



Quality Issues of Joint International Higher Education Programs: Selected Examples from China

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Social and Policy Context

- China's higher education reforms have been lined with those in the economic sector.
- China's education policies are produced by economists to 'meet the needs of a socialist economy.'
- China's bid to enhance its international competitiveness in a globalising world, by importing good practices from overseas universities.

Intended Policy Goals (i)

For the Chinese government, it is a means to rapidly boost the capacity of Chinese universities by accessing the world's most advanced education systems, thereby accelerating the process of human capital building and ultimately economic development.

Intended Policy Goals (ii)

For individual Chinese institutions, they can, by partnering,

- capitalise on the demand for foreign qualifications and/or the shortage of places available at universities;
- be able to offer programs in partnership that they could not provide alone because of their lack of resources, expertise and insufficient prestige to attract students on their own account.

Relevant Policies

- The most important national legislation influencing the emergence of transnational education in China is the *Education Act of the People's Republic of China* issued in 1995
- Based on this Act, two documents concerning transnational education were promulgated and implemented: the *Interim Provisions for Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools* issued by the then State Education Commission on 26 January 1995, and the *Regulations of the People's Republic of China on Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools* issued by the State Council on 1 March 2003

Stipulations of the Regulations

- foreign institutions must partner with Chinese institutions;
- partnerships must not seek profit as their objective;
- no less than half the members of the governing body of the institution must be Chinese citizens and the post of president or the equivalent must be a Chinese citizen residing in China;
- the basic language of instruction should be Chinese;
- tuition fees may not be raised without approval.

Important Features of the 2003 Regulations

- an extension of governmental encouragement from vocational to higher education;
- strongly promoting Chinese universities to cooperate with renowned overseas institutions in launching new academic programs to improve the quality of teaching and learning and to import excellent overseas educational resources to local institutions;
- relaxation of the restrictions on profit making.

Scale of Foreign Activity (i)

- There had been new partnerships annually since 1995;
- In 1995, there were only two programmes that could offer an overseas degree;
- By 2002, the joint programs had spread to China's 28 provinces;
- Their numbers increased to 745, with 169 programs qualified to award overseas (including Hong Kong) degrees by June 2004;
- By June 2004, there had been 668 approved partnerships, with a total of 51,893 students enrolled.

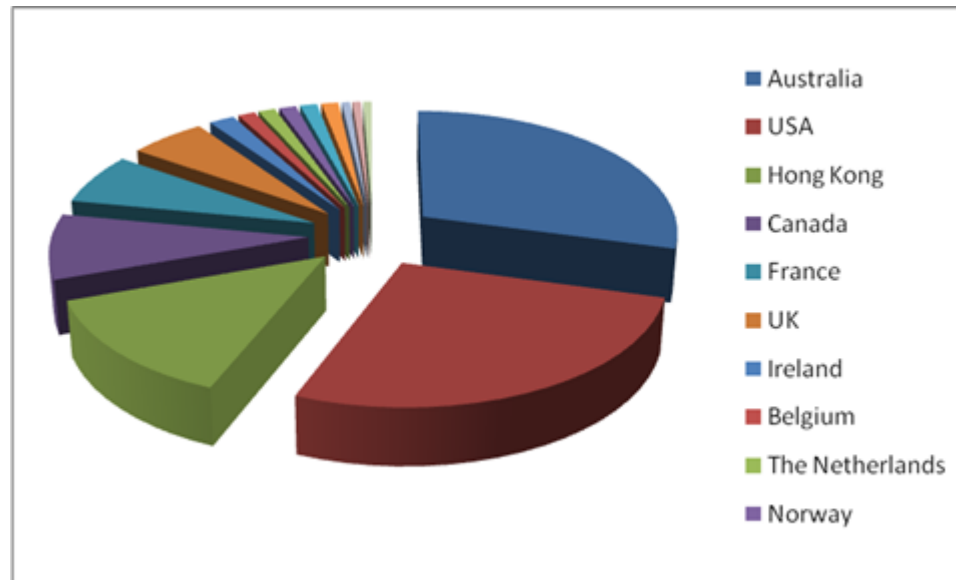
Scale of Foreign Activity (ii)

- No more than 100 of the 1,671 higher education institutions had joint programs with overseas partners in 2004 at undergraduate level and below
- Only about 10,000 (0.5%) of the annual recruitment (4,473,400) were enrolled in joint programs offered by Chinese and overseas partners

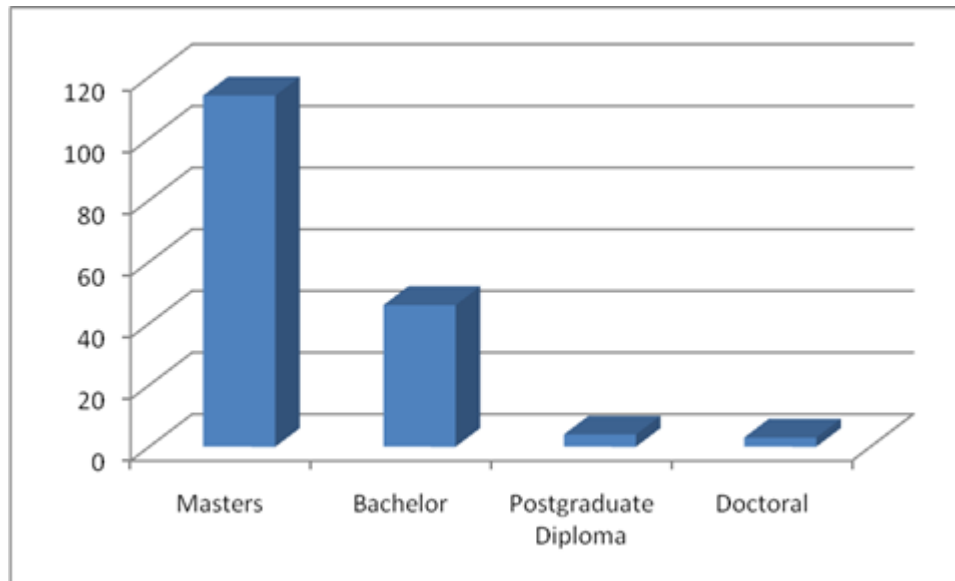
New Partnerships Established, 1995-6.2004

Year	95	96	97	98	99	00	01	02	03	04
No.	2	3	4	7	9	11	22	37	45	24

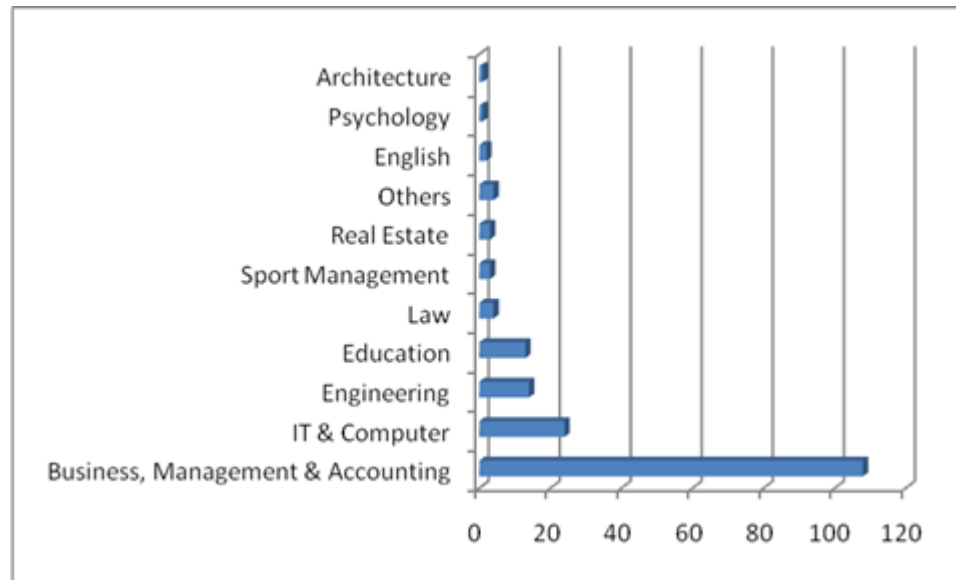
Countries of Origin of Partnership Institutions



Levels of Joint Education Programs



Disciplinary Distribution of Joint Programs

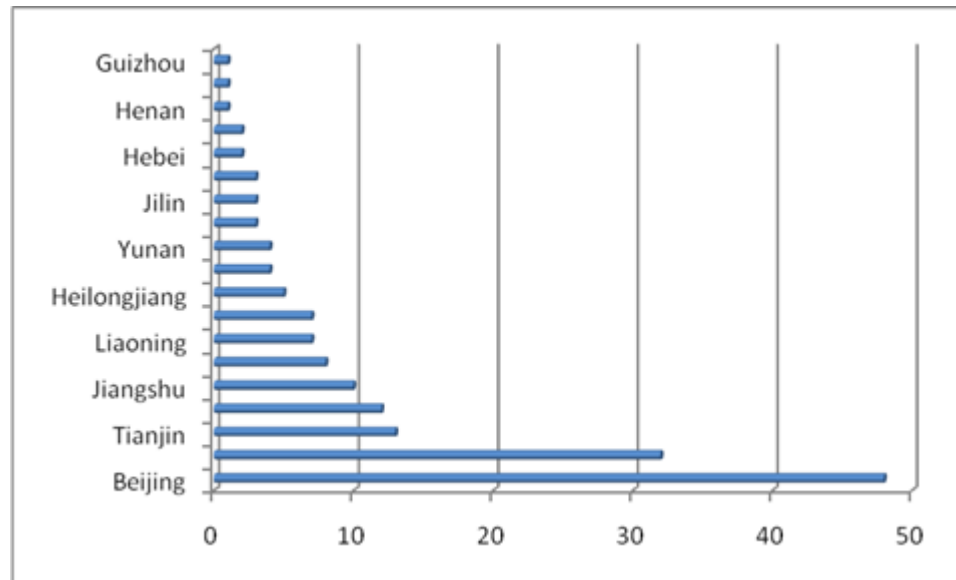


Dominance of Business, Management & Economics

7,549 students in 136 undergraduate programs in 2004, among them

- ❖ 67 (49.3%) economics & management
- ❖ 7 (5.1%) agricultural & medical sciences
- 4,075 (54%) students in economics & management
- 598 (7.9%) students in agricultural and medical sciences

Geographical Distribution of Joint Programs



East-West Imbalances, 2004

- 47 regular higher education institutions, with 32 (68.1%) in the East and 2 (4.3%) in the West
- 47 vocational training institutions, with 35 (74.5%) in the East and 4 (8.5%) in the West
- ❑ 136 undergraduate programs, with 76 (55.9%) in the East and 5 (3.7) in the West
- ❑ 104 vocational training programs, with 82 (78.8%) in the East and 7 (6.7%) in the West
- ❖ 7,549 undergraduate students, with 4,152 (55%) in the East and 479 (6.3%) in the West
- ❖ 4,967 vocational training students, with 3,911 (78.7%) in the East and 279 (5.6%) in the West

Concern 1: Quality Assurance

- Transnational higher education is especially vulnerable to the perils that consumerism creates in higher education.
- Evidences continue to show that transnational provision is in many cases driven by market opportunity and that compromises to quality are widespread (Lieven & Martin, 2006).
- With little international agreement on standards, an unregulated market allows overseas 'for-profit' operations to offer poor quality higher education.

Concern 2: Legal Status

- Foreign higher education activity in China has not been regarded as an integrated part of the Chinese higher education system.
- The Chinese government has not permitted overseas institutions to set up their branch campuses on the mainland to recruit local students and offer teaching programmes.
- China is concerned about its possible loss of educational sovereignty, something that has never stopped perplexing Chinese policy-makers, theorists and partner institutions.

Concern 3: Cultural Appropriateness

- While students come to buy Western education and degrees, studies have shown that students regard curriculum adaptability to their local context as a key aspect (Dunn & Wallace, 2004);
- Many providers continue to advocate the 'global template,' raising the question of what counts as 'scholarship' (Appadurai, 2001)

Concern 4: Public Good or Private Commodity

The approach of Western universities is often described as aggressive or even predatory in developing countries, leading South Africa's Kader Asmal (1999) to ask:

“Are we entering a Darwinian nightmare, when higher education is red in tooth and claw and only the fittest survive?”

Concluding Comments (i)

Chinese government expects transnational joint programs to help improve the quality of China's human resources, upgrade China's educational system, meet the national educational demand, prevent brain drain, and attract foreign capital into education. Such expectations have not been materialised fully.

Concluding Comments (ii)

Internationally joint programs in higher education, as part of the present intensified diversification and marketisation, has challenged China's conventional higher education governance.

Concluding Comments (iii)

Rather than building up new regulatory frameworks to govern the increasingly complex and diversified higher education sector/market, the Chinese government unwisely still places its hope on its state-oriented regime.

Thank You !

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