

Negotiating Cultural, Political, and Ideological Boundaries:
Local Chinese Universities as Both Regional and International Higher Education Space

Qiyu Zhuang
University of Edinburgh
(qiyu.zhuang@ed.ac.uk)

- **The complex and diverse structure of HEIs in Mainland China**

Private/Public Universities/Chinese-Foreign Cooperative Education Universities/Universities run by Mainland China in cooperation with Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan; First-tier/second-tier universities; Higher vocational colleges...

- **Local Chinese Universities**

Featured state-university relationship: Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) leadership and governance

- **Evidence**

- 1) Literature & Policy review

- 2) Empirical data: Interviews with 31 academic faculty members in Chinese universities (June 2022 - December 2022)

- **Two 'Contrasting' Role of Local Chinese Universities**

- 1) 'Internal role'

- 2) 'External role'

‘Internal role’: Political socialisation & Party speaker

- **The advocacy and promotional force**
 - Political socialisation
 - Disseminating and popularising mainstream social, cultural, political, and ideological values domestically
 - The policy of curriculum ideology and politics
- **The restrictive force**
 - Controlled access to international research collaboration
 - Controlled access to international academic mobility
 - Limited choice in teaching materials
 - Sensitive topics in teaching and research

‘External role’: International goals & Impact pursuer

- **Involvements in the internationalisation of HE**
 - The reception of foreign academic faculty
 - The dispatch and reception of international students
 - Global South-South partnership
 - Regionalisation of internationalisation (Asian Universities Alliance)
- **Build international impact**
 - Participation in international league tables
 - Global Image establishment (‘Chinese characteristics’ of HE)
- **Research outputs**
 - Overseas publications

Main argument

Two layers of the intermediary role place local Chinese universities in a complicated position under the CCP leadership and governance. And this complicated position elucidates how these universities manage to establish and maintain national boundaries in the trend of globalisation while simultaneously attempting to mitigate these boundaries to expand the recognised values to an international level.

References

- MOE. (2004). *Academic Norms for Philosophy and Social Science Research in Colleges and Universities (Trial)*. Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China. http://www.moe.gov.cn/srcsite/A13/moe_2557/s3103/200408/t20040816_80540.html
- Alemu, S. K., Qu, M., & Sakhiyya, Z. (2022). Voices of Internationalisation of Higher Education from Sub-Saharan Africa, China and Indonesia. *Learning and Teaching*, 15(3), 2–31. <https://doi.org/10.3167/latiss.2022.150303>
- Cabanda, E., Tan, E. S., & Chou, M.-H. (2019). Higher Education Regionalism in Asia: What Implications for Europe? *European Journal of Higher Education*, 9(1), 87–101. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21568235.2018.1561310>
- Du, X. (2018). Role Split Phenomenon of Academic Staff in Chinese Higher Education: A Case Study of Fudan University. *Higher Education*, 75(6), 997–1013.
- Du, X. (2020). Academic Staff's Dual Role in China: Academic Freedom in a Prestigious University. In Z. Hao & P. Zabielskis (Eds.), *Academic Freedom Under Siege: Higher Education in East Asia, the U.S. and Australia* (pp. 103–124). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-49119-2_5
- Hao, Z., & Guo, Z. (2020). Professors as Intellectuals in China: Political Roles and Academic Freedom in a Provincial University. In Z. Hao & P. Zabielskis (Eds.), *Academic Freedom Under Siege: Higher Education in East Asia, the U.S. and Australia* (pp. 81–102). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-49119-2_4
- MOE. (2015). *Higher Education Law of the People's Republic of China*. Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China. http://www.moe.gov.cn/s78/A02/zfs__left/s5911/moe_619/201512/t20151228_226196.html
- Karran, T., & Mallinson, L. (2019). Academic Freedom and World-Class Universities: A Virtuous Circle? *Higher Education Policy*, 32(3), 397–417. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41307-018-0087-7>
- MOE. (2021). *Number of Non-Government Schools, Educational Personnel and Full-time Teachers by Type and Level*. Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China. http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_sjzl/moe_560/2020/quanguo/202108/t20210831_556363.html
- People's Daily. (2021, April 19). Rooted in China to Build a World-Class University. Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China. http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_xwfb/s5148/202104/t20210419_526973.html
- Pringle, T., & Woodman, S. (2022). Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Academic Freedom in Globalising Chinese Universities. *The International Journal of Human Rights*, 26(10), 1782–1802. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13642987.2022.2074979>
- Woodman, S., & Pringle, T. (2022). Differentiating Risks to Academic Freedom in the Globalised University in China. *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, 48(4), 642–651.
- Xu, X. (2023). Towards a Chinese Definition of Higher Education Internationalisation? A Systematic Review of the Chinese and English Literature. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 44(3), 364–388. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01596306.2023.2200075>