

GOING GLOBAL: CONTEMPORARY INTERNATIONAL NETWORKING IN CHINESE MAINLAND UNIVERSITIES

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Abstract

The educational exchange relationship between developed and developing (not accidentally non-Western) countries has always been characterised by imbalances and asymmetries. Accordingly, the traditional forms of North-South relationships have been between donors and recipients. International educational exchange between developed and developing countries needs to be located in a historical context of colonialism, and many constraints continue to pose barriers to genuine partnership. Today, neo-colonialism is the relationship that developing countries have to deal with. The present international educational equation has certain institutional and intellectual “centres” that give direction, provide models, produce research, and in general function as the pinnacles of the academic system. At the opposite end of the spectrum are universities that are peripheral in the sense that they copy development from abroad, produce little that is original, are generally not at the frontiers of knowledge. Educational institutions located in developing countries are strongly dependent on the institutions located in the centres.

Meanwhile, the contemporary academic world is becoming increasingly multi-polarised. A critical mass of non-Western scholarship is emerging, and beginning to force a reconsideration of traditional concepts and theories. The latest work in research fields is done at many more centres of scholarship than before. China, a giant periphery as called by some scholars, is especially noticeable and should be treated seriously, with its massive investment on research and development. Based on longstanding observation of the Chinese higher education system, this article explores how the maintenance of international links in mainland Chinese universities, set in an international context. It ends with some critical comments and constructive suggestions, with particular regard to the genuine collaboration and reciprocity in international educational exchange between the best institutions in the developed countries and their Chinese peers.

Keywords

GLOBALISATION, INTERNATIONALISATION, THE UNIVERSITY, INTERNATIONAL NETWORKING, CHINA

INTRODUCTION

Universities started as truly international institutions. With only minor exceptions, universities all over the world stem directly from the European medieval traditions, both in terms of their organisational patterns and their approaches to both knowledge and pedagogy. Since its origin, the university has maintained an international sphere of activity and influence. Students and knowledge have always flowed across national borders, with Latin, German and English dominating scholarship and science as the global academic language, one after the other. During the long past, the academic was almost the only reason for universities to communicate internationally (Altbach, 2005).

The present 21st century globalisation has put the international dimension of universities on steroids. Internationalisation has now become an imperative for almost all institutions of higher learning, and few can avoid its impact. In sharp contrast to the past, what characterises the contemporary exchanges and cooperation among universities is the strong orientation for international competition and market share, resulted especially from the increasingly intensified shortage of financial resources and marketisation. In order to enhance their influence, visibility and market share, universities now reach out proactively to the international community. To do so, they have to take a variety factors into consideration. Their achievement depends also on their localities, resources, strategies, as well as on how they perceive their contexts and thus position themselves. This article looks at the current practice of universities in the Chinese mainland, linking the existent literature to the author's personal observation within recent two and a half decades.

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF INTERNATIONAL NETWORKING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

It is to some extent ironic that while the University continues to house most scholarly activities, it remains under-theorised, compared with the Firm, the Government, or even the Army (Marginson, 2006). Although internationalisation of higher education has most recently caught much attention in the academic circle and even among people from the business world, research on the international networking among universities is much lacking. Most of the theories have only been formulated recently, with evident roots in long established views in social sciences.

The educational exchange relationship between developed and developing (not accidentally non-Western) countries has always been characterised by imbalances and asymmetries. The traditional forms of North-South relationships have been between donors and recipients. International networking between universities in developed and developing countries has many constraints, arising from historical factors, of which many continue to pose barriers to genuine partnership. The relationship is located in a historical context of colonialism, and neo-colonialism is the relationship that developing countries have to deal with today.

According to Altbach and Kelly (1978), there are three forms of colonialism in education: classical colonialism, internal colonialism, and neo-colonialism. Classical colonialism is the traditional form of control that emerged in the colonies. Colonial schools were created to give support the colonial power, not to fulfil the needs of the local population or the colony. They taught the values and religions of the empire and served to increase the control of the colonists over the native population. Local people were educated to improve the dialogue between the indigenous population and the empire. Internal colonialism is the domination of a "nation" (defined geographically, linguistically, or culturally) within the national borders of another nation-state by another group or groups. Some of these dominated "nations" may at one time have been independent. But they are not at this time independent. Neo-colonialism perpetuates the old and unwelcome colonial powers. Nations involved in neo-colonial relationships have formally become independent, but as they continue to depend strongly on the support of the industrialised nations, the notion of independence is an illusion. The state only

appears outwardly independent. In reality, its economic, political systems and policies are directed from the outside (Daniel, 1975, p.25).

Education is one essential element of the neo-colonial structure. It helps to maintain and to some extent to perpetuate colonial links. This is especially so as the result of the accelerated developments in science and technology in developed nations and the further lagging behind in the same fields in developing countries, particularly because of the shortage of scientists and technicians. This leads to the present international educational equation in which certain institutional and intellectual “centres” give direction, provide models, produce research, and in general function as the pinnacles of the academic system. At the opposite end of the spectrum are universities that are peripheral in the sense that they copy development from abroad, produce little that is original, are generally not at the frontiers of knowledge. Educational institutions located in developing countries are strongly dependent on the institutions located in the centres (Altbach, 1981, p.602).

Another critical factor in understanding current international networking among universities is, as noted above, the historical roots of the University in nearly all parts of the world today. Elements of universities’ long historical traditions directly affect global higher education and relations among academic institutions internationally. The German research university model and the American “multiversity” are among the most powerful academic influences worldwide of the past two centuries (Ben-David and Zloczower, 1962). The major expansion of universities from their European and North American heartland occurred from the mid-19th century to the present time, mainly through colonialism (Ashby, 1964). Countries that escaped colonial domination and that established universities during this period adopted Western models, in some cases jettisoning indigenous institutions, as exemplified in China, Japan and Thailand (Altbach and Selvaratnam, 1989). The most widely adapted contemporary American university system is based on an amalgam of elements—the English collegiate model, the German research concept, and the American tradition linking the university to society in terms of teaching, service and research (Altbach, 2001a). Academic systems in other countries have similarly evolved over time, and have all incorporated Western models and practices.

One legacy of this historical context is the language of instruction and research. English continues to dominate as the language of scientific communication worldwide. Many non-English speaking countries have instituted English as a key language of instruction. In a growing trend, some programs now allow studies in English in China and elsewhere. As the main language for the Internet, the status of the English language has been strengthened even further. Major international websites operate in English, and a significant proportion of scientific communication takes place in English (Yang, 2002). Since language involves the dominance of ideas, not simply a tool of communication, this affects the content of curriculum and the form and substance of methodologies, approaches to science, and scholarly publication. The power of English impacts the role of indigenous languages in the developing world, and forms part of the cultural and political environment of international education.

One contemporary contextual factor is the commercialisation of higher education in a context of globalisation. There has been a deepening of the shift from Keynesianism to neo-liberalism. Strong market forces and the ideas of corporate management have

affected the way universities operate worldwide (Slaughter and Leslie, 1997). It is not that universities must do the same with fewer resources but must do different things and in different ways (Schugurensky, 2003, p.296). Market forces affect higher education as never before, and this factor must be taken into account when considering international exchanges among universities. At the heart of this change is the shift in thinking about higher education from its identity as a “public good” to that of a “private good.” Increasingly, states think of higher education as a private good that benefits individuals and should be paid for by them rather than as a “public good” that benefits society and therefore is public responsibility. The imposition of tuition and fees, the growth of the private sector, and the privatisation of public higher education comprise elements of this trend. The commercialisation of higher education and the growing focus on market concerns affect both domestic and international higher education policy (Kirp, 2003).

The commodification of education seems to be the order of the day. In most English-speaking countries, in many parts of Europe, in Latin-America and Southeast Asia, the free market philosophy has entered the educational sphere in a big way. Market relevance is becoming the key orientating criterion for the selection of discourses, their relation to each other, their forms and their research (Bernstein, 1996). Privatisation is increasingly seen as the solution to the problems and failings of public education. Within current policy discourse, the disciplines of competition and profit are taken to provide an effective and efficient alternative to bureau-professional regimes of deliberation and procedure which have organised and delivered public education in most developed and developing countries over the last 50-100 years. ‘The private’ is idealised and romanticised, while the bureau-professional regime of public welfare provision is consistently and unthinkingly demonised (Ball, 2005).

This movement has profound implications. Its impact is particularly damaging to education in countries with a substantial population of poor people. Evidence for this can be found everywhere in China, demonstrating how serious these issues are and their detrimental social effects especially in developing countries due to the strikingly different social cultural traditions from those of developed nations and the lack of relevant infrastructure required by the commodification of education to operate appropriately. For example, The Breton Woods institutions have always included in their advice package to Nigeria the need to reduce government overheads by making Nigerians pay for their education. They suggest that the introduction of market forces into education will raise the performance of the education system. The premise, however, has been based on faith rather than hard facts. After a decade of school reform initiatives informed by the faith, increasing empirical studies suggest those policies have a stratifying effect, by social class and by ethnicity, even when they are explicitly designed to remedy inequality (Fuller *et al.*, 1996; Whitty *et al.*, 1998).

Reflecting the new philosophy and rapidly growing enrolments, academic systems face financial pressures, and must themselves generate some of their revenues. Increased tuition and fees, the sale of academic products, and other income-generating schemes have been part of the privatisation of public universities. The state provides a declining share of the academic budget, and many institutions become responsible for generating their own operating funds. Universities look to students as a major source of revenue. International students become an attractive revenue source. Meanwhile, private higher education is expanding rapidly. Higher education institutions often focus too much on

earning a profit for owners and investors, offering a narrow and specialised curriculum for meeting vocational qualifications without providing general education or serving the broader public purposes of traditional universities, something Altbach (2001b) called “pseudo universities.” Most of the new private institutions have little interest in international programs or activities except as they might increase revenues. Consequently, the varied international components of higher education are becoming increasingly commercialised (Garnier, 2004; de Wit, 2002).

Looking at the landscape of international higher education from another perspective, the contemporary academic world is becoming more multi-polarised. A critical mass of non-Western scholarship is emerging, and beginning to force a reconsideration of traditional concepts and theories. The latest work in research fields is done at many more centres of scholarship than before. The achievements in some Asian countries such as China and India are especially impressive. For example, Chinese science has come into its own in a way that few believed would be possible. In the 1970s, China ranked 34th in the number of scientific articles cited internationally. Today it ranks 3rd. China’s international ranking in terms of the number of scientific essays published increased from 38th in 1979, to 23rd in 1982, to 15th in 1989, and 5th in 2003 (Li, 2005, pp.3 and 66).

A BRIEF TRAJECTORY OF CHINA’S INTERNATIONAL NETWORKING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

As Knight and de Wit (1995) correctly detect, in spite of a few recent studies (see, for example, Welch, 1997; Welch and Denman, 1997), little research has been done on the historical roots of the present wave of internationalisation of higher education. This is even more the case in China. It is, however, important to link the generally acknowledged focus on internationalisation of education in today’s world to the original roots of the university, and to place the present developments in an historical perspective.

China’s history as an ancient educational centre in the region, if not the world (Welch and Denman, 1997, p.14) dates the internationalisation of higher education back to Confucius (551-479 BCE), paralleled by a long history of educational exchange. However, modern Chinese higher education, similar to that in other non-Western countries, started with the introduction of elements of a Western higher education system. In this process, collaborations and fusions have long existed between this introduced Western culture and scholarship, and indigenous Chinese cultural values and educational traditions.

From the late *Qing* dynasty, internationalisation gradually occurred at the institutional level through various cultural reforms and revolutions. Nonetheless, the question of how to treat foreign cultures properly, and how to manage the relationship between foreign and traditional cultures, is still debated in Chinese academic circles. Indeed, conflicts between indigenous and Western cultures have been a long-standing common problem in non-Western societies (Carnoy, 1976; Arnove, 1980; Altbach and Kelly, 1982; Branson and Miller, 1992), especially in those countries with long and rich cultural traditions.

Similar to cultural debates, the introduction of modern Western higher education was intermittent, although deepening gradually overall. Once China’s defences were broken in the 1840s (Hsu, 1990), it became impossible to contain Western science and technology. The ‘Self-Strengthening’ Movement’s *Ti-Yong* formula (essential Chinese learning, married to Western science and technology) dominated higher education,

requiring introduction of foreign technology on the one hand and retention of the traditional cultural spirit on the other. Thus while many engineering schools were established, no teaching of Western philosophy and culture initially occurred in institutions of higher learning. After the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895, some Chinese began to realise that China lagged behind not only in technology but also in culture and education. The debate on whether China needed to be substantially westernised emerged, the classics were abolished, and the whole higher education system and its philosophical underpinnings began to reflect Western influences. Tensions between Chinese traditions and Western influences deepened and broadened in the first half of the 20th century (Hayhoe 1996).

After the founding of the People's Republic of China, in the context of the Cold War, educational exchanges between the two blocs were prohibited. Internationalisation was confined to the eastern bloc, with a special focus on the former Soviet Union. Historical statistics demonstrated that from 1949 to 1966, 77 higher education delegations and 325 people visited other countries. China sent 10,670 students abroad numbering roughly 600 per annum (Ji, 1994, p.321). The vast majority of these visits were to the former Soviet Union and East European countries.

For a decade, during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) China's education was totally separated from other parts of the world, having no way to internationalise (Yu, 1994, p.86). Only after China adopted the 'Open Door' policy in 1979 did the internationalisation of higher education become a real prospect. In fact, international exchange in China's higher education restarted immediately after the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee in December 1978, which decided to both send students to study abroad, and host some foreign students. However, a good understanding of international exchange in higher education did not occur until December 1983 when Deng Xiaoping called for China's education to be geared toward the world. Higher education internationalisation then became a conscious target, indeed, a development strategy. Its importance was enhanced by the *Decision on the Reform of China's Educational Structure* and further by the *Outline of China's Educational Reform and Development* (CCP Central Committee, 1985, 1993).

Overall, the past two decades have seen several different stages in the internationalisation of higher education in China: the first occurred before 1985 when China resumed its limited contacts with other countries and began to expand its associations internationally once more. A striking feature of this stage was that educational exchange activities began to separate themselves from politics. The Central Government played a key role in seeking exchanges, and also established various programs and controlled overall planning.

Since 1985, as devolution increased in China's higher education system, provincial governments and individual institutions of higher education gained more autonomy in internationalisation activities. Institutional exchanges grew swiftly. Institutes under the then State Education Commission, for example, established institutional cooperative programs with more than 300 universities in about 20 countries by the end of the 1980s. While institutional linkages grew rapidly, central and provincial governments increasingly restricted their role to ensuring quality control and efficiency.

The period from the 1990s to the present may justly be seen as the 'golden time' for internationalising China's higher education. Although it may be still comparatively weak

internationally in terms of scale and extent, China has gradually established a comprehensive program of higher education internationalisation, of which the main components include sending personnel (students, teachers, and administrators) abroad for training; receiving foreign students; exchanging scholars; cooperating in administration and research; holding and participating international conferences; introducing foreign investments into Chinese higher education; and implementing educational assistance to other less developed countries, especially Africa.

SOME MAJOR ISSUES IN THE CURRENT PRACTICE OF INTERNATIONAL NETWORKING IN CHINESE MAINLAND UNIVERSITIES

While it goes without saying that China's universities have achieved significantly in their international reaching out, there have been a number of problems with the current practice. Some of the problems are serious enough to be in the way to a healthy development of China's higher education both at present and more in the future. Based on my longstanding experience within the system and my empirical research in recent years, the following observation can be made:

Soft Power

The concept of soft power was first introduced by the Harvard University political scientist Joseph S. Nye (1990), who borrowed what Peter Bachrach and Morton Baratz (1963) called the "second face of power." Soft power is the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments. It arises from the attractiveness of a country's culture, political ideals, and policies. It uses a different type of currency to engender cooperation. The soft power of a country rests primarily on three resources: its culture, its political values, and its foreign policies (Nye, 2004).

Universities can develop their own soft power, such as enrolled international students, foreign scholars in-residence, and academic and scientific exchange, that may reinforce official foreign policy goals. As the former U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell has said, "I can think of no more valuable asset to our country than the friendship of future world leaders who have been educated here." International students usually return home with a greater appreciation of their host countries' values and institutions, and, as expressed in a report by an international education group, "The millions of people who have studied in the United States over the years constitute a remarkable reservoir of goodwill for our country. Many of these former students eventually wind up in positions where they can affect policy outcomes that are important to their host countries.

During the era of the Cold War, the ideological, political, and economic power struggle between the United States and Soviet Union dominated much of international higher education relations. Industrialised nations viewed higher education as another battleground for the "hearts and minds" in the world - particularly in the Third World. Assistance programs, scholarships, the translation and reprinting of books, the provision of foreign aid, and other initiatives were all seen as part of Cold War political strategies.

While the situation has significantly changed, such a legacy of the politics of the Cold War lingers on. Politics remains essential to international academic relations. National interests and agendas, on all sides, remain involved in academic cooperation. The many government-sponsored scholarship programs that provide opportunities for international study often combine elements of altruism and national interest. Australia's Colombo Plan

scholarship program, Germany's Deutsch Akademische Austauschdienst (DAAD) and the German Marshall Fund, the Japan Foundation for the Promotion of Science international programs, America's Fulbright programs, Humphrey scholarships, and others are all examples.

As Nye (2004, p. 89) points out, China has already loomed as a giant of Asia, and even of the world. There are increasing signs of the expansion of China's soft power resources. In 2000, the Chinese novelist Gao Xingjian won China's first Nobel Prize for literature. The Chinese film *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* became the highest-grossing non-English-language film. Yao Ming, the Chinese star of the National Basketball Association's Houston Rockets, could become another Michael Jordan, and China is set to host the 2008 Summer Olympics. China's investment in manned space flight also helps to increase its prestige and attraction. Large expatriate communities in the United States, 2.4 million Chinese, have increased interest in their home country among Americans.

The realm of higher education is an important area of Chinese soft power. Training future generations of intellectuals, technicians and political elites from other nations is a subtle but very significant form of soft power. This was the role of Great Britain as its imperial zenith and of the United States even since the 1950s, and now China increasingly fills this role. During the 2003 academic year, there were 77,628 foreign students studying for advanced degrees in China's universities, approximately 80 percent of which came from other Asian countries. South Korea sent by far the largest number of these students (35,363), while Japan sent 12,765, Vietnam 3,487, Indonesia 2,563, Thailand 1,554, and Nepal 1,199. During that same year there were 3,693 students from the United States. As China rises, international student numbers soar. According to the Ministry of Education, a total of 265,090 foreign students from 194 countries were studying in China's 620 universities, research institutes and educational institutions in 2010 (Wang, 2011). The precise influence that this training will have on future generations of Asian elites is difficult to predict, but these individuals will certainly be sensitised to Chinese viewpoints and interests, and they will have knowledge of the Chinese language, society, culture, history, and politics (Shambaugh, 2005).

The soft power concept has been enthusiastically taken up by the Chinese government (Starr, 2009). In October 2007, Chinese President Hu Jintao called for enhancing the soft power of Chinese culture at the Seventeenth National Congress of the Communist Party (Xinhua News Agency, 2007). However, how such an intension has been translated into practices remains highly questionable, as evidenced by the Confucius Institutes initiative (Yang, 2010). From the Ministry of Education to individual institutions of higher education, there has been a shortage of clear understanding of the strategic role played by universities in the projection and enhancement of soft power. In an age of information, "winning hearts and minds" still composes an important part of the international higher education equation. Commensurate with its recent rise of economic and political power, China needs to enhance its concurrent soft power. Educational exchange and cooperation fall squarely under the rubric of "soft power." Governmental tensions ebb and flow but connections between institutions of higher education are a steady and civilising influence. In terms of soft power resources, China is rich especially in its history and culture, and its higher education has a particularly important role to play. This requires

well-thought, long-term planning. Such careful thinking has been largely absent in the international reaching-out of Chinese mainland universities.

China's Unique Cultural Contribution to the World Community

China has much to contribute to the world community, especially culturally. This has become more important at the moment when the human society is confronted with serious issues of sustainable development, and cultural conflicts. Higher education has a critical role to play here. This is also the level of height that China's higher education should aim at in its international exchange and cooperation. In this regard, it is particularly well positioned (Yang, 2005; 2006), as Confucianism responds to a range of problems and issues facing Western societies with increasing subtlety and persuasiveness (Tu, 1998, pp.13-14). There is a possibility of a deep-level foundation for creative thinking about a global human future that brings together aspects of the Chinese and Western philosophical heritages. This is an approach to human persons, knowledge and democratic development that is fundamentally different from those of Enlightenment thought (Hall and Ames, 1999, p.12), the neo-realism of Samuel Huntington (1993) and rights-based liberalism (Hayhoe, 2005).

While whether or not Confucianism might well become the salvation of the social sciences as Neville (2000, p.12) suggests remains to be seen, such ideas open up hopes for genuine and profound forms of understanding and cooperation that embrace the spiritual, cultural, intellectual, and scientific aspects of knowledge and human life. They could enable us to move beyond the concepts of deterrence and the balance of power in neo-realism, and the overriding emphasis on a free market in neo-liberalism, into a dialogue over how to create a better world that is open to cultural and epistemological inputs from diverse regions and civilisations (Hayhoe, 2005).

They help to understand how Chinese culture and Chinese epistemological traditions are beginning to have an impact on the mainstream thought and thus contribute more broadly to global debates about the future of the human community. Such understanding facilitates a reassessment of the moral and spiritual responsibility of the university as a knowledge institution (Wilshire, 1990; Schwehn, 1993), and further contributes to readdressing the under-theorised university (Marginson, 2006). A close scrutiny reveals that China's current bid for world-class universities has not aimed high enough to work towards such goals. With such a shortage, it would not be exaggerating to say that future Chinese world-class universities would lack substance.

The American Model

The Western (European-American) model has been influencing the direction of change in Chinese institutions of higher learning. Chinese universities are looking to their American for standards. Regardless what kind of different status they have within the Chinese system, Chinese institutions of higher education are all looking at the most prestigious American elite universities for policy innovation and solutions to their development problems. Factors contributing to this are many. One is the sources of reform ideas advocated by international lenders such as the World Bank, and multinational organisations including the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), and the Organisation for European Cooperation and Development (OECD). China's entry into the World Trade Organisation (WTO) ensures

that international rather than traditional domestic approaches to higher education will be used much further.

Shifting from the previous reliance on Soviet experience, changes made since the open and reform policy was implemented always reflect the acceptance of Western policies and practices, often without full understanding of the consequences of these changes. Today's university reforms in China are thus a combination of externally imposed standards forcing China to adopt international (usually Western, and often American) modes of education and administration, as well as voluntary and even enthusiastically acceptance of foreign standards of academic excellence. Chinese universities are using international models for reform. Many of them derived specifically from the American experience gained through educational exchange. The wholesale adoption of U.S. plans may not be totally appropriate for a country with a very different history and cultural traditions. At a minimum, Chinese universities could benefit from studying the problems that have plagued American universities, learning from the examples of what not to do in the effort to reform China's higher education institutions (Mohrman, 2006).

There is an urgent need for critical examination of the long-term consequences of grafting American academic practices onto a Chinese base. The American higher education is to serve the American society based on its historical and cultural traditions. Higher education development is deeply rooted in culture and societal needs. One might question whether or not the Chinese higher education is happy to allow China's universities to adopt the highly individualistic ethos that characterises American institutions, together with all the institutional frustrations that that ethos has entailed. China's higher education policy makers and practitioners need to ask what will distinguish a Chinese world-class university from its international peers once China does have some universities with such a status.

With strikingly different cultural values and heritages, the Chinese need to look at knowledge and its production outside China more critically. Will Chinese academic continue to look outside their borders for standards of excellence, implying that Western educational norms are superior and that Chinese universities remain inferior? This links to the longstanding issue in Chinese education that indigenous Chinese wisdom and the imported Western knowledge have never been on an equal footing. It reminds us that real knowledge is only produced by some particular countries in a particular way (Appadurai, 2001). The current situation in China warns us that the Western educational system and structures continue to define education for the rest of the world, and by extension, they define what knowledge is and who may claim competence in it.

Higher education in China is vigorously developing to be a significant global player. While some aspects of these developments have received research attention, many have been undertheorised in the literature. The theorisation of dynamic higher education development in China needs to be more critical of the theories developed elsewhere especially in the Anglo-American context. The Chinese case may challenge existing theories. Some higher education developments in China require fundamentally new approaches to theorisation that may contribute to the development of broader theories in higher education. The development in China can provide a useful site for the development of theory and empirical understanding in contemporary higher education. There is a need to problematise the situatedness and specificity of influential theories of

higher education development, and to offer some constructive suggestions for an intellectual agenda for developing new theories in higher education.

END REMARKS

There are several reasons why China's leading universities have become the partners of choice for so many of the world's most distinguished universities: the large size of China's population, its significant role on the world stage, and its rapidly growing economy. But an essential ingredient is China's increasing investment in its top universities and the leadership's recognition that outstanding universities can be engines of economic growth. At a time when too many Western countries are reducing investment in their flagship universities and when Japan seems disinclined to increase the scientific capacity of its greatest institutions of higher education, the leaders of China are wise to recognise that substantial investment in their country's universities is conducive toward future economic and cultural advancement.

China's drive to build world-class universities should go beyond its current approach to international exchange and cooperation, featured especially by seeking joint-ventures or acquiring more star professors from overseas. Instead, Chinese universities should be aware of both the strengths and the weaknesses of the American system, and work to overcome its enduring obstacles such as the weakness of liberal arts education and bureaucratic power over academic freedom. China should also try to avoid the 'problems that have plagued the American educational system' (Mohrman, 2006), as it adopts the American model of education. While becoming "world-class," Chinese universities must develop a new sense of distinctive "Chineseness" that distinguishes themselves from others, both at home and abroad.

Few decisions of the 20th century have had as profound an impact on the 21st century world as Deng Xiaoping's announcement of the Open Door Policy in 1978. Deng was prophetically ambitious to bridge minds by sending Chinese students to study overseas and by encouraging Chinese universities to exchange and cooperate with their counterparts worldwide. Nearly three decades later, the same mixture of vision and boldness is required. For all of us working on university campus as academic and administrative staff, ambition is also needed to support academic partnerships that create knowledge and address the crucial issues facing the global community. It is our responsibility to ensure that the most talented young people are also the most outward-looking ones, with a much-needed intercultural knowledge and perspective in the increasingly shrinking world. To achieve this, those working within higher education need to build up their own innovative perspective first, to aim high, and to think globally and act locally.

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