

Xiaohong XU, Shanghai University, China

“The History and Latest Reform of Academic Promotion Policies in Australian Universities”

Key words

Australia; academic promotion policies; reform

Abstract

Australian universities have been high ranking both in research and teaching quality internationally. As the core force of higher education, Australian university teachers play an important role in cultivating high quality talents and promoting higher education development. How to better reward and motivate the teachers and design proper promotion policies has always been an important agenda in Australian universities.

The academic promotion policies in Australian universities have experienced a series of reforms along with the changes in higher education policies.

In the period of Binary System of Australian higher education, under the reforms by Whitlam's Labor Party, the Federal Government took stronger control on the higher education by intervening into the employment and promotion policies in universities. A national standard about salaries for university teachers was set up. The policy about sabbatical leave in terms of period and condition became stricter as well.

During the period of the National Unified System from the famous Dawkin's reforms in 1988, some changes about academic promotion policies took place. A five-level academic rank was established in universities. In the 1990s, the number of students enrolled in universities was increased by 64 percent comparing with that of 10 years ago, and as a consequence there was a stronger demand for more teachers in universities. In such a situation, the Australian universities started to employ faculty on term contracts besides the tenure system. Regarding the promotion criteria, similar to other western countries, teacher's contributions in the three broad areas of teaching, research and service were evaluated, and weightings were allocated to teaching and research for 40 percent each and 20 percent in social service, but in practice research was more highly valued in academic promotion process.

With the trend of globalization in the 21st century, Australian government has taken some initiatives to emphasize the teaching quality in higher education. As a result, Australian universities have made some reforms in academic promotion policies to recognize excellent teaching –focused academics. Beside positions of the teaching and research faculty, research-only faculty, education-focused or teaching –focused positions are set up in more and more universities. Weighting in the three areas of teaching, research and service are reallocated with much more weightings given to teaching in the promotion process of teaching-focused academics.

The reforms in academic promotion policies in Australian universities are closely related to higher education reform. These reforms are of much significance to the human resource management of faculty in higher education.

XU, Xiaohong

XU Xiaohong is an associate professor and research member in Australian Studies Center, Shanghai University. She is a PhD candidate in Comparative Education in Shanghai Normal University. Her recent publications include: “A Study on the Reforms of Higher Education Evaluation System in Sweden and its Enlightenment,” *Journal of Higher Education Exploration* (CSSCI, January 2014); “A Comment on Australian Basic Education Reform Policy in the 21st Century: based on the Result of the PISA Test ,” *Journal of Primary & Secondary Schooling Abroad* (CSSCI, March 2014); “Staff Development in Australian Universities,” *Journal of Hebei Normal University* (National Core Journal, June 2013); and “ A Research on Internationalization of Group of Eight in Australia,” *Journal of Higher Education Exploration* (CSSCI, March 2013). Her current research interests are in the field of comparative higher education and include faculty development, quality assurance in universities.