Eastern Asian Higher Education at the Crossroads:

A Reflection of the Accreditation/Evaluation System

of Universities in Taiwan

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Abstract

In the current era of global capitalism and internationalization, several countries have resorted to higher education evaluation systems to implement quality control in universities. Over the past decade Taiwan has actively participated in enforcing higher education evaluation of all of its universities. This study critically assesses the higher education evaluation system used in Taiwan to establish whether it improves or impedes the quality of creativity in universities. The background and present application of the system are introduced, followed by a thorough evaluation of the negative aspects of this system. This study problematizes the present concept of higher education and its approach to quality, which could be considered to impede rather than improve creativity. This study concludes that the evaluation system must be open and coordinated with the involved university acting as a community of possibility, a community in the making; thus, a more creative university.

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1. Introduction

Accreditation and evaluation in higher education are widely believed to be effective means of quality assurance (Hou, 2009; Harvey & Stensaker, 2008; Hawkins, 2010). "Quality" is one of the key concepts driving the current development of higher education. Quality, success, and funding have been key concerns in higher education, not only in the West (Barnett, 1992), but also worldwide. However, Ronald Barnett indicated in his classic work *Improving Higher Education: Total Quality Care* that numerous concepts of and approaches to determining the quality of higher education exist. At a time when higher education evaluation systems are regarded as critical tools in the quest for high-quality universities, members of higher education organizations should carefully consider the purpose of higher education and the definition of quality used to assess the effectiveness of evaluation and accreditation systems. In this paper, the higher education evaluation system currently used in Taiwan is presented as an example to evaluate, expose, and discuss the limitations and weaknesses of rigidly and recklessly pursuing quality control in universities.Therefore, this study aims to problematize the "taken-for-granted" concept of higher education, as well as the approaches to determining quality, which can hinder rather than enhance creativity. The study concludes that the evaluation system must be open and coordinated with the involved university acting as a community of possibility, a community in the making; thus, a creative university.

2. Higher Education Evaluation in Taiwan

2.1 Higher Education Accreditation and Evaluation in Taiwan before 2006

In Taiwan, the University Act (大學法)amended in 1994 and the Regulations for University Evaluation (大學評鑑辦法)enforced in 2007 are the legal base for enforcing higher education evaluations. However, before these regulations were enacted, various types of higher education evaluation existed, and not all higher education institutions had evaluation systems in place. According to the present regulations, four official types of evaluation system in higher education exist: university evaluation, study program accreditation, specific disciplinary field evaluation, and specific project evaluation. Not all higher education organizations implement the latter two types of evaluation. Therefore, the focus of this paper is on the former two types of evaluation, university evaluation and study

program accreditation.

The Higher Education Evaluation and Accreditation Council of Taiwan (HEEACT)was established in 2005. Since 2006, all universities in Taiwan are required to be accredited. The HEEACT evaluates whether the services and operations of educational institutions or programs meet the required standards. The first phase of accreditation was from 2006 to 2010 and emphasized how universities ensured the quality of the learning environment from an input-based perspective.The accreditation process is currently entering its second phase to evaluate how and what universities in Taiwan invest in enhancing student learning from an outcomes-based or performance-based perspective. Essentially, five subdivisions of items are reviewed and explained in a subsequent section.

The establishment of the HEEACT is regarded as a milestone in the development of evaluation and accreditation processes for higher education in Taiwan, because it is the first independent professional body with the power and authority to conduct program accreditations and university evaluations.

The evaluation of higher educational institutions in Taiwan began in 1975. Two main types of higher education evaluation systems existed during the initial stage: a study program evaluation and accreditation system, and the institutional evaluation system (Guo, 2012). In the next section, the program evaluation and institutional evaluation systems used before 2006 are briefly introduced.

2.1.1 Study Program Accreditation

The Study Program Accreditation system was implemented in three phases from 1975 to 1990. The Ministry of Education (MOE) first launched the study program accreditation system for mathematics, physics, chemistry, medicine, and dentistry in 1975. Over the subsequent 3 years, the MOE accredited the programs of agriculture, engineering, medicine, business, law, humanities, and teacher education. Until 1990, higher education evaluation in Taiwanwas under the complete control of the MOE (Guo, 2012).

The responsibility for accreditation and evaluation shifted from the MOE to academic organizations or societies during the second phase (1991–2005). In 1991, the MOE funded a research project to study the feasibility of academic or professional societies acting as evaluation and accreditation bodies. Since 1992, three professional societies, the Chinese Institute of Electrical Engineering, the Chinese Society of Mechanical Engineers, and the Chinese Management Association, were commissioned by the MOE to evaluate and accredit

the programs in their particular fields. In 1996, the Chinese Association for General Education was commissioned to oversee the accreditation of general education programs in 58 universities. The National Health Research Institutes were authorized to accredit the study programs in faculties or colleges of medicine from 2000 to 2005 (Guo, 2012). Higher education evaluation in the second phase was characterized by various evaluation and accreditation bodies, and no single professional body specifically tasked with accreditation existed.

In 2006, higher education evaluation in Taiwan entered its third phase, with the task of evaluation and accreditation of higher education assigned to a professional independent body, the HEEACT, which is discussed in detail in the next section.

2.1.2 Institutional (University Management) Evaluation

The second type of higher education evaluation is institutional (university management) evaluation, which was implemented in 1997. This type of evaluation, therefore, does not have a long history. Over 2 years, 1997 and 1998, 62 universities were evaluated using this system. This was the first time that a university management evaluation was conducted in Taiwan.

The second evaluation was conducted in 2004 and 2005, with 76 universities evaluated during this phase. The body responsible for the evaluation was the Taiwan Assessment and Evaluation Association (TAEA), which was established in 2003, and its membership was drawn from the Chinese Management Association (Lin, 2004).

The third and current university management evaluation has been conducted by the HEEACT since 2011, and the TAEA evaluates tertiary vocational education.

2.2 The Higher Education Accreditation and Evaluation system used in Taiwan since 2006

In 2006 the HEEACT assumed control of the evaluation and accreditation of higher education in Taiwan. The HEEACT is recognized as the first independent, professional organization aiming to assess, evaluate, and accredit higher education in Taiwan. Despite the stated independent status of the organization, it remains under government control to a certain extent. The HEEACT was established with funding from the MOE in 153 universities in Taiwan in 2005. The HEEACT is responsible for ensuring the quality of programs leading to undergraduate and graduate degrees, and for evaluating university management in all

universities in Taiwan by using external reviews. Qualified external reviewers must 1) be full professors, and 2) have completed at least three specific courses on appraisal procedures to acquire certification. Evaluation and accreditation results are divided into three categories: unconditionally accredited and verified; conditionally verified; and unverified. The conditionally verified programs or institutions must submit a report to indicate what and how improvements will be made. In the following year, a "follow-up" evaluation focusing only on the parts that were not qualifiedis conducted. Unverified programs are re-evaluated and re-accredited in the following academic year. Five main criteria are used to evaluate study programs and institutions, and are discussed in a subsequent section.

2.2.1 Program Accreditation

As explained previously, the study program accreditation processis currently in its third phase, which is conducted by the HEEACT. The HEEACT, following the direction of the MOE, completed the first cycle of program evaluations of 79 universities from 2006 to 2010. The institutions that were rated as "unverified" or "conditionally accredited" were required to submit a report or plan indicating the strategies and procedures to be implemented for improvements and revisions, and had to be ready for a follow-up evaluation or re-evaluation. The second program accreditation cycle started in 2011 and is on-going. According to the HEEACT, the second program evaluation cycle focuses on student learning outcomes. The main goals of the second program evaluation cycle are:

1. To understand the development of student learning outcomes by assessing program mechanisms;
2. To grant accreditation status and suggest a validity time-frame for programs;
3. To facilitate programs to develop and implement quality improvement mechanisms;
4. To facilitate programs to develop their strengths and features toward excellence, and to promote in-service master's degree programs responsive to the needs of industry; and
5. To advise on higher education strategies for the government based on the evaluation results (HEEACT, 2011a).

The evaluation of student learning outcomes is proclaimed to be the main focus of this study program accreditation cycle. The criteria used to review and evaluate programs still encompass dimensions of pedagogy, management, and academic or research achievements.

Teaching and research activities are required to positively influence student learning outcomes. Table 1 lists the five major criteria and standards for evaluation.

Table 1:

Five major items of program accreditation

Standard	Purpose
Assumed mission and objectives (core ability and curricular design)[1]	To accomplish the mission and attain the objectives, the department or the faculty should provide adequate teaching strategies, curricular design, and course programs.
Teaching activities (instruction and student learning evaluation)	To ensure teaching quality, the department or faculty should establish sound mechanisms to recruit qualified teaching staff, review and evaluate teaching performance and student evaluation.
Tutoring aids and resources for students (student guidance and learning resources)	To ensure the quality of learning resources, the department or faculty should provide sufficient resources, advice, and tutoring.
Research (academic and professional performance)	To ensure the academic and professional quality of academia, the academic performance of the department or faculty should be evaluated.
Outcomes (performance of graduates and self-improvement mechanisms)	To ensure the effectiveness of student learning and performance, the department or faculty should establish a mechanism to acquire feedback on the study programs from graduates and employers.

Note. From *2011 Annual Report* by HEEACT, 2011a. Retrieved from:
        http://www.heeact.edu.tw/public/Data/25211644171.pdf

Student learning outcomes cannot be entirely separated from teaching and research sources. However, the second cycle of program accreditation has a shortcoming in its practical application. The HEEACT claims that the goal of accreditation is to improve student learning outcomes, but the findings of this study suggest that the fifth criterionis not prioritized over the others during the evaluation process.

2.2.2 Institutional Evaluation

The HEEACT has been conducting institutional evaluations since 2011, when 81 universities were evaluated using the University Evaluation system. These institutional evaluations were completed and the results announced. The universities that failed or were conditionally accredited were required to fulfill certain criteria to secure a re-evaluation or follow-up evaluation. Table 2 lists the five major criteria used in the evaluation.

Table 2:

Five major items of institutional evaluation

Standard	purpose
Assumed mission and objectives of the institution (Institutional self-identification)[2]	University should be able to identify its own advantage, disadvantage, turning point, and crisis. It should clearly address the institution's development direction and major features, and identify its own status. It should follow its mission statement and draw up a master plan for development, and abide by this plan to offer suitable departments and programs. It should define students' basic literacy and core competence, which should match the trends of internationalization and marketization, in order to strengthen institutional competitiveness.
Managerial activities (Institutional administration and operation)	The university should follow the needs of its master plan to establish administrative management system and operational structure, and place suitable personnel to induce effective university leadership. Also, in order to strengthen institutional governance and operation, there should be a sole responsible mechanism to plan out the development of the university. In administrative operation, each important committee and organization should function properly. In the university's finances, there must be a sound mechanism to manage and plan public university funds and private

	university accounting system, which would ensure the stable development and long-term operation of the university. In addition, to enhance international academic collaboration and broaden students' international vision, the university must be able to promote bilateral international exchange activities. Lastly, the university should perfect its social responsibility and periodically publish its complete institutional data for duly public knowledge.
Teaching and learning resources	Teaching and learning resources include four parts: human resources in teaching, scholarships and grants, learning space, and environmental facilities and equipment. In terms of human resources in teaching, the university should make sure to provide academic units with sufficient number of professional personnel, ensure that the ratio of faculty members to students is reasonable, and establish a clear auditing system for faculty's academic performance. Faculty members who demonstrate academic excellence should be awarded as a means to promote academic activities and faculty's professional development. In terms of scholarships and grants, the university should provide diverse channels for students to receive awards, as well as strive to create more sources of grant funding. The university should also provide necessary work-study opportunities so that students who excel can focus on studies without worries. In terms of learning plans, the university should establish a sound curriculum planning system, and offer courses that are suitable to cultivating the students' basic capabilities and core abilities. In terms of learning space, the university should provide academic units with reasonable and integrated space for teaching and learning, which also takes into consideration the safe design of a campus environment that is handicap accessible and non-discriminate against

gender.

In terms of environmental facilities and equipment, the university should provide for information technology, library equipment, sports and recreation, health and safety, student housing, laboratories, etc. The university should provide sufficient software and hardware, as well as a complete management and maintenance system to fully support teaching and learning. The university's support is crucial to creating a sustainably developed and operated campus environment.

In terms of student learning, there should be sound mechanisms which carry out mentorship, guidance and counseling, student clubs and organizations, and career planning.

Accountability and social responsibility	The main element of measuring accountability includes the assessment of students' learning outcome and faculty's academic performance. In order to ensure student learning outcome, the university should establish clear criterion for admission selection, and assess students learning efficiency to ensure that upon graduation, students would possess basic capabilities and core abilities. As for assessing teaching accountability, this is reflected in the faculty's academic performance, including teaching, research, and service. Through the assessment of student learning and faculty teaching, the university should be able to regularly examine whether it is able to ensure the accountability of both teaching and learning, and establish suitable and usable data to sustain improvement and attain quality assurance. At the same time, the university should meet the expectation of society and mold itself to become a highly reputable educational institution.

Self-enhancement and quality assurance mechanism	A highly reputable university must have the identification of its faculty and students, and the recognition of all external parties involved. In order to establish a quality assurance mechanism, internally the university must set up a self-evaluation mechanism and examine whether the university is developing according to its master plan and carry out sustainable quality assurance. Externally the university should collect the views and suggestions of all parties involved to be used as reference for quality improvement and sustainable development.

Note. From *2011 Institutional Evaluation Handbook*, by HEEACT, 2011b. Retrieved from:
http://www.heeact.edu.tw/public/Attachment/142515454964.pdf

3. Evaluation/Accreditation: An Opportunity for improvement or Impediment?

Overall, compared to other countries, higher education evaluation in Taiwan does not have a long history (less than a decade).[3]Although the period of evaluation implementation has not been long, several problems have been observed (Chen &Chien, 2005; Chin& Chen, 2012; Chou, 2011; Guo, 2005; Huang, 2005; Hwang &Chang, 2010; Lai, 2005; Yeh, 2005; Yen, 2005). This study identified four main problems:

3.1 The concept of higher education and approach to quality are narrow and restricting.

If the mission of higher education is determined by the goals and definitions proposed by universities, it appears that the mission is currently dominated by marketized and instrumentalist ideologies. As indicated in Table 2, universities must define their own advantages and disadvantages according to "the trends of internationalization, marketization and institutional competitiveness standards." The state and the HEEACT assume that the quality ensured by the higher education evaluation mechanism can improve global competiveness, internationalization and marketization. The universities are therefore required to define themselves in these terms. However, there is a paradox implied in this assumption, because Taiwan has a unique relationship with the market and competitiveness. First of all, applying the language of the market does not translate intothe marketization of

higher education in reality because the results of the evaluation do not actually increase or decrease the competitiveness of the institutions in the national and international higher education market. Concerning the national market, students' (and parents') choice of university is mainly influenced by its ranking and reputation, which develops over time, based on public perception and does not depend on the results of the evaluation and accreditation system. Concerning the international market, the world university rankings are relevant, but the results of the evaluations conducted by the HEEACT have not influenced Taiwanese universities' positions in the world rankings.

Nevertheless, because of local evaluation standards, Taiwanese universities submit to "the trends of internationalization, marketization and institutional competitiveness" and thus marginalize the classical ideal of universities as institutions that aim to pursue truth, beauty, and integrity. As Cardinal John Henry Newman (1854)stated, a university should be regarded as "a seat of wisdom, a light of the world, a minister of the faith." The idealist approach is rarely mentioned in universities' self-definitions today. Universities tend to be exclusively concerned with productivity and are intensely focused on becoming effective machines producinga high number of publications delivered by efficient manpower. Item 3 in Table 1 and Item 4 in Table 2 include the criteria against which the academic performance (faculty publication rates) is quantitatively assessed. Item 5 in Table 1 and Item 4 in Table 2 consider student performance based on the employment rate of graduates, and the satisfaction levels of their employers. Publication quantities, rates of employment, and employer satisfaction levels problematically predominate the conceptualization of the meaning of quality in universities. Instead, there should be an increased focus on ideals, purposes, and the philosophy of universities which cannot, and should not, be easily quantifiable.

The four concepts related to quality in higher education proposed by Barnett in 1992 still dominate the notion of quality in Taiwanese universities today: higher education as the producer of qualified professionals; higher education as training for research careers; higher education as the efficient management of teaching; and higher education as the opportunity to improve life chances. However, Barnett's alternative suggestion for higher education as an institution, which is closely involved in the development of the individual, has been largely ignored but is readdressed in a subsequent section of this paper.

In addition to the limiting concepts of higher education, the approach to quality is restrictive and partial. An instrumentalist, objectivist, fixed, and productivity-driven approach to quality dominates the evaluation process and over-determines the concept of

higher education today. It is taken for granted that the input and output of higher education are fixed, accountable, calculable, comparable, measurable, and predictable entities. Numerous performance indicators, standards, and benchmarks have been devised to represent inputs and outputs, and processes and outcomes. The HEEACT review emphasizes a focus onthe learning process. Nevertheless, the manner in which the concept process is used and defined in the system is highly similar to the conceptof means, despite the advancement of process as conceptually fluid, non-objectivist, and thus developmental. Statistics and figures are the most significant evidence used in these evaluations.

Overall, a strong belief in instrumentalism underlies the concepts of higher education and quality. Barnett (1992) argued that three problems related to instrumental thinking are worth considering: the value and reasoning used to judge institutions come from the wider society, rather than from the educational enterprises themselves; quantity is prioritized over quality; and the means rather than the purpose of higher educationis emphasized. During the evaluation process, the roles of academics and the institutions in which they are situated should be carefully considered. Do faculty members or lecturers in universities consider themselves to be fulfilling educational or bureaucratic roles? What is the purpose of higher education institutions? Should higher education institutions prepare students for life? If so, what does "life" mean in this instance? Does the evaluation system consider life and living? All of these questions indicate the values, purposes, and meanings of universities today, and are discussed in a subsequent section.

3.2 The current procedures and practices only focus on trivial and minimum standards while overlooking the overall educational context.

This is a fundamental problem inherent in the current evaluation systemand fragments the entire learning process. For example, the first criterion defined by the HEEACT inreviewing programs is "objectives, core ability, and curricular design. "During the evaluation process, external reviewers focus on the literal relationships among curricular objectives, core ability, and performance indicators.To demonstrate the internal relationships inherent in the structure of courses, faculties produce copious amounts of documents and records. In most instances, considerable time and effort are spent in constructing definitions and explanations by using the rhetoric of the assumed objectives, core abilities, and performance indicators, rather than in examining the internal structure of the curriculum of the program *per se.*

Physical evidence matters most for the other items under review. To impress external reviewers over a 2-or 3-day visit, numerous documents and files, such as teaching materials and faculty profiles, are either preserved or specially produced to exhibit. More time and effort are spent on preparing these review documents than on preparations to teach the course. Institutions have developed a strong tendency to window-dress and perform deceptive practices (Van Damme, 2004) for evaluations.

3.3 Academic freedom is crudely violated by the tendency to favor formalism, standardization, and homogenization.

This infringement on academic freedom perhaps deserves the most fervent criticism. Accountability is the crucial indicator when research is evaluated. The research output of a university or department is meticulously calculated according to the volume, statistics on the estimated influence, rankings, frequency of citations in publications, and amount of funding received. The results not only have a crucial (and cruel) effect on the university's evaluation but also on staff members' professional career development when applying for promotion. From one perspective, this approach appears entirely reasonable. However, it is problematic that quantitative measures are persistently favored over qualitative measures. Following this logic, natural science scholars most often receive more favorable evaluations than social science scholars. Consequently, scholars in the humanities tend to receive the lowest rankings, because their publications usually rank lowest in influence and have the lowest citation frequency. If such a quantity-driven approach to quality had been followed, several genius and influential works, such as the *Tractatus Logical Philosophicus* by Ludwig Wittgenstein, and *Theory of Justice* by John Rawls (Peters &Olssen, 2005) may not have met the criterion and thus could have been tragically abandoned and would have remained unknown to the world.

In addition, the results of program accreditation have powerful practical effect on institutions or departments. According to the *Standards for Student Admission Quotas and Resources at Institutions of Higher Education* (專科以上學校總量發展規模與資源條件標準) amended in 2011, an institution or department that is only conditionally accredited or failed the accreditation processis forced to decrease the number of annual student admissions until it has been verified and accredited. Reducing the number of students creates direct and obvious disadvantages because the state funds universities according to the number of students enrolled.

3.4 The current process, form and system of higher education evaluation and accreditation in Taiwan are conducted in a top-down and monopolistic manner.

This problem is the result of the relatively small number of higher educational evaluation bodies in Taiwan. Firstly, universities should ideally have the freedom to choose among different evaluation and accreditation systems. In fact, in addition to the HEEACT, there are three other Taiwanese organizations recognized by the MOE as qualified higher education evaluation bodies, namely the Taiwan Evaluation and Assessment Association (TESA), The Institute of Engineering Education Taiwan (IEET) and The Chinese Management Association (CMA). Additionally, several international evaluation and accreditation bodies are recognized as qualified organizations including all members of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE), as well as the Asia-Pacific Quality Network (APQN) (Kuo, 2013). However, as a result of limited budget and the characteristics of their programs, most higher education organizations in Taiwan have few options.

Second, one of the aims of the evaluation system is to allow the power of the free market to improve the quality of higher education. However, the market is not the main force that facilitates determining the future and the development of Taiwanese universities; the government is. All universities, public and private, rely on government funding. The number of students cost of tuition, personal programs, and curricula are all controlled by the MOE. Overall, as a reviewer of the HEEACT university evaluation process, and as a member of a faculty being evaluated, the author concurs that higher education evaluation has a positive effect on quality enhancement and control in universities.1)Many colleagues admit that they hold students' opinions in high regard because their opinions influence accreditation items. 2) Some universities, especially private ones, which may not have employed enough qualified teaching staff to reduce expenses, are forced to change their policy; otherwise, they could fail their evaluation. Nevertheless, the author remains sympathetic to the systems' critics. An anonymous survey conducted by a lawmaker in December 2012 indicated that 22 of 47 university presidents in Taiwan gave negative responses to the question of whether the current practice of university evaluation in Taiwan could achieve its stated mission and objectives, whereas 21 gave positive responses. This result emphasizes somewhat the

popular distrust of the evaluation system and reveals that Taiwanese higher education is at a crossroads.

4. Concluding Remarks: Envisioning a Creative University

Higher education and the higher education evaluation system in Taiwan face several challenges. The most urgent challenge is the strong focus on productivity, accountability, and proceduralism. This bias conceals the high-minded ideals and values of purpose of the university. Instead, convenient and practical objectives determine the development of universities. In addition, the evaluation process has been reduced to a mere means for easy control in the Taiwanese higher education environment. Unlike other countries that are also regarded as "Confucian nations" (Marginson, 2010) and have recently witnessed college and university populations increasing, Taiwan is now facing the unfortunate challenge of a decreasing school-aged population. It is expected that the number of student enrollments will decreasein future, and some higher education departments or institutions will have to close down. The results of higher education accreditation and evaluation could be a crucial determining factor in the future of universities in Taiwan. At present, a total of 162 higher education organizations exist in Taiwan and include universities, colleges, junior colleges, and religious colleges. Table 3 lists the number of public and private universities for the 2014/2015 academic year. Because Taiwan has the lowest birth rate in the world, Taiwanese universities face substantial student recruitment problems. Table 4 lists the numbers and rates of birth in the decade of 2001 to 2011.

Table 3:

Number of universities and colleges in Taiwan in Academic Year 2014/2015

	Total	Public		Private	
		University	College	University	College
No.of Schools	156	36	22	39	59

Note. From Ministry of Education, Taiwan (2014, October 15). *University list*, Retrieved from http://ulist.moe.gov.tw/Home/UniversityList

Table 4:

Number and Rates of Birth

	2001	*2002*	*2003*	*2004*	*2005*	*2006*	*2007*	*2008*	*2009*	*2010*	*2011*	*2012*	*2013*	*2014*
No. of births	260,354	247,530	227.070	216,419	205,854	204,459	204,414	198,733	191,310	166,886	196,627	229,481	199,113	210,383
Birth rate (0/00)	11.65	11.02	10.06	9.56	9.06	8.96	8.92	8.64	8.29	7.21	8.48	9.86	8.53	8.99

Note. From Directorate-general of Budget, Accounting and Statistics (n.d.). *Number and*
Rates of Birth, Death, Marriage and Divorce. Retrieved from
http://www.dgbas.gov.tw/ct.asp?xItem=15409&CtNode=4595&mp=1

According to the statistics, the number of higher education enrolments during the 2012/2013 academic year was approximately 326,000. This number is predicted to drop rapidly in 2016/2017 to 247,000 and even more drastically to 178,000 in 2023/2024 (Ministry of the Interior). Over the period of a decade, higher education enrollments are likely to reduce by nearly half. Reducing the number of higher education affiliations has become one of the policies to manage the situation. The accreditation system can therefore be seen as a convenient means to control the number of enrolments. The MOE will reduce the number of enrolled students in departments that fail to receive accreditation. However, it is questionable whether the state-driven evaluation system is the most appropriate means to achieve this end in a transparent way. More importantly, to meet the criteria of the state-driven evaluation system, universities are likely to pander to the popular preferences of governmental officials rather than play the role of an independent, professional academic community that could provide intellectually sound and conscientious suggestions for society. Another risk inherent to the state-driven evaluation system is that it could have a homogenizing effect on universities, because a uniform template is used to evaluate all universities. Therefore, diversity and difference among and within universities must be maintained. Without external and internal diversity and difference, universities become mere factories or industries. Barnett (1992)stated that alternative concepts of higher education exist and are essential in an era defined according to the quest for neoliberal market and global competitiveness. These concepts are listed as follows:

— Developing the individual student's autonomy, with students acquiring intellectual integrity and the capacity to be their own person;

— Higher education as the formation of general intellectual abilities and perspectives ("the general powers of the mind, "as Robbins called it a general ego; 1963), with the student attaining a breadth of vision and understanding beyond the confines of a single discipline;

— Enhancing the individual student's personal character;

— Developing competence to participate in a critical commentary on the host society (thus sustaining an oppositional function for higher education (Scott, 1984; Barnett, 1992, p. 20–21).

Some may contend that there could be many different ways, such as questionnaires to quantify and assess individual autonomy, intellectual ability, personal character and developing ability. Nevertheless, such means or tools cannot thoroughly describe the meaning of autonomy and the mind. Evaluation means, tools, or systems for individuals or organizations can be useful to a particular end, but they are temporary and limited. Evaluation systems can demonstrate "something" about universities, but not "everything." The evaluation system can be seen as one way, but not the only way to understand the performance of universities. Alternative approaches to determining possibilities for universities must be created to understand, deepen, broaden, innovate, and create the purposes, processes, incomes, and outcomes of higher education. The idea of an ecological university as suggested by Barnett (2011a, 2011b) clearly emphasizes the inadequacy of today's concept of higher education and the evaluation system used. Barnett (2011b) proposed an ecological university as a feasibly imagined vision of a higher education institution that welcomes alternative possibilities for universities in general. Barnett suggested five adequacy criteria for achieving an ecological university: range, depth, feasibility, ethics, and emergence. According to Barnett (2011b), the contents of the five criteria are as follows:

— Range: What is the range of the imagining? Does it have theoretical backing? Is it rich in concepts and ideas? Does it lend itself to an array of practices? Does it have large implications for policies?

— Depth: What is the epistemological depth of the vision? Does it reflect or identify large structures, or acknowledge forces, that are present and does it address those structures? Does it connect with actors' experiences? Does it connect with the material world in its complexity?

— Feasibility: Given the power structures that it has identified, to what extent might the vision be implemented? How feasible is it? Could it be instantiated by individual universities? Could it even be instantiated by the university system as a whole?

— Ethics: To what degree does the vision reflect large ideas as to human and social wellbeing and even flourishing? In what ways could its vision be said to be worthwhile? Does it reflect large human principles such as those of fairness and openness?

— Emergence: To what extent does the vision lend itself to continuing further interpretations over time? Could it open itself to yet further ideas and imaginings? Could it continue to unfold over time, and in new ways as new situations arise? (2011b, p. 93)

The five adequacy criteria are likely to "act as prompts for yet more imaging and more creativity" (Barnett, 2011b, p. 93) because "there is no limit to the number of times any new imagining might be tested against the criteria of adequacy"(2011b, p. 93). Following this approach, any new, different, and alternative vision of the university should be welcomed and encouraged to take form and be tested to determineits range, depth, ethics, feasibility, and emergence. This vision of an ecological university can also be called a "creative university." In such a university, freedom is a necessary condition and fundamental value.

> The basic values of the creative university are those of individual freedom and responsibility. These values are quite distinct from those of the educational bureaucracy: forced productivity, proceduralism, form, order, and compliance. (Binder, 1983, 1984, p. 31)

The educational bureaucracy is embodied in today's evaluation system and is strangling creativity in universities by turning creativity into a triviality. By closely evaluating the implementation of the current evaluation system, this paper revealed the deep-seated

problems inherent to a productivity-driven approach to higher education. As Jim Binder (1983, 1984, p. 30) stated:

> A "search for rationality, for productivity and for efficiency" will be "counterproductive" in human and intellectual terms in the long run. It cannot create a real university, nor can it make us more responsible. It won't make us free.(p. 30)

Freedom allows people or organizations to innovate and create, and thus should be paid great heed when the purpose and value of universities is considered. There have been several statements related to freedom in the stated missions of numerous universities in the process of evaluation and accreditation systems. However, freedom in higher education should not be used as a mere rhetorical device, but should be regarded as a value and condition present in the internal and external dynamics of every aspect of the university. Freedom in higher education means that there are, and should be, possibilities to be explored and developed in programs, curricula, pedagogy, resources, and management. The popular market model and language of economics (Smith, 2012) currently used cannot, and should not, be seen as the perfect model and language to represent higher education. Freedom is what keeps a university alive and creative, because free individuals and organizations can break boundaries.

NOTES

1.The author made revisions of the translation of Items 2, 3, 4, and 5 in Table 1 to ensure that the terms are more intelligible to readers of English. The author also placed the literal translations provided by the HEEACT within subsequent parentheses. The difference between the translations reflects the distinct manners of thinking. The purposes listed in Table 1 were translated by the author.

2. The author translated the former two items in Table 2 by placing the original translation in subsequent parentheses, as the author did for Table 1. The difference between Table 1 and

Table 2 is that the descriptions of the purposes listed in Table 2 are direct quotes from the 2011 Institutional Evaluation Handbook.

3. According to Judith Eaton (2009), President of the Council for Higher Education Accreditation, and John Hawkins (2010), Director of the Centre for International and Development Education, accreditation in the United States is more than 100 years old.

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面臨歧路的東亞高等教育：
反思台灣大學評鑑

洪如玉＊

摘要

當前許多國家在全球化資本主義與國際化潮流中，採取高等教育評鑑制度來進行大學的品質管控，過去十年中，我國也非常積極在大學中實施高等教育評鑑。本文主要採取批判的觀點衡量台灣高等教育評鑑制度的問題，此制度有利或有礙於大學的創意發展，值得一探究竟。本文首先說明我國高教評鑑的背景與實施狀況，並指出此制度可能連帶的負面意涵，本文認為目前高等教育及其對於品質的理解可能有些問題，受到牽制的評鑑制度，反而可能阻礙大學創意的發想。最後本文在結論中指出，評鑑制度應該更開放，並且將大學視為一個實踐各種可能性的社群，也是一個不斷在進行創造的社群，如此方能促成大學成為更具創意的大學。

關鍵字：認證、評鑑系統、高等教育、大學理念

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