficiency, effectiveness and equity of the delivery of education
- integrating education more effectively with other strategies for promoting economic and social wellbeing, both domestically and internationally

### Questions

- Which impacts of the current crisis are of greatest concern for education & training?
- What are the arguments for and against different policy options in response to the crisis?
- How can international organisations such as the Commonwealth help countries shape educational policy responses to the crisis?
- Is education a human right or a tradeable commodity?

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The Financial Crisis and China's Higher Education

# Preparing Graduates for their Social Responsibilities

The financial crisis has influenced the politics, economy and culture of many countries to a substantial degree. China was no exception. After thirty years of reform and opening-up to foreign trade and investment, China has become an important economy and a full partner in the process of globalization. Thus the financial crisis affected many aspects of China's economy and society, and the link between China's development and graduate education is becoming closer and closer. It is therefore important to understand the challenges that Chinese graduate education faces as well as the opportunities that might emerge.

To reduce the pressure of financial crisis and to maintain economic development, many countries chose to broaden their education and immigrant policies aiming to attract more foreign students.



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From Table 1 we can see that in 2007, at the beginning of the financial crisis, the increase of overseas students was only 7.9 per cent. However, in 2008, when the crisis intensified, the annual total increased by 35,000 with the growth rate close to a quarter (24.17%) which is nearly twice as much as in 2006 and more than three times that of 2007.

### Competition for International Students

On the one hand, it is significant that a large number of students go abroad to study; both for strengthening intercultural communication and to take advantage of the excellent educational resources in other countries. But on the other hand, this phenomenon will also have some negative effects on China's domestic graduate education. First, it reduces the number of high-quality students directly. Based on official statistics: "Among the 1,0024 million overseas students, there are 735,400 students who are pursuing bachelor, master, PhD degrees or do research as a post-doctor or visiting scholar" (2). That is to say, about three-quarters of China's overseas students are in higher education, which reduces the enrolment of high quality graduate students at home. Secondly, a substantial sum of money is spent in the foreign education market. Even if we assume that each student spends only 9,932 Euros annually, this would still mean some 1.79 billion Euros going to other countries. At the same time, lack

Table 1. 2006 - 2008's Chinese Overseas Students Years

Years	2006	2007	2008
Number	134,200	144,800	179,800
Percentage increase	12.90 %	7.90 %	24.17 %

Data Source: The Official Website of China's Ministry of Education

of finance is always one of the key issues concerning China's universities. Such an out-flow of funds affects support for the universities' development and restricts the advancement of domestic graduate education. Besides the above, the loss of talent or potential 'brain-drain' triggered by studying abroad will also influence graduate education indirectly.

### The Increasing Difficulty for Graduates to Find Employment

One of the direct influences triggered by the global financial crisis has been a fall in employment opportunities in urban areas. According to a report from the Institute of Population and Labour Economics, the Chinese Social Science Academy, in 2009: "We need thirty million jobs in China's towns and cities to solve the unemployment problem, while our economic growth creates about only about nine million jobs each year" (3).

At the same time, Chinese higher education develops very quickly as well as the number of graduate students increases. Table 2 shows that in the past four years the number of graduates increased by tens of thousand of students each year. For instance, the number of graduate students increased from 150 thousand in 2004 to 311 thousand in 2007. This discrepancy will make it hard for graduates to find employment.

The difficulty of finding a job shows in the dramatic decrease of the starting salary for graduates. Based on a national survey of graduate students, in 2009, enterprises paid masters and doctoral graduates an average starting salary of 271 Euros and 392 Euros respectively. This is significantly less than the 308 Euros and 403 Euros paid respectively in 2008 (4). Especially for masters' degree holders, the starting salary in 2009 is roughly 40 Euros lower per month than in 2008, down 12 per cent. Finding a job is the ultimate goal for graduates and if this cannot be achieved future student enrolment and national educational development will be affected negatively.

### The Bleak Financial Situation of Chinese Higher Education Institutions

That the operational fund for running higher education institutions comes chiefly from the State is a key feature of China's current system. Because of the constraints of China's economic development, State expenditure on edu-

Table 2. 2004 - 2007's Post-Graduates

Years	Graduates (masters, doctors)	Increase on Previous Year	Per cent
2004	150,800	39,700	35.73 %
2005	189,700	38,900	25.86 %
2006	255,900	66,200	25.87 %
2007	311,800	55,900	21.84 %

Data Source: National Statistics Communique of Education Development

cation has not reached the planned annual goal of 4 per cent of GDP. Even in 2007, when the expenditure on education was comparatively high, the outlay was only 3.32 per cent of GDP (5), significantly lower than in developed countries. Paradoxically, at the end of the 1990's, higher education in China saw fast development, and the gross enrolment ratio increased quickly from 9.8 per cent in 1998 to 23 per cent in 2007 (6). The number of students in universities and colleges is now more than 27 million, and within just a few years the scale of higher education enrolment in China became the first in the world.

However, because of this rapid increase, China's institutions of higher education are in desperate need of money if they are to maintain quality, while the State cannot provide sufficient financial support. In such circumstances, many universities and colleges chose to borrow money from banks. According to statistics, by 2007 the debts of Chinese higher education institutions had reached around 19.86 billion Euros (7). At that time, there were 2321 higher education institutions of all kinds (8), which is an average of 8.54 million Euros.

The current financial crisis aggravates such tensions. First the State's educational investment has been reduced comparatively. At a 2008 forum on The Financial Crisis: Broadening Domestic Need and China's Economic Strategy, Zhou Qifeng, the president of Peking University, said that the financial crisis had already led to such tensions in financing higher education institutions. One of the chief reasons was that: "...the government's revenue was affected and the outlay on education fell correspondingly" (9).

Besides government subsidy, tuition fees, social donations, social group and personal funds are becoming important sources of higher education finance in China. The financial crisis has also led to a reduction in the availability of such funds. Such financial constraints restrict universities and colleges' integral development and influence post-graduate education as a part of higher education, the

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building of capacity in key disciplines, especially scientific research and support for post-graduate students. These need significant funds if they are to be sustained. The reduction or even absence of such funds will endanger post-graduate education in particular.

### The Vulnerability of the Academic Ethos

The prospect of unemployment for graduates has steadily increased and the motive for enrolment to universities has changed gradually as a consequence. In 2006, a sample investigation of five universities and nearly one thousand students showed that 58 per cent of the students chose post-graduate study to evade unemployment, and in the longer-term hope of finding a better job (10). Considering that the present financial crisis puts more pressure on the graduate labour market than in 2006, it may be estimated that the proportion of the students with such an enrolment motive is probably greater today than when the survey was conducted.

Again, anxiety is prevalent among graduates and the financial crisis deepens this anxiety, which is chiefly an "anxiety for employment". This is a psychological burden for graduates and prospective graduates. They spend a lot of time and energy on job search, which influences their studies and reduces the education and training quality eventually. The realization that graduation may be the beginning of unemployment, a prospect aggravated by the financial crisis, leads to cynicism and a belief that formal study and academic qualifications are pointless and the motivation to study falls.

As the pressure of the crisis intensifies, utilitarianism's influence on graduates increases. Many students become obsessed with simply "getting the certification" or in "passing examinations" which are seen to be of possible exchange value; or they choose subjects which are less demanding and in which it is easier to graduate. The intellectual interest in academic study declines correspondingly and higher education becomes equated with job-training. The longer-term scientific and cultural development of students, institutions and of Chinese society generally is likely to be affected by such attitudes.

### The Social Responsibilities of Higher Education

The system of Chinese higher education has a greater social responsibility in the circumstances of financial cri-

sis. On the one hand, such education can release some employment pressure, avoid the waste of high-level talents and reduce the social problems aroused by unemployment. But on the other hand, as a sub-system of education, higher education's capacity for such absorption is limited and might prevent higher education from carrying out its normal teaching and research functions, which would consequently endanger the quality of such education and would be unfavourable for its development.

Nevertheless the financial crisis also offers opportunities. After thirty years of development, China's higher education has established expertise in a number of high-level disciplines, with a firm research base. China's higher education is equipped for studying and solving complicated social issues and technical problems. As part of higher education, post-graduate education in particular shoulders obligations of scientific research, of economic development and of social service. Co-operation in these areas would make the association between higher education and economy and society stronger and avoid the perception that higher education is detached from actual public needs.

Secondly, such co-operation would stimulate more scientific research and greater investment from both State and private enterprise, which would reduce the current financial tension. Thirdly, it would provide graduates both with the opportunity to do research and to engage in social practice and in entrepreneurship. Fourthly, greater co-operation would enhance the social influence of higher education and its current status in the eyes of the Chinese people.

### The Structural Adjustment of Chinese Higher Education

The structure of Chinese higher education conditions its function and determines the quality of its graduates and the social benefits they bring. It was constructed on the basis of a planned economy and is seeking to adapt during China's move to a market and globalized economy. It plays a fundamental role in satisfying the need of the Chinese society for high-level talent. But, considering changing demands, the existing structure still shows some incompatibility with the new Chinese labour market.

The financial crisis is compelling China's higher education system to adjust. First, the original balance between economic and social needs and the development of knowledge and skills through higher education has been affect-

ed. As the provider of high-level talent, higher education must achieve a new balance so that public needs can be satisfied effectively. Secondly, the structural changes in the economy triggered by the financial crisis provide a realistic basis for higher education's own structural adjustments.

### Changes in Academic Employment

The financial crisis brought many Western universities and colleges into serious financial difficulties and forced them to adopt various corresponding solutions. Let us take the United States as an example. Many universities began to prune budgets thoroughly, reduce the number of planned enrolled students to more manageable levels, froze the employment of all but essential staff, including making staff redundant, reduced expenditures, postpone construction or expansion plans (11). On the one hand, this reduction of enrolment will mean a reduction in the need for staff. On the other hand, the staff that remain in service also face pressures, such as salary caps and the lack of promotion opportunities.

Compared with some Western countries, China provides a better environment for developing talents. From a macro point of view, though affected by the financial crisis, China's society is still balanced and the economy is still developing. In 2008, the rate of GDP reached 9 per cent and China continued to open its gate to the world. For example, soon after the onset of the financial crisis, international talent continued to flow into China's labour market. According to official statistics, more than fifty thousand overseas professionals registered to find jobs in China in 2008 (12). From a micro point of view, the financial crisis did not influence the scope of China's post-graduate education. Instead, its continuing development made the demand of universities for high-level teachers much more urgent.

### Higher Education and Vocational Training

China's systems of higher education and of vocational training still lack strategic overall co-ordination and collaboration is inadequate given long-term needs. Graduates lack systematic vocational plans and work directions; higher education curricula do not sufficiently take into account the likely nature of future employment; the number of high-level vocational training institutions is limited and the administrative system of vocational training has

much room for improvement; graduate education is disconnected from vocational capability certification. Such problems result in a deficiency in graduates' capacity for effective employment, which is one of the reasons that make it difficult for them to find jobs.

The financial crisis has intensified such contradictions and attracted the attention of the Chinese government. In January 2009, the General Office of the State Department of China published a notice on The Enforcement of Universities' Graduate Students' Employment which emphasized the need to improve the employment capacity of students. The notice includes the following measures: organize practical experience opportunities; transitional training for unemployed graduates and the broadening of the general practice base for graduates. The Ministry of Education also advanced measures to improve the prospects of graduate employment including specific demands for improving graduate employment guidance services, as well as developing the working abilities of graduates.

### Future Challenges for the Educational System

In China, as elsewhere in the world, higher education is still an elite education and most graduates will play an important role in economic and social development. China's transition to a market economy system is still incomplete. One important challenge is to prepare such graduates for their social responsibilities in an increasingly competitive market economy. A second challenge is for higher education to turn away from simple expansion and focus on the intensive and qualitative development of China's universities and colleges. This has been spurred by the financial crisis. Yet, as higher education also has an obligation of to help mitigate unemployment pressures, it is probable that the system will continue to expand while, in the most advanced parts of the system at least, seeking to improve quality. The latter will become imperative, as China's most prestigious universities compete with world-class institutions elsewhere, such as Harvard and Princeton in the United States and Oxford and Cambridge in the United Kingdom. This should lead to the growth of university autonomy and to an integrated model of teaching, research and employment. This will strengthen the links between higher education and the market. Yet, as the current financial crisis has shown, this will bring with it risks as well as opportunities.

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Greek Education and the Financial Crisis

# Education System with a Bleak Future?

In May, 2010, the Greek government and the EU governments under the threat of national bankruptcy, agreed to a "rescue mechanism" involving both the EU and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). This meant a 110 billion Euros loan by the EU and the IMF as well as various institutional interventions over three years. At the same time: "... the European Union has decided to set up a massive economic defence mechanism amounting to half a trillion Euros to protect weaker euro zone nations from market speculation" (Wittis 2010: <http://euobserver.com/9/30040>).

Greece was obliged to take the necessary measures to gradually correct its economic indicators by:

- reducing public spending,
- reforming the public sector, improving its performance and eliminating its corruption,
- restructuring the pensions system, and
- supporting the private sector to ensure economic development. These measures are described in detail in the much discussed agreement-document known as the "Memorandum" (Mnimonio).

senior positions. However, since 1982 there has been no teachers' appraisal system and the Ministry of Education struggles to implement a new one because of teachers' unions' opposition. Nevertheless socio-political and economic changes during the 1990's, such as the economic growth, the improvement of the population's educational level, and the large immigration to Greece made educational reforms more essential than ever.

The reform process, which began in the late 1990's aims to modernise and decentralise the education system. However, as many authors comment, it remains an uncompleted task (Persianis, 1998; Pigiaki, 1999; Gouvas, 2007).

## The Implications of the Financial Crisis

The four items of documentation-legislation introduced since the beginning of 2010 and related directly or indirectly to measures against the effects of economic crisis are:

- "The updated Greek programme of stability and development" by the Ministry of Finance. This is the government's economic programme which aims to solve the fiscal problem of Greece using a variety of measures aiming at the reduction of the deficit and at structural reforms in both public finances and the rest of the economy (Ministry of Economics, 2010). This document is important because it was submitted to the European Commission in January of 2010



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and, secondly, because this programme determines the context within which all others might function.

- The Law 3833/2010, "Protection of Greek economic measures for the treatment of the fiscal crisis". This provides measures such as:

- Reduction of wages in the public sector
  - Reduction of recruitment in the public sector
  - Increase of VAT and other taxes for specific goods
- The Law 3848/2010, "Upgrade of educators' role - establishment of rules for assessment and meritocracy in education" by four ministries among which is the Ministry of Education. This Law deals with issues that have been considered at least three times since 1997 by governments of both major political parties. It aims to restructure the specific part of the educational administrative system related to:

- Teachers' recruitment system. According to the new arrangements it remains fully centralised. However new teachers will be hired only:
- after accrediting their pedagogical proficiency (through a university course similar to the Post Graduate Certificate of Education in the United Kingdom), and
  - After being successful in centrally organized exams held every two years by a state organisation named the "Superior Committee of Personnel Selection" (ASEP).

Their appointment will be followed by a two year probationary period under the supervision of a "mentor". At the end of this period there will be an assessment. Those teachers successful in terms of teaching competency will become permanent; otherwise they will be transferred to other public services.

According to the Minister of Education Mrs. Diamantopoulou, not all graduates of universities are fitted to become teachers and the aim of the new process is to select the most suitable. Many commentators and the unions claim that these are only measures to reduce teachers' recruitment as, because of the continuation of tenure in the public sector, there is no possibility of dismissal.

- Reduction of teachers' employment rights such as:
  - secondments and transfers (from school to school within LEA,
  - from LEA to another LEA,
  - secondments to the Ministry's main building, universities, state libraries, offices of Members of

- Parliament, Archdioceses of the Orthodox Church and other public positions,
- secondments to Greek schools abroad, and
- promotions to higher positions.

III. The obligation of teachers to undertake five more hours overtime weekly if required by the head teacher.

IV. New teachers' appraisal system.

- The Ministry of Education's document-brochure "The New School - The pupil first". This document announced the "new" education reform using two catch phrases: "the pupil/student first" and "no school and no child left behind". It gives priorities to issues such as:

- the integration of new technologies in the teaching process
- new curricula
- the connection of the new technological school with the local market
- new in-service training scheme of teachers (a combination of face to face teaching and distance learning) out of school time.
- greater emphasis on foreign languages
- the extension of primary schooling from 13.15 to 14.00 for all year groups
- the re-design and gradual generalisation of "All-day school" (optional classes running till 16.15).

## "Rationalisation of Human Resources"

According to the Law 3833/2010 teachers' recruitment for academic year 2010-2011 was to be reduced by 50% for permanent appointments and by 70% for one year contracted supply teachers. As far as the hourly paid teachers are concerned, the Ministry claims that this practice should be abolished. A reasonable question to ask is who will cover these hours?

The Ministry claims that the problem can be solved by:

- taking gradually all the teachers who are detached elsewhere back to the school of their official appointment.

- ensuring that all teachers work their obligatory teaching time, as well as the new compulsory overtime. Additionally there is a provision for transferring teachers from secondary schools (where there is a teacher surplus) to primary schools (where there is a shortage).

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- closing down the LEA branches and merging the Local Primary Education Authorities and the Local Secondary Education Authorities, as well as the Local Authorities of Physical Education and of Technical Vocational Education with the main Local Education Authority. It is anticipated first that a large number of teachers will be released and, secondly, a large amount of money will be saved.
- merging schools and classes with small numbers of pupils, and making sure that all classes are close to the legal limit of pupils per class, currently 25 pupils, with the possibility of this number reaching 28 in cases of lack of space or teaching staff (Ministry of Education, 2011). However, according to the fundamental Law of Education (Act 1566/1985) which dominates Ministerial decisions, this number should be 30 pupils per teacher. Therefore, there is much concern within the Greek education community that this number will become the norm.

In addition, following a series of ministerial decisions, the secondment of teachers to Greek schools abroad – which operate under the supervision of Greek Embassies and Greek communities, was cancelled – for academic year 2010-2011. Furthermore, another 20% of teachers, already seconded abroad, returned to Greece following an announcement by the new Minister of Education. The number of teachers abroad was unreasonably large. Finally, no fresh study leave will be awarded to teachers accepted by universities for postgraduate studies.

This is summarised in the Minister's statement on the "Rationalisation of Human Resources". Many commentators and teachers' unions claim that the number of teachers occupied in other public positions is unlikely to cover the vacancies of the coming years. This is because such teachers serve in positions (such as in the Ministry of Education and LEA offices) which, due to the freeze of recruitment in the public sector, are most unlikely to be covered and, secondly, because the Ministry's merger programme, is in question. This is chiefly because little attention has been paid by the Ministry to the social, institutional and geographical particularities of Greece, a mountainous country with hundreds of remote islands and villages and a large percentage of isolated rural schools. This makes it very difficult either to merge or to close

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ity of politicians, including many members of today's government.

**Conclusion**

- The Greek Government's policies are focused on:
- reduction of teaching staff,
  - cuts in school funding, and
  - rationalisation of human resources which means curbing teachers' employment rights and significant cuts in wages.

Such policies will affect the education system generally, as class numbers will become larger and the already limited resources available will be reduced further. However, some specific elements of the education system are expected to be affected to a larger degree as they are, unfortunately, considered to be of secondary priority. These include:

- Small schools in remote areas where the number of pupils is small.
- Intervention programmes which run in deprived areas and in schools with large number of pupils of migrant parents and more specifically: special needs classes which run within mainstream schools, tutorial classes again within mainstream schools for pupils with minor learning difficulties, and integration classes for speakers of other languages,
- Special education as many staff are not permanent, and
- Greek education provided to pupils of Greek origin abroad.

It could be said that the basis of the "New School" reform introduced in 2010 is in question, as it is appearing to be a product of the financial crisis rather than a reform aimed at educational improvement. The targets set by "New School" are difficult to achieve, bearing in mind the now chronic underfunding of education, the shortage of teaching staff, as well as the reaction of a demoralised and underpaid existing teaching staff. We are not optimistic for the immediate future of the Greek education system given the present and continuing financial constraints. However, what began as a necessity may become an opportunity to focus on reforms that will provide both educational quality and managerial efficiency.



**HR der neuen Generation: Social Media & Co.**



Das Buch erklärt die Grundlagen und verfügbaren Werkzeuge von Social Media und Web 2.0, lässt erfahrene Experten zu Wort kommen und gibt Hinweise, Anregungen und Praxisbeispiele für den erfolgreichen Einsatz neuer Medien im Personalmarketing.

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