

Serial number 0265
Title Shaped by global and local dynamics: Evolving themes, paradigms and academic “tribes” in higher education research in China
Submitter Prof. Jian Liu, Ms. Hui Ye, Mr. Zhong Gao

In between global and local: Evolving themes, paradigms and academic “tribes” in higher education research in China

Introduction

In the era of globalization, knowledge production in the regions of periphery is increasingly influenced by Western academic centers. As a rising country with the largest higher education system in the world, how the dynamics between the global and local shapes the domestic knowledge production of China’s higher education research is an interesting yet unaddressed issue.

Since journals plays a central role in academic research for disseminating formal knowledge (products of research) and a normative power shaping research, analyzing journal articles is regarded as a valid way to illustrate the trends of research (Ertl et al, 2015). Therefore, this study intends to illustrate the evolving trends of research by examining journal articles and explore how the linkage to traditional scholarship and the influence of Western research paradigms jointly shape the landscape of Chinese higher education research and the differentiation of research communities.

Theoretical framework

Our analytical framework draw heavily from Shigeru Nakayama’s defining study of *Academic and Scientific Traditions in China, Japan, and the West* (1984). Nakayama elucidated some basic differences between East Asian approaches to scholarship and those of the West. Traditional China’s scholarship emphasized a careful recording of all knowledge in an orderly and cumulative way. This approach depended on an abundant supply of paper and advanced printing technology from early period. Another important feature of Chinese scholarly tradition is the emphasis on the unity of knowledge with action in neo-Confucianism, represented by Wang Yangming’s School of Mind (Du, 2014). In contrast to Chinese documentary tradition, the Greco-Roman rhetorical tradition features with an emphasis on disputation and logic, taking an interest in the causes of things, and paying special attention to the laws that order the natural universe (Hayhoe and Liu, 2010).

We argue different social sciences traditions strongly shape the purpose of inquiry and methodological underpinnings, therefore we will use the framework to understand the interactions of East and West scholarship traditions, which have jointly shaped the trends and characteristics of Chinese higher education research.

Data sources and method

Sample of journals

In this study, four leading Chinese education journals were chosen by two selection criteria: the influence in higher education research in China, and the representativeness of the journal types. We chose two comprehensive journals of *Educational Research* and *Tsinghua Journal of Education*, and two journals focusing

specifically on higher education, *Journal of Higher Education*, and *China Higher Education Research*. They are among the top six in all education journals in terms of citation impact factor. Among them, two journals are managed by elite universities, one by national research institute, and one by scholarly association. We assume the affiliation of a journal may influence the preference of theme, methodology and author profile.

We will collect all research and scholarly articles addressing higher education issues in these four journals in the past two decades (1997-2016). We already collected and analyzed data from 2012-2016 on yearly basis, and we will collect data from 1997-2011 in every 3 years.

Indicators

In this study, the indicators for analysis were selected based on literature review and our research interest:

1. Theme of research: 1) system level policy and relationship between government, society and HEIs; 2) HEI organization and management; 3) knowledge, curriculum, teaching and learning; 4) academic profession; 5) student affairs; 6) other that can't fall into the category of 1) to 5).
2. Method used: empirical, theoretical/ historical/reflective, and application research. If the research is identified as empirical, we further look at which category it falls: quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods.
3. International dimension. We use two sub-indicators, one looks at if the study is a comparative and international research or mainly focus on domestic issue; the other measures an international perspective by counting how many references are foreign language literature.
4. Number of reference.
5. Funded research. If the research was funded by grant and what type of the grant: national, provincial, institutional, commissioned or contracted grant.
6. Collaboration. Number of authors, and the affiliation of these authors.
7. Author profile: First author's affiliation. If the affiliation is HEI, what type of HEI, academic rank or level of graduate study, and disciplinary background.

Preliminary findings

We already have collected data from 2012 to 2016 on yearly basis. During this relatively short time period, we didn't find identifiable trend in terms of the change in themes, methodology, percentage of funded research, collaboration patterns, but trends in two indicators are obvious: 1) the share of articles identified to have international perspective (three or more foreign language references) increased from 31% to 40%, and 2) the percentage of authors' affiliation to 985 Project universities kept increasing from 40% to over 50%.

Based on the analysis on the 2012-2016 data, we also found the strong correlations among journal preference, research paradigm and author profile. Each of the four journals have their own preference in themes, and the youngest journal in the four--Tsinghua Journal of Education has the highest share of empirical research, more junior faculty authors with overseas experiences working for elite universities, more comparative studies and international perspective in the four, while Educational Research favors more traditional paradigm of theoretical/historical/reflective research and much higher share of authors are tenured faculty from non-elite universities with

grant support.

Conclusions

We expect a 20 years period data will allow us to find the trends and changes in higher education research in China. From the preliminary findings of 2012-2016 data analysis, we do find some trends and distinguishable differences in research themes, paradigms and author profiles in four sample journals that are shaped by the dynamics of global and local.

References

- Du, Y. (2014). Integrating knowing and acting—Wang Yangming. Beijing: Beijing United Press.
- Ertl, H., Zierer, K., Phillips, D. & Tippelt, R. (2015). Disciplinary traditions and the dissemination of knowledge. An international comparison of publication patterns in journals of education, *Oxford Review of Education*, 41:1, 64-88.
- Hayhoe, R. and Liu, J. (2010). China's universities, cross-border education and the dialogue among civilizations. In D.W., Chapman, W.K., Cummings, and G., Postiglione (eds.) *Crossing borders in East Asian higher education* (pp.77-102). Hong Kong: Springer Press.
- Nakayama, S. (1984). *Academic and scientific traditions in China, Japan, and the West*. Tokyo: Tokyo University Press.