



# **Varieties of Capitalism and Sino-Foreign HE partnerships: Exploring the Diversity of Economic Governance within China**

## **CGHE event - Rethinking the Geopolitics of Higher Education**

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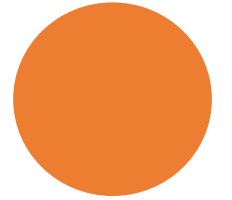
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# Overview of the paper

- This paper examines China's global positioning in higher education (HE) through Joint Venture (JV) transnational partnerships.
- While prior research explored international cooperation models with China, much of it predates the pandemic and emphasises 'sending countries' over 'host' countries.
- This study reassesses the Chinese Ministry of Education's (MOE) goals in the Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools policy (CRCFS) (2013), focusing on cooperation between foreign and Chinese institutions.
- Utilising the Varieties of Capitalism (VoC) model by Hall and Soskice (2001), the paper illustrates diverse economic systems' impact on transnational higher education (TNHE).
- The framework highlights variations in both sending countries and host territories, exemplified in a case study comparing partnerships in Liberal Market Economies and Coordinated Market Economies—Sino British College in Shanghai and Sino Danish Centre in Beijing.

# Key points from earlier work

- Cockayne, H., Gao, J., & Lim, M. A. (2020). Pursuing Ideal Partnerships: The Discourse of Instrumentalism in the Policies and Practices of Sino-Foreign Higher Education Cooperation. In L. Weimer, & T. Nokkala (Eds.), *Universities as Political Institutions: Higher Education Institutions in the Middle of Academic, Economic and Social Pressures* (pp. 58–80).



# Introduction - the structural contexts and needs of the Chinese education partners



The CFCRS policy (2013) serves an important role in quality assurance regarding Sino-Foreign educational corporations, while reaffirming educational sovereignty (Cockayne, Gao and Lim, 2020).



To prevent jeopardising educational sovereignty, the 2013 Proposals acknowledge both positive and negative aspects of the CFCRS partnerships, aiming to distinguish effective practices from detrimental ones, as well as tightening regulations of Chinese TNHE.



Further CFCRS regulations have been implemented since 2019 (State Council, 2019). These regulations emphasised furthering TNHE and vocational training in China, while with no intention of easing regulations (Yang, 2023).



'China's Education Modernisation 2035' policy (State Council, 2019), aiming to enhance the quality of CFCRS by 'Actively participating in global education governance, and deeply participating in the research and formulation of international education rules, standards, and evaluation systems'.

# Introduction - structural contexts and needs of European education partners

- China's HE policies raise concerns about Sino-foreign partnerships due to government and political party involvement in university governance (Dukalskis, 2024).
- UK-China partnerships, often in '2+2' or '2+1' models, have shifted toward fully in-country programs, accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemic (Clayburn, 2022).
- China was identified as one of the four 'high-value' regions by the UK, in which they highlighted their intention to grow education exports and international partnerships, which shows a prevailing perspective of education as a marketised good ([Lomer et al., 2023](#)).
- When considering the wider European community, the [European Commission \(2022\)](#) states that they (the EU) 'seek to take transnational cooperation to a new level of intensity and scope.'
- For the EU there appears to be a stronger focus on exploring collaborations across EU-member states. However, individual member countries within Europe still employ their own strategies



# Varieties of Capitalism and Research questions

- Hall and Soskice's (2001) VoC framework distinguishes liberal market economies (LMEs) like the United States and coordinated market economies (CMEs) like Germany.
- LMEs prioritise competition, flexibility, and shareholder value, while CMEs emphasise collaboration, coordinated industrial relations, and long-term investments.
- We validate and identify the different factors at individual, institutional, national and world-regional level to build upon the VoC framework to understand post COVID Sino-European / foreign educational partnerships.
- Building upon these elements regarding the evolution of Chinese policies regarding TNHE and the VoC framework, our paper sets out the following research questions:
  - RQ1: What are the updated policies of Sino-European JV partnerships (in particular the SBC and SDC)?
  - RQ2: How can the VoC Framework be used to describe and explain the partnerships approaches and strategies of different European countries / economies with China - and its local governments?

# Methodology

- This study relies on public policy sources, three methodological steps: firstly, we have conducted a policy review of the Chinese HE policies/regulations on Sino-Foreign partnerships post COVID-19.
- The second step of the policy review focuses on specific JV example case studies, one located in Shanghai and one in Beijing.
- As such this paper focuses on Sino-European partnership examples and reviews institutional policies and guidance linked to the Sino-British College (SBC), based in Shanghai and the Sino-Danish Centre (SDC) based in Beijing, paying particular attention to any changes since 2019 or that may have been a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- To explore the case studies in relation to their locality this paper then employs a content analysis using concepts from the VoC framework to examine and analyse the policies identified in previous steps.

# Chinese HE policy changes at national and city region levels

- Until 2023, there were four policies/initiatives at the national level that impacted Sino-Foreign HE partnerships significantly: China's Education Modernisation 2035 (State Council, 2019b), Accelerating and expanding the opening up of education to the outside world in the new era (MOE, 2020b), the implementation programme for the project of promoting a strong education nation in the 14<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan period (MOE, 2021), High-quality promotion of the 'One Belt, One Road' education initiative (MOE, 2023)

Policy	Beijing	Shanghai
China's Education Modernisation 2035	Capital Education Modernisation 2035	Being a Pathfinder for National Education Reform (MOE, 2022)
Accelerating and expanding the opening up of education to the outside world in the new era	Studying abroad in Beijing (Li, 2023)	Continuing to support the use of CFCRS to alleviate the difficulties of students going abroad to study under the impact of the epidemic (Shanghai Municipal Education Commission, 2021)
14 <sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan	Beijing Education Reform and Development Plan for the 14th Five-Year Plan Period (Beijing Government, 2021)	Shanghai Education Development '14th Five-Year' Plan (Shanghai Municipal Education Commission, 2022)
B&R education initiative	Report on the Implementation of Beijing's National Economic and Social Development Plan for 2022 and the National Economic and Social Development Plan for 2023 (Beijing Municipal Education Commission, 2023)	Accelerating the development of world-class urban education with Chinese characteristics (Shanghai Municipal Education Commission, 2023)



# Beijing: local policies and the SDC

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- The implementation of the Capital Education Modernisation initiative aligns with China's Education Modernisation 2035, highlighting its role as a political centre and enhancing foreign-related public education services.
- Beijing's focus under the 14th Five-Year Plan includes contributing to the B&R initiative 'focusing on national strategic needs and Beijing's major tasks'.
- The SDC originated as a political project that intended to guarantee equal presence to both China and Denmark. The implicit 50-50 policy was at the centre of SDC's operation and guided the organisation of its resources and the composition of its structure (SDC, 2015).
- While the SDC has been operational for some time, they are not only promoting the partnership, but 'Study in China' seems to be the key message to anyone who visits their website (<https://sdc.university/>).



# Shanghai: local policies and the SBC

- Besides Shanghai has achieved the goals set by China's Education Modernisation 2035, it is working towards increasing the openness of its education to the world.
- Shanghai showcases its continuous enthusiasm in participating and hosting international events: Teacher Education Centre under the auspices of UNESCO in Shanghai, annual participation in Teaching And Learning International Survey (TALIS) and Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA).
- Besides seeking increased accreditation from organisations outside of China, SBC has also linked their aims with the wider Shanghai strategy.
- 'SBC-USST's strategy of internationalisation strengthens high-level international cooperation, educational exchange and internal stakeholder development... contribute[s] to the national development strategy of Shanghai's municipality to create 'Five Centres'.

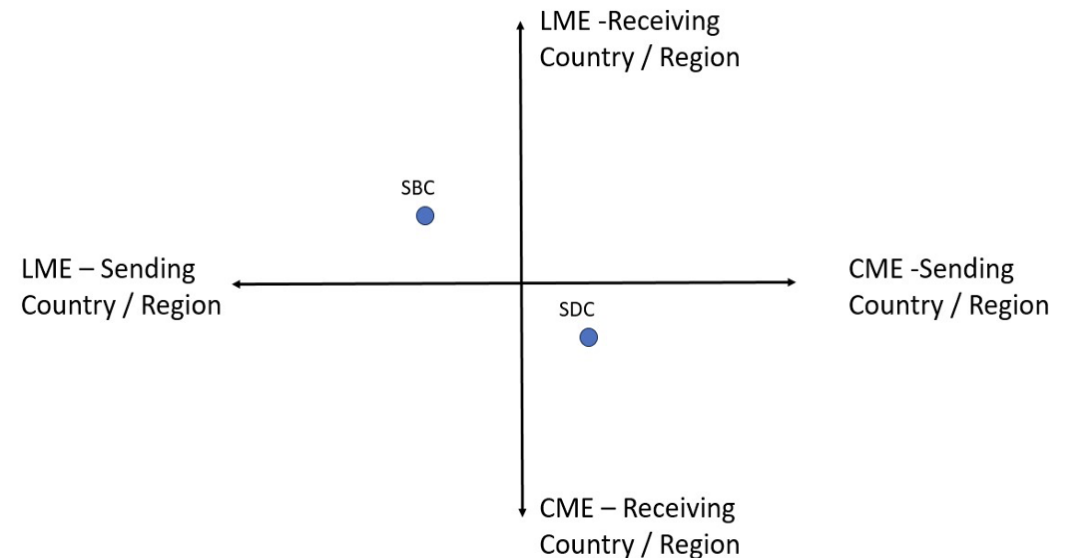


# Discussion - Varieties of capitalism within China's HE system

- Beijing and Shanghai present important cases for analysis within the VoC framework due to their divergent economic structures and policy orientations.
- Beijing, as the political capital, has been associated with state-led industrial policies, emphasising the dominance of state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and strategic industries (Whiting, 2004).
- Beijing Education Reform and Development Plan for the 14th Five-Year Plan Period (Beijing Government, 2021), it draws attention to how HE and other stakeholders contribute to the overall capital city development by stating 'encouraging universities, educators, learners and enterprises to build the capital's digital education resource database'.
- Shanghai, as a global financial and commercial hub, highlights the effects of market-oriented reforms and openness to foreign influence, reflecting a more liberal approach to economic governance.
- In Shanghai's *Pathfinder for National Education Reform* (MOE, 2022), Shanghai showcases its determination and confidence regarding TALIS and PISA, thereby allowing the results to inform and shape educational reform initiatives. It denotes how Shanghai embraces international elements in shaping education policies.

# Discussion - Partnerships between varieties of capitalism

- In the cases we have studied, we have shown how an alignment between the contextual frameworks of Britain and Shanghai as well as of Beijing and Denmark have led to specific - and possibly more 'successful' forms of partnership.
- In the case of China, foreign partners should not assume that the entire country is characterised by a single CME mode of governance nor part of a single national strategy.





## 'Liberal' TNHE

1. Arguably there is long trend of the state being brought back in / increasing neorealist understandings of international relations
  
2. Our analysis and use of VoC propose a return to a 'liberalist' view of relations in HE.
  - a. State preferences, rather than state capabilities, influence state behaviour – expressed in international HE policies.
  - b. Preferences will vary from state to state – and even within states, depending on factors such as culture and economic system.
  - c. A liberalist view is oriented towards findings opportunities for cooperation among states (and sub-state) actors and non-military notions of power.



**Thank you for your time**

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