

# Cultural Innovation: Localization and Internationalization of China's Higher Education

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**Abstract** - The chief aim of the paper is to study the major function of higher education in cultural innovation through an analysis of how China's higher education nationalizes and internationalizes and draws challenges for cultural innovation. The starting points are an original contribution to the understanding of the role of higher education in relation to innovation (UNESCO Forum on Higher Education, Research and Knowledge, 2009). On this basis we move ahead and the procedure we follow can be briefly described as follows: firstly, the paper makes a simple analysis about the characteristics of higher education localization and its influence on cultural innovation; meanwhile, the author puts forward several proposals for the reform of higher education in order to promote cultural innovation. Secondly, the author proceeds to emphasize the importance of higher education internationalization and its value in cultural innovation. Thirdly, the paper expounds internationalization communication and cooperation of Chinese higher education. At last, It is concluded that higher educational localization and internationalization are of great significance for realization of the function of cultural innovation keeping balance between Chinese native culture and international culture.

Index Terms - Cultural innovation, localization, internationalization, Chinese higher education

## 1. Introduction

The Research Report held by UNESCO Forum in 2009 provides a synthesis of the main findings on higher education, scientific research and innovation systems, from its establishment in 2001 to the conclusion of its activities under Phase1. in 2009. In the report, it is noted that in scientific research, the tension between basic and applied research is the core issue, thus linking to the "think global, act local" challenge. This prompts more flexibly organized research systems, and pragmatic approaches which promote "Big Science" while also nurturing science, which serves society in the widest sense. While in the innovation field, the dynamic consists of both "research for innovation" and "research on innovation".

Due to the important role research and innovation play for growth and sustainable development, fundamental transition processes are taking place in the systems of research, innovation and higher education in China, as in other regions of the world. These processes can be described as a shift from regulation to deregulation and competition, from administration to management. Institutions involved, such as higher education and research institutions are greatly affected by these changes, gaining high autonomy for themselves. But all these changes may disappear if there are lack of managers and administrators. While the roles of universities in national and regional innovation systems has been emphasized by both

policy makers and researchers all around the world, the interactions between universities and industries gradually take place beyond national borders. Therefore, this paper embraces the global dimension of innovation systems, research and higher education and attempts to understand and study higher education with special attention to localization and internationalization.

It's important to develop an innovative culture in order to build an innovation-oriented country. Confessedly, colleges and universities are the main places to spread advanced culture and the innovation of knowledge. Therefore, great efforts must be made to strengthen the construction of culture innovation through higher education, to cultivate the consciousness of innovation, to encourage the spirit of innovation, to complete the mechanism of innovation and to inspire the vitality of innovation so as to create a cultural atmosphere for the production of innovative outcome and elites, which will give powerful moral motivation and mental support to construct an innovation-oriented country.

## 2. Higher Educational Localization And Cultural Innovation

### A. History of China's educational localization

With the educational research domain's watchful eye on and relative discussions, the issue of educational localization has been popularizing. Actually, reflection on it has been since the 1940s in the history of Chinese educational research and development. Therefore, before starting an action it has provided an ideological clue for deep research. Many generations of Chinese people cherish the desire of generating cultural innovation though the combination of national glamorous ideological culture, knowledge hierarchy with Chinese reality, and they move forward from "Chinese style, Western Use" in late 1800s to Chairman Mao's reflection on Chinese style of Marxism in 1940s and President Deng Xiaoping's theory on socialism with Chinese characteristics.

Actually, conceiving of Chinese localization is common in our culture. It focuses on protecting 5,000 years' civilization of the nation and endows Chinese characteristic cultural and ideological quality, so it guards more new acceptable proposals generated from different stages of development.

### B. Future challenges of higher educational localization and cultural innovation

Entering the 21st century, governments in many countries have laid down new strategies for the development of higher

education in order to cope with the challenge of fast-changing progress in science and technology, promote the development of knowledge economy and enhance the nation's comprehensive strength and competitiveness. Especially with the strike of the international financial crisis, all countries, whatever their level of development, have been obliged to make policies of cultivating innovation and improving quality of higher education with key measures of making innovation in science and technology and education for quickening economic revival and sustainable development.

Nowadays, China is entirely carrying forward constructions in economy, politics, culture, society and zoological civilization. Consumption structure is turning into developing patterns from survival patterns these years, and demands in education become exuberant with a tendency of high quality, diversification and long life, therefore, China's higher education takes dual tasks of growing in dimensions and improving quality, with both challenges and opportunities.

With more emphasis on innovative talents, higher educational localization and cultural innovation are now facing more challenges on educational concepts and research as well as teaching practices.

With the long-term effect of exam-oriented education, personnel training mode cannot adapt to requirements of a constructing innovative country, the capacity of fostering high-qualified talents and innovative talents weakens, system of assessment and selection of those talents turns out to be unreasonable. Whole groups of teachers' lack of strength is due to being short of leading talents, which has a direct influence on the improvement of education quality and fostering innovative talents. Some colleges and universities have large gaps applying structural system of courses to industrial development; industries lose motivation in participating in higher education, and the standard of social support for higher education and capacity of higher education for serving society need improvement. As a result, the search for more effective local, national and regional solutions must operate in tandem with ongoing transformations, including those with unknown and possibly negative outcomes.

### *C. How to make cultural innovation through higher education reform*

With the above point of departure, China's higher education takes research of improving quality as the core assignment of reformation and development, paying close attention to strategic change in developing conception, innovation in training modes and structural reform, and systematic construction in assessing quality assurance.

Firstly, stick to people-oriented concepts and deepen reform of personnel training mode in institution of higher learning. In educational concepts, take personnel training firmly as the center of higher education with full scale operation of quality-oriented education, emphasizing fostering students' social responsibility, spirit of innovation and ability of practice, and emphasizing education in scientific spirit, cultural accomplishment and life-long learning. In the way of cultivating, encourage universities to decide to reform experimentation for themselves, paying much attention to the

combination of learning and thinking, knowing and doing, teaching students in accordance of their aptitude, carrying forward active elicitation methods and open classrooms, arousing thinking things out for oneself and consciousness of innovation, and cultivating learners' ability of collecting and processing information and acquiring new knowledge, analyzing and solving problems, cooperation and social interaction. In the system-building, explicit college and universities' responsibilities, expand their autonomous rights, explore building modern system to create favorable environments for cultivating talents

Secondly, structure scientific assessment systems of personnel training to improve correspondence of personnel training to national talent demands. To make a practice of developing the country through science and education, powering the country with talents and strategy of sustainable development, China has laid down the country's medium and long term program for development of science and technology, talents and education. To adapt the requirement for the nation's economic and social development and follow the law of education and talents' growth, Chinese government, society and universities are undertaking the responsibility of training, using and encouraging talents together to solve the problem of being disjointed between the supply and demand of personnel training. As for colleges and universities, they should improve personnel training so that economic and social development and personnel training development should dynamically integrated into the demand of choosing a person for a job.

Thirdly, increase government spending to form a life-long learning system of personnel training development. Compendium of Educational Programs note that financial educational appropriations will be up to 4% of GDP by 2012. We continue to strengthen the responsibility of government spending in higher education, encourage society to support the development of higher education, and perfect the policy system of aiding university students financially. Besides, we still continue to strengthen guidance for regional higher education, especially for supporting higher education in the Midwest and national territory. With the guidance of life-long learning concept, we have to set up a "flyover" interpenetrated among general education and vocational education, school education, society education, and family education.

## **3. Higher Educational Internationalization and Cultural Innovation**

### *A. Higher education research for innovation*

During the decade, the sign of educational theory system on socialism with Chinese characteristics, research of educational localization has been discussed and developed with main trains of thought on national education reality, experience and previous theory, which has promoted the research of educational localization, but this traditional way of thinking is being gradually substituted by educational globalization at the beginning of the 21st century.

The evolution of globalization and of the knowledge society has led to systemic and institutional changes in higher

education systems, and has required universities to adapt their character and functions to meet complex societal demands and expectations (Mok and Welch 2003). Supra-national institutions, such as the OECD, have guided national policies towards higher education leading to major systemic and structural changes in higher education systems and institutions (Vaira 2004). These include changes in managerial attitudes and cultures (Deem and Brehony 2005), the changing role of the State, from a position of almost full control to one of steering at a distance (Amaral and Magalhaes 2001) which has resulted in increasing institutional autonomy, but also in increasing of accountability exercises (Horta and Vaccaro 2008), and the promotion of schemes of performance based-funding and institutional competition (Jongbloed 2006).

Most universities around the world need to change and become more entrepreneurial (e.g., Slaughter and Leslie 1997), and this entrepreneurial attitude has led universities to extend the scope of their activities outside beyond national borders. As the activities of higher education institutions become more developed in international (in terms of cooperation) and global (in terms of competition) frameworks (see Teichler 2004), the more these institutions face new challenges. Universities that dominate in their national education systems are now struggling to improve the quality of their academic activities when starting to think more like their international peers. The universities that have managed and administrated themselves earlier in global higher education have their competitive advantages. This is so because they belong to countries which have established dominant scientific systems, get more resources or acquired international reputation and experience by carrying out more activities at the international level earlier. They have created a brand, and these are the universities that tend to be regarded as the per excellence “world class universities” (Shattock 2003).

Harvard, Yale or Cambridge tend to be viewed as the representatives of the “world class universities” that most universities around the world aspire to be. The position of these “world class universities” in the international level is legitimized by worldwide university ranking lists that assess mainly performance characteristics connected with research activities, but which nevertheless, fuel the competitive enthusiasm among universities at a global level (e.g., Dill and Soo 2005). In this regard, Altbach states “everyone wants a world class university. No country feels it can do without one”. The same author adds “The problem is that no one knows what a world-class university is...” It may be true that there is no agreement on a definitive concept of “world Class University”, but the research university model is obviously in everyone’s mind when the idea of “world class universities” is mentioned. The struggle that most European and Asian universities undergo to improve their positions in the research focused international rankings (Deem et al. 2008), and most of these universities have the willingness to have their name or academic activities associated with a better ranked university (Marginson and Sawir 2006).

### *B. Higher education internationalization and its value in cultural innovation*

The internationalization of higher education can be helpful to boost the country’s competitive force. Investing in and advancing knowledge, technique-oriented applicable research can effectively promote and maintain one country’s competitive advantage, while these strategies are within the scope of higher education. Hence, the internationalization of higher education, competitive force, economy and the development of science are closely connected (Glen A. Jones, 2010).

When referring to country image, education can be considered as a kind of communicative policy, which can enhance a country’s image. Meanwhile the international cooperation of education is also a kind of investment for foreign policy, which will help to make international relationships better. The communication of culture, economy, science and technology and education can keep the connection and cultural communication with other countries. The internationalization of education particularly makes a great important contribution to cultural innovation among countries. The internationalization of economy and the improvement of cultural communication will provide a potential clue to a country’s recognition and culture’s survival. Cultural assimilation often causes a crisis for small countries. Therefore, it is necessary to enhance or strengthen a country’s recognition by higher education and cultural innovation.

As for the blend of multi-culture, social-cultural factors, and country recognition are closely related with each other. From the angle of social-culture, for countries who consider internationalization as a respect of diversity and a way of counteracting the homogenized influence, protecting and enhancing culture for these countries becomes their motivation, while acknowledging the culture differences among countries is considered as the main reason for the internationalization of a national educational system (Dong Chen, 2011).

### *C. International communication and cooperation of Chinese higher education*

The internationalization of higher education is namely the international cooperation and communication among different countries, including foreign studies, international exchange of students and teachers, international studies, regional studies and technical support. While “internationalization of education” includes all activities in higher education, the content of course, teaching methods, the ability to use foreign languages and to understand multiple-cultures and the extent of internationalization of higher education institutions.

In respect of higher education internationalization, China pays its attention to two aspects. One is sending students to study abroad. From 1985 until now, China remains the country which has the largest number of students studying abroad. In 1985, there were 53, 378 students studying abroad. And there are 394,669 students studying abroad now. It can be seen that China attaches great importance to the internationalization of higher education, especially the policy

on overseas students. For boosting higher education internationalization, the other method is Chinese-foreign cooperation in running schools. Through Chinese-foreign cooperation in running schools, advanced patterns in running schools can be borrowed and we can also learn from their professional course settlement and update majors. This is the other way to enhance the internationalization of higher education in some schools, areas and even some countries. Besides, Chinese-foreign cooperation in running schools can draw in foreign investment and education resources which can make up for the inadequateness of education investment and improve educational conditions. However, this is far from enough. In the consideration of foreign experiences, the author holds that the internationalization of higher education in China should develop in the following directions: to increase the education quality of higher education institutions in China, the government of China boosts the internationalization of higher education by making policies of promoting overseas students, academic communication and cooperation with other countries. The forms of internationalization include promoting overseas students, academic communication and cooperation and joint running of higher education institutions with foreign parties. Through the overseas student's policy, the government establishes funds to send teachers and administrators abroad to study. Apart from government investment, other countries offer many scholarships to the teachers and students. Therefore, the number of overseas students increasingly grows. These students become one of the essential factors for the reform of higher education. Academic communication, cooperation and joint running of higher education are the main ways to level the higher education quality. Through academic communication and cooperation, the teachers in China can have the opportunity to communicate with foreign experts and take part in international conferences. The joint running of higher education policy allows overseas universities to establish branches in China.

As a historic witness for Chinese educational reform and development, the country's compendium of medium and long term programs on educational reform and development plans (2010-2020) promulgated in July, 2010. In the outline, the expansion of education opening to the outside world is taken as a separate chapter, which demonstrates China's dedication to communication and cooperation on education.

Various forms of vigorous communication and cooperation on international education have opened up capacious space for the development of higher education. Universities with top research capacity become the core of international communication and cooperation on education.

#### 4. Conclusion

To build an innovation-oriented country with localization and internationalization, Chinese higher education can move forward with improving quality and making innovations in training mode and structural reform nationally and paying more attention to research on education through academic activities and international communication and cooperation.

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