

East-West Crosscurrents in Higher Education

Xin Xing
Meng Tian *Editors*

Impact on Higher Education Transformation and Leadership Development

Overseas Leadership Development
Programmes for Chinese University
Leaders

 Springer

East-West Crosscurrents in Higher Education

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This book is dedicated to all the Chinese higher education institution leaders who participated in the overseas leadership development programmes.

Foreword by Bailian Huang

Higher education in the Central and Western regions of China is relatively underdeveloped compared to that in the Eastern and Coastal regions. In recent years, China has been striving to combat the problem of higher education inequality across the country. Against this backdrop, the *Overseas Leadership Development Programme for Chinese Higher Education Institution (HEI) Leaders in the Central and Western Regions of China* initiative was launched in 2012. The overseas leadership development programmes were initiated by the Ministry of Education in China and co-funded by the Lee Shau Kee Foundation and the Peihua Foundation in Hong Kong. From 2012 to 2018, a total of 1,452 Chinese HEI leaders from 497 HEIs attended 66 overseas leadership development programmes in Australia, Canada, Finland, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, the U.K., and the U.S. The overseas leadership development programmes witnessed the largest number of Chinese HEI leaders participate in overseas leadership development since 2000. The overseas leadership development programmes were designed to strengthen the leadership capacities of HEI leaders in the Central and Western regions of China. It marks a milestone in the history of China's higher education internationalisation and collaboration and HEI leaders' professional development. One question we need to ask is, what are the impacts of overseas leadership development programmes? In China as well as in other parts of the world, this question has not been satisfactorily answered. To study the impact of overseas leadership development programmes, we have to gain first-hand information from the participants, namely the Chinese HEI leaders who have attended these overseas leadership development programmes. This book details a timely study that closely examines the impact of overseas leadership development programmes from both individual and institutional perspectives. Hence, this book has both theoretical and practical implications.

The book was authored by five Chinese scholars. It is the first book published in English that has an explicit focus on the impact of overseas leadership development programmes on Chinese HEI leaders. The study lasted five years in total. The authors conducted an in-depth follow-up study on Chinese HEI leaders in the Central and Western regions who had participated in overseas leadership development programmes. The book examined the impact in the following ways. First, it covered

a variety of topics, including overseas higher education systems, tenured academics, organisational culture, the relationship between HEIs and society, HEI internationalisation, and HEI presidential leadership. Second, the research participants included Chinese HEI chairmen, presidents, vice chairmen, vice presidents, and those in other equivalent positions. These positions accounted for the majority roles of Chinese HEIs. Third, countries that provided leadership development programmes consisted of Australia, Canada, Finland, the U.K., and the U.S. Fourth, the programme themes included university governance and development, university human resource management and teachers' professional development, pedagogy in HEI and student development, quality assurance of higher education, university research and education for innovation and entrepreneurship, university strategic planning and resource allocation, and the transformation of local universities. Finally, the study covered the leadership development period from 2012 to 2018.

The book fits nicely within the East-West Crosscurrents in Higher Education series by Springer. It focuses on the impact of overseas leadership development programmes on the experience and practices of HEI leaders in the Central and Western regions of China and reflects on the interaction between Chinese and Western higher education practitioners. For higher education scholars and leaders who would like to acquire a more comprehensive understanding of the current development of higher education in the Central and Western regions of China, especially the changes implemented and challenges faced by these Chinese HEI leaders, this book is a must-read. Through this book, readers will learn how Chinese HEI leaders made sense of Eastern and Western educational policies, philosophies, and concepts during and after the overseas leadership development. Readers will witness these HEI leaders' professional growth and the success of their institutional level changes as a result of overseas leadership development. Their reflections on the ideological and structural differences among various higher education systems will also be made evident. In a nutshell, this book provides readers with a wide spectrum of topics, an in-depth analysis, and insightful findings.

Based on *China's Five-year Plan and the 2035 Long-term Goal Outline*, the State Council of China (2021) aims to optimise the distribution of higher education resources and to revitalise higher education in the Central and Western regions. I believe that the key to the revitalisation of higher education in the Central and Western regions of China is human resource. HEI leaders in these regions are responsible for cultivating human resources, and overseas leadership development has been proven to be an effective tool for enhancing knowledge and developing competences. This book encapsulates empirical evidence on how Chinese HEI leaders developed their own knowledge and competences as well as led a community of experts in their HEIs after overseas leadership development. There are many lessons on the innovation and development of HEIs and the modernisation of Chinese HEI governance that can be learned in this book.

There is an old Chinese saying from 诗经 [*The Book of Songs*], “他山之石, 可以攻玉 [use stones from another mountain to polish one's jade]”. This means that criticism from others should be used to correct one's mistakes, and others' experiences and practices should be drawn upon to improve oneself (Termbases,

2021). Readers will encounter fascinating descriptions of these Chinese scholars and their relentless efforts to promote educational equity and build a bridge between Chinese and foreign higher education systems. The year 2022 will mark the 10th anniversary since the first overseas leadership development programme was launched in 2012. The publication of this book is a hallmark of this amazing journey. As a higher education scholar and a key actor in initiating the overseas leadership development programmes in China, I would like to extend my warm congratulations to all the authors. I hope that they will achieve their research aspirations, promote knowledge exchange between Chinese and overseas HEIs, and contribute to the revitalisation of higher education in the Central and Western regions of China.

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Foreword by Yuzhuo Cai

China, which has the largest higher education system and is the biggest producer of scientific articles in the world, is a point of focus with regard to global higher education. As such, China has been considered a priority in many countries' strategies on the internationalisation of higher education, and there has been increasing international research attention on both international higher education cooperation with China and Chinese higher education from international comparative perspectives. Meanwhile, China has been keen on developing world-class higher education and universities by learning from the successful experiences of advanced higher education systems, and this has led many researchers to plunge into this research area. While extant studies, in one way or another, imply that the implementation of China's international higher education cooperation with other countries and its higher education reforms brought about by learning from successful global experiences largely depends on the capacity of institutional leadership, it is rare to see research on capacity development in Chinese higher education institution (HEI) leaders, particularly with respect to learning international experiences.

This book addresses the research gap by examining one approach used by the Chinese government to enhance the capacity of HEI leaders through overseas leadership development. Specifically, the book provides detailed reports of the overseas leadership development programmes for HEI Leaders in the Central and Western regions of China, which were in operation between 2012 and 2018. In total, nearly 1500 Chinese HEI leaders from about 500 HEIs from these regions participated in over 60 leadership development programmes provided by more than 100 HEIs in eight Western countries, namely Australia, Canada, Finland, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, the U.K., and the U.S. The book provides the most comprehensive reports on the nature of the leadership development programme, expectations/perceptions of programme participants concerning the overseas study experience, and the impact of the programmes on the learners' beliefs and work practices. Throughout the discussions on these issues, China's challenges in learning from Western higher education systems are also revealed.

As a higher education scholar engaged in research on China's higher education cooperation with Western countries and as one of the key actors in organising leadership development programmes for Chinese HEI leaders in Finland, I greatly appreciate the editors and contributors of the book for examining the experiences of the leadership development programmes from a scholarly perspective. The book makes a profound contribution to existing research knowledge on the overseas leadership development for Chinese HEI leaders and its impact on Chinese university reforms. In terms of a practical impact, the findings and insights presented in the book are not merely useful for relevant stakeholders in Chinese higher education as clearly indicated by the book, but more importantly, they also help policymakers, HEI managers, and academics from the countries (typically Western countries), which are considered as role models by China in its transformation of higher education, to initiate, develop, and/or strengthen their collaboration with Chinese HEIs. The latter aspect, concerning the relevance of using Western countries' strategies to develop Chinese HEI leaders' leadership, is not the focus of this book, and I would like to highlight it here.

Before discussing the relevance of these leadership development programmes to Western countries' Chinese cooperation strategies, one should know how such leadership development is positioned in the larger context of China's development strategy from a historical perspective. Although China already sent officials and professionals to the former Soviet Union for leadership development in the 1950s, the new era of overseas leadership development began at the start of the 1980s when China commenced its economic reform and launched an open-door policy. At that time, one challenge faced by the country was a shortage of talent, as the higher education system had been tremendously destroyed during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976). As such, human resource development became a national priority. In addition to expanding and improving the domestic education system, overseas leadership development was also regarded as an effective approach for developing human resources. Initially, young students were encouraged to study abroad to pursue their academic degrees. While these students mostly studied at universities and research institutes for pure academic knowledge, there were lots of technical and management issues in economic reform practices that needed to be resolved. In response to this situation, the central authorities decided to send a number of professionals and managers from commercial and industrial enterprises to receive leadership development abroad with financial support.

Until the early 1990s, the main human resources who received overseas leadership development were professional and technical personnel, as there was a clear aim to solve the technical problems in industrial production and to learn advanced management experiences for enterprise innovation. The large-scale leadership development of administrative officials abroad began in 1993 when the central government realised that when developing a market economy, it is very important for administrative officials in different sectors and levels to update their concepts of a market economy and to know how to conduct public management in a market-oriented economy. Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, the initiation of overseas leadership

development of administrative officials has become a key human resource development activity in China. North America and Western Europe are the main destinations for training Chinese officials and professionals. The particular overseas leadership development programmes for Chinese HEI leaders examined in the book took place in such contexts.

Based on my experiences providing several leadership development programmes for Chinese HEI leaders and administrators in Tampere University, Finland, such programmes do not generate much financial income for the university due to heavy infrastructural costs (overhead) incurred by the university and constrained leadership development budgets from the Chinese side. However, the benefits of the leadership development extend far beyond its direct economic rewards to programme providers. Through leadership development for Chinese HEI leaders, both the institutions and even the countries in which the leadership development takes place can better implement strategies for Chinese cooperation in three ways.

First, the leadership development programmes can better help the programme-providing institutions to establish relationships with Chinese partners. The lack of trust and heavy bureaucracy in China are two major barriers for many Western universities when developing partnerships with their Chinese counterparts. Chinese HEI leaders in overseas leadership development programmes are normally decision-makers or play an important role in decision-making on institutional matters. In China, they are not easily approached, let alone engage in an in-depth exchange of ideas. However, when they attend overseas leadership development programmes as learners, they become more modest and open to different cultures and ideas. Thus, trustful relations are likely to be established between the learners and teachers from the programme-providing institutions. If the Chinese HEI leaders are convinced of the potential of collaborating with HEIs in the programme country, quick implementations can be expected.

Second, through leadership development, the host countries/institutions can largely influence China's higher education development with their best practices as well as ideas. For instance, in 2014, I coordinated a study entitled "What China Can Learn from the International Experiences of Reforms of Universities of Applied Sciences" in collaboration with both Chinese and Finnish colleagues. Through communications with our partners, the Chinese Ministry of Education decided to take Finland as a role model for China's regional university reforms. Consequently, the Ministry of Education invited Tampere University to provide leadership development for Chinese regional HEI leaders, with around 50 participants trained in Finland and nearly 100 trained in China from 2014 to 2016. By participating in different leadership development programmes, visiting Finnish HEIs, and sharing knowledge with Finnish HEI leaders and academics, the Chinese HEI leaders, as learners in the leadership development programmes, identified various merits of Finnish higher education. Consequently, many of them tried to bring the Finnish experience to China and develop joint education programmes as well as Finnish leadership development programmes for teachers in their institutions.

Third, leadership development for Chinese HEI leaders also offers a unique opportunity for leadership development providers to learn from China. As an Adjunct

Professor involved in the leadership development programmes for Chinese HEIs leaders in a Finnish university, I noted that the knowledge exchange was bi-directional. My colleagues and I, who were teaching in the programmes, were very impressed by the active interactions and high-quality discussions throughout the leadership development. To us, the learners' reflections on Finnish higher education from the perspective of Chinese higher education practitioners were very valuable. Through their feedback on our teaching, we also deepened our knowledge about Chinese higher education. Even some of our doctoral students seized the opportunity to conduct interviews with Chinese HEI leaders for their research.

While trying to call the attention of a wider range of readers to the book, I want to emphasise that it is fundamentally a collection of solid scholarly works that elucidate a rarely reported phenomenon in international literature. The book is an important source of reference for those who are investigating Chinese higher education in the global context and those who would like to leverage overseas leadership development programmes to enhance their higher education cooperation with China.

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