

# 中国高等教育国际化

## The Internationalization of Chinese Higher Education

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The expansion of higher education in China over the past four decades has outstripped any comparable example in the world. Zhong Yang captures the dynamic of this development appropriately:

In order to accelerate the development of education, in 1998 the Ministry of Education developed The Plan for Revitalizing Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. One of the specific goals is to extend senior high school education in urban and advanced areas, and to enlarge higher education's scale. The plan called for the gross enrolment rate in institutions of higher learning to reach 15% by the year 2010. This goal was reached in 2002, eight years ahead of schedule. In 2004, the rate rose to 19% and in 2007, it rose to 23%, with an aggregate higher education student population of 18 million (Chen 2007). In Shanghai, the rate was nearly 50%. In Jilin Province, which is a much less developed region, the rate rose to 23%. The national average rate in 1997 was 9.7%. Within five years, higher education in China had reached the initial stage of mass higher education (Zhong, 2011).

The rapidity and scope of this extraordinary expansion has overshadowed the various dimensions of internationalization of Chinese higher education. Rui Yang provides a useful background by placing them in the overall context of social and economic policy changes in China over the past four and a half decades. He points out, importantly, that from the late 1970s onward, China struggled to align higher education with other dramatic changes in society. These efforts were very much

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motivated by the desire to realize the “Four Modernizations” - industry, agriculture, science and technology - through economic reform (Yang, 2014).

As China modernized its higher education, despite the confusion in the early stages, the country made considerable use of a “private sector” hybrid structure known as the *minban* (Mok, 2009). Overall, the effort could fit Jane Knight’s definition of internationalization as “the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions, or delivery of higher education” (2008). As Rui argues, this understanding of internationalization was best defined as “higher education based on Western experiences.” What is lacking is an appropriate combination of the “international” and the “local,” particularly if one takes into account that throughout Chinese history there has been a continuous “fostering of unique cultural heritages” for thousands of years. Since the late Qing dynasty, however, the internationalization of higher education was viewed as part of China’s “salvation movement” - to learn Western knowledge and technology to make China stronger.

This creates the current context within which one can observe the major features of China’s strategy for the internationalization of its higher education experiences. These features focus on a broad array of engagements with the “outside” world — especially Western societies. This is most marked by China’s embrace of English, which is now required throughout the education system. As a result, China has become home to more English speakers than any other country in the world.

The overall accelerated growth of global trade and economic expansion over the past two decades has also had an impact on China’s education internationalization strategy. Within this framework, Chinese scholars and students have little difficulty communicating with international scholars and they continue to extend their engagements. One instance has been the vast increase in peer-reviewed papers, which has risen 64-fold over the past 30 years. One can see an interesting and quite deliberate focus on demonstrating a commitment to internationalization within academic publishing which is especially significant in the “hard” sciences, where the growth has been extraordinary. However, this is far less prominent in the social sciences and humanities (thereby suggesting the relative importance which the two approaches are perceived to have for society as a whole and the economy in particular). In 2010, China had 121,500 scientific publications listed by the Science Citation Index, of which only 2.41 percent were in social sciences.

In some regards, China’s formal efforts to promote internationalization in higher education may be regarded as either peculiar or paradoxical. While, on the one

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hand, China welcomes the provision of higher education institutions from foreign countries (especially from highly reputable institutions); on the other hand, governmental regulations insist on a direct measure of control that is normally absent in such arrangements in other countries. This is demonstrated, for example, by the fact that individual Chinese higher education institutions that contract with foreign partners must have equal measures of direct Chinese governance — causing potential clashes between a formal authoritarian state structure and the more universal higher education values of open inquiry.

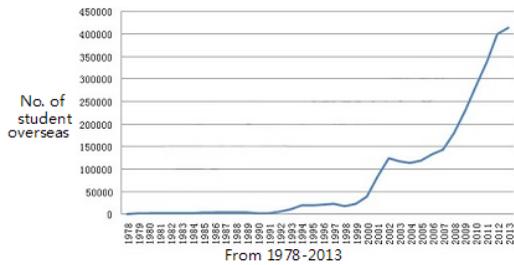
In general, while flagship universities and some top regional specialized institutions are well integrated with respect to their internationalization and “internal differentiation,” this is much less evident in regional institutions, which continue to display a structure and culture that is significantly less “integrated” in whatever the pretense of their international missions may be. One should, however, add that the so-called 211 and 985 “world-class” universities, identified by the Ministry of Education, receive significant additional funding intended largely to enhance their international standing. These universities have overall a much higher international reputation than those that must operate outside these programs (Holsinger and Jacob, 2008).

Perhaps the most prominent and direct change in the effort to develop internationalization in recent years is a shift in how China views and affects student populations, moving from an initial and continued emphasis on “sending out” students for cross-border education to actively recruiting incoming cross-border students. This movement has occurred in tandem with China’s continued emphasis on developing outreach through the establishment of Confucius Institutes throughout the world.

The following exemplars provide substance to the points made above.

### **1. China’s internationalization of higher education is on a fast track.**

Over the past 35 years (from 1978 to 2013), 3,058,600 Chinese students have studied overseas, which ranks China above all other countries in the world. In 2013 alone, 413,900 students studied overseas (Chinese Ministry of Education of China, 2013). As China, with the largest population in the world at over 1.3 billion people, has moved into the second place in the world in terms of the size of its economy, the higher education sector has grown apace. As one of the USA’s largest trading partners, the cross-border exchange of students has played a significant role.



### 3,058,600 Chinese students overseas in 35 years

If one views this development in China as a macro shift from “importing” to “exporting,” a significant example has been the proliferation of Chinese Confucius Institutes (CCI) which by 2014 numbered 475, with the existence of an additional 851 Confucius Classrooms (CC) located in 126 countries worldwide (Meng Zhaoli, 2014-12-08). Over the past 10 years, approximately 3.5 million students have registered for one or another program in these facilities. Whereas CCI’s charter is to promote Chinese language and culture abroad, one clear additional outcome is to contribute overall to the internationalization of Chinese education as both an import and export phenomenon. For the latter to occur, familiarity with Mandarin is essential, and the combination of CCI and CC facilities has contributed to the growing total of approximately 100 million Mandarin learners around the world.



### Global Distribution of Chinese Confucius Institutes (CCI)

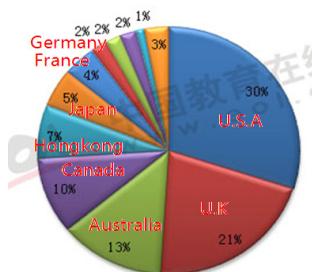
While many view the growth of CCIs as a bridge to internationalization and as a contribution to the enhancement of mutual understanding and friendship among all the people, they have also recently served as a source of negative critique focused on what is viewed as the possible hegemonic character of their instruction (Painter 2014).

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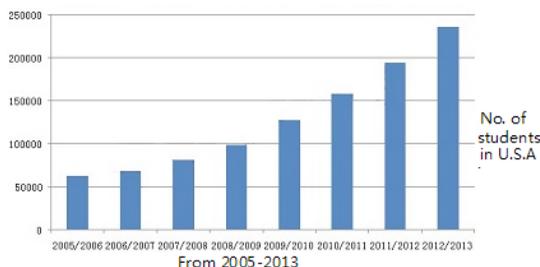
## 2. The USA is the most favored country destination for Chinese students.

The largest number of Chinese cross-border students study in the USA (30 percent), compared with the U.K. (21 percent), Australia (13 percent), Canada (10 percent) and all other countries (26 percent). The USA has always been the number one receiving country for Chinese cross-border students for the last 35 years (Chinese Ministry of Education, 2013).

Correspondingly, China has been the largest country for international students from the USA over the past five years. The number of Chinese students going to the USA has continuously risen from 62,582 in the academic year 2005/2006 to 235,597 in 2012/13 (Opening Report from the USA, 2014), which was a new record. In percentage terms, the number of Chinese students studying in the U.S. has grown nearly 300 percent in eight years.



Structure of Chinese students overseas



Growth of Chinese students in USA

## 3. Recent changes in higher education relations between China and the USA

In November 2014, U.S. President Barack Obama at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meeting held in China announced an extension of visa numbers for Chinese students and visitors: “There were 1.8 million Chinese visitors to the US last year, contributing US\$ 21 billion to the economy and supporting more than 100,000 jobs...” (C.N. Rencai, 2014-11-13). Greater visa opportunities suggest a continued increase in the numbers of students coming to the USA for study.

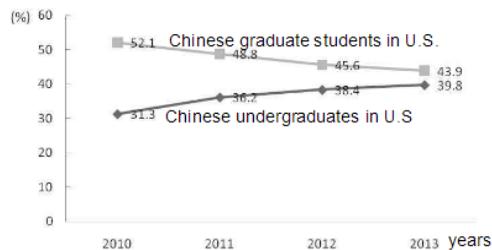
The degrees sought by Chinese students studying abroad continue to change. Those seeking the master’s degree have increased two-fold during the period 2006-2013, while those seeking bachelor degrees have increased almost ten-fold,

with the numbers of high school students far more (Lang Xianping, 2014-07-21). As expected, younger students will come to the USA for high school and bachelor's degrees, which suggests they will stay much longer and make a greater financial contribution to the U.S. economy.



Trends of Chinese Students in the USA

In recent years, the number of younger students studying abroad has speeded up, the rapid growth coming from those seeking undergraduate and high school degrees, while the number of Chinese graduate students has decreased.



Trends of Chinese graduate and undergraduates in the USA 2010-2013 (CCG, 2014)

#### 4. The shape, speed and content of internationalization of higher education in China is dependent on a number of factors, including:

**(1) Commitment of the National Government:** Chinese President Xi Jinping has called for more government activities to enhance talent acquisition to achieve national rejuvenation. In June 2014, the Chinese State Council issued a new policy of “Accelerating the Development of Modern Vocational Education,” which again strengthens the “going out and bringing in” of international education methods (Chinese State Council, 2014-6-22).

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**(2) Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) motivation:** The number of international students and teachers and the scope of institutional cooperation with foreign universities are important indicators in national quality evaluations of Chinese HEIs, especially those included as “985 key universities,” “211 universities” and “flagship universities,” which have eagerly sought such status in order to be considered “world-class” universities of excellent quality.

**(3) Student interest:** Increasing numbers of students desire to go abroad for study, especially since President Obama’s recent announcements have made the process seem less bureaucratic and more open.

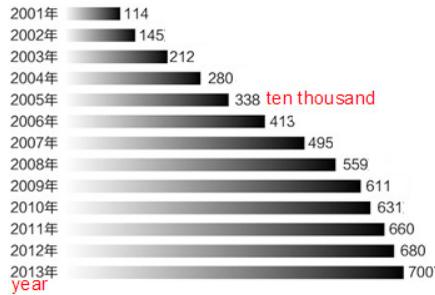
### **5. Learning English in China: a huge market in need of quality assurance.**

The pervasiveness of the English language has become a measure of integration into the mainstream of the world system, and is also viewed as a preferred middle class attribute.

Consequently the “industry” for English Language instruction is considerable. The current numbers of Chinese undergraduate students is the largest in the world: 25,365,647 in 2012 (Chinese Ministry of Education, 2013). The number of Chinese students seeking master’s degrees both within and outside China is 15 times that of 10 years ago. For over 30 years, it has been compulsory for both graduate and undergraduate students in Chinese higher education to take only one foreign language: English. For Chinese students, English is required to enroll in those institutions designated as first class universities for BA/BS MA/MS and PhD degrees and to gain preference for government scholarships. For higher education staff, English familiarity is essential to be included in the processes of international engagement. In reality English language familiarity is a necessary requirement to get a job with foreign companies, to engage in white-collar professions, and to obtain higher salaries and social positions.

Those who wish to study abroad must pass the English exam. Although Chinese students begin to learn English from elementary school, with further involvement over the next ten years, their overall proficiency is poor. Therefore there has been a gigantic additional market in improving language quality, often with provision coming from the private sector.

In China, over 7,000,000 university students, 50,000,000 middle school students and numerous pupils from primary school and kindergarten painfully but continuously learn English. China has 600,000 fully paid English teachers,



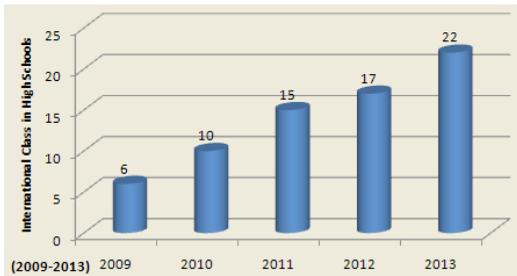
### Chinese Graduates from 2001-2013 (CCG, 2014)

supplemented by countless profitable language training centers and home tutors that also offer English instruction. Data show that the money spent on English textbooks, training centers, exams (TOEFL, IELTS, GRE, GMAT), English teachers and others forms of instruction amounts to over ten billion RMB each year. Li Lanqing, a former Deputy Prime Minister, has remarked on the shortcomings of this process: “English teaching and learning in China is really time-consuming and money-burning with low efficiency” (Liu Ziqian, 2014-05-23).

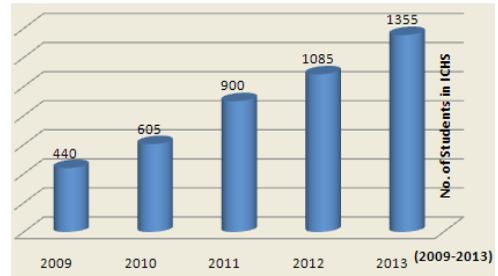
#### **6. Chinese high school students getting ready for bachelor’s degrees abroad: International Class in High School (ICHS).**

A relatively new phenomenon is the increase in the numbers of middle school students who are going abroad to study. For example, in the 2005-2006 school year, only 65 middle school students attended American private high schools, but by 2012-2013, the number had increased to 23,795. The primary motivation behind this startling growth appears to be the increasing numbers of students and parents who seek to acquire international education as early as possible, thereby enhancing their chances in the higher education selection competition. This activity has resulted in the rapid emergence of International Class in High Schools (ICHS). These students will not attend Gaokao (the national exam for entering into Chinese HEIs), given that their only goal is to be accepted at a foreign university for bachelor’s degrees. The six ICHSs in Beijing City in 2009 have grown to 22, established by 17 separate public high schools (CCG, 2014).

The 22 ICHSs in Beijing issue both a “Graduation Certificate of Beijing Ordinary High School” and a “Foreign Graduation Certificate.” Only 32 percent of them can be doubly awarded from both China and international schools. But both parents and students continue to desire a double certificate.



Numbers of ICHSs (2009-2013)



Numbers of Students in ICHS (2009-2013)

## 7. Distribution of Chinese students in the USA by choice of major

In the 2012-2013 academic year, the program distribution of Chinese students in USA professions shows a preference for business management, engineering, mathematics and computer science as the top three programs, accounting being the largest proportion. Among them are three types: (1) 29 percent of Chinese students study business management, the percentage being much higher than that of other majors; (2) engineering ranks second, the proportion being 19.2 percent of the total number; and (3) 11.20 percent of the students study mathematics and computer science (Opening Report from the USA, 2014).



Chinese Students in the USA by Choice of Major

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## 8. Internationalization within Chinese universities measured for first time

Three rankings have emerged to measure the phenomenon of the “China University Internationalization Level”: (1) the Higher Education Research Institute at Southwest Jiaotong University; (2) the Ai Ruishen Alumni Association in China; and (3) the Higher Education Research Institute of Zhejiang University. Jiaotong’s top ten in the ranking were Tsinghua University, Beijing University, Fudan University, Zhejiang University and others; while the top ten of Alumni Association and Southwest Jiaotong University are different. This discrepancy occurs from the use of different indicators. At the present time the validity and usefulness of such rankings is limited within the realm of public acceptance for multiple reasons including accountability, choice of indicators, reliability of statistical data and others.

### Conclusion

As the foregoing makes clear, there is no question that the scope and rapidity of higher education development in China over the past three-plus decades have been unprecedented. There is also little question that the rate and scope of internationalization of Chinese higher education will also be unprecedented. However, it is an accepted rule of thumb in virtually all higher education quality literature that the rapidity of capacity expansion (for the primary purpose of providing and assuring access) comes at the expense of creating and assuring quality at a high level. Reviews of China’s development of a centralized national program of quality assurance (which completed its first national cycle of QA reviews in 2008) underscore both the ambitious nature of the endeavor and the wide gaps between the quality of the country’s best higher education institutions and the vast bulk of HEIs (Li, 2010). Of equal importance will be the processes through which the outcomes of higher education continue to be evaluated. (China, like many other advanced industrial nations, experiences difficulty in occupational placement of many university graduates.) Overall, a significant challenge for China in the arena of internationalization lies in the long-term consequences of privileging a given set of higher education institutions through the 985 and 211 policies at what may be the expense of the rest of the higher education system. Time alone will determine whether such a determined policy to create “globally competitive universities” produces the distributed effects that may have been hoped for them.

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