



Policy Transformation in China's Transnational Higher Education: Quality Assurance and Impacts

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Background

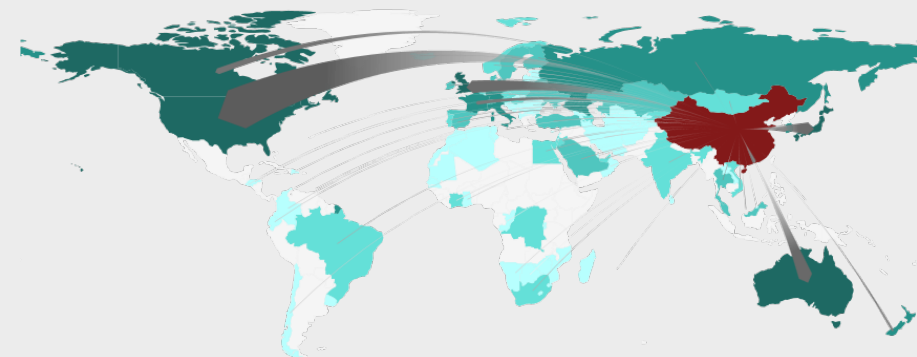
- Transnational higher education (TNHE) is one of the measures taken by the Chinese government in response to the impacts of globalization, and it has led to a series of education reforms (Mok, 2007; Mok & Han, 2016).
- As a consequence, many domestic education institutions and universities partner with foreign institutions and universities to create a new form known as transnational education (TNE) or transnational higher education (TNHE).
- **Format**
 - Chinese-Foreign Cooperative (CFC) institutions with independent legal status (e.g., Ningbo Nottingham, Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool, UIC, CUHK-Shenzhen, etc.)
 - CFC Institutes (e.g., Sichuan University-Pittsburgh Institute)
 - CFC Programs (e.g., Tsinghua-Berkeley Dual Masters Program)

TNHE in Mainland China

- Since the 1990s, the transnational education in China has played a significant role in the introduction of high-quality teaching resources from abroad, the training of international talent, and the promotion of foreign academic collaborations (Huang, 2007; Mok & Han, 2016; Hu et al., 2019).
- In Mainland China, TNHE has taken various forms, including joint programmes with foreign universities, institutions partnered with foreign universities, and partnerships between Chinese and foreign universities (Huang, 2007).
- The massification of higher education has resulted in the growth of Chinese-foreign cooperative institutions since 2002. In 2020, there were 12 Chinese-foreign universities with independent legal personality (Xiong et al., 2022).

TNHE in Mainland China

- TNHE in China is still in its development and, as a result, is susceptible to a variety of change possibilities, depending on the needs of stakeholders including students, institutions, and governments (Fang & Wang, 2014; Xie, 2022).
- Some critics have voiced concerns about the quality and standards of TNHE programmes, as well as their potential impact on domestic institutions of higher education (Hu et al., 2019).
- To proactively deepen interactions with the worldwide arena, the State Council recommended in 2020 to expedite and expand open education to the global sector, with the goal of speeding the modernization of Chinese education and developing more competitive international talents (State Council, 2020).



Literature Review

- Transnational higher education (TNHE) refers to the “international movement of programmes, institutions, or providers of higher education.” As transnational higher education has developed and expanded globally over the past two decades, researchers’ interest has continued to increase (Wilkins, 2016; Knight & Liu, 2017).
- China has seen a significant increase in TNHE relative to other regions, especially since the 1990s (Huang, 2007).
- Importing and exporting higher education activities has become a significant topic of discussion at policy levels in many nations regarding higher education reform (Huang, 2007; Naidoo, 2009).

Literature Review

- Choices regarding student mobility are influenced by various level contexts, such as personal factors, programme structure, labour market, future perspective, etc. (Fang & Wang, 2014; Ahmad & Buchanan, 2016; Mok & Han, 2016; Li et al., 2021).
- Evaluating the satisfaction of students in TNHE programmes and institutions serves as a mechanism for guaranteeing quality and pinpointing potential areas for enhancement (Wilkins & Balakrishnan, 2013;).
- The economic, social, cultural, and educational motivational factors involved in TNHE development and their impact on TNHE development in the country are investigated (Hou et al., 2013; Mok, 2021).

Aims of research

- This study aims to explore how the policy shift in China's transnational education affected the quality of teaching and learning in Sino-Foreign cooperative universities.
- To provide new directions as well as references for policy makers through an in-depth analysis of policies and programs.

Policy Transformation

The development of TNHE in China can be traced back to a period of informal and laissez-faire phase preceding 1995 and has progressed into a more structured and regulated stage (Huang, 2007).

1993

“The Program for Education Reform and Development in China”:

- ✓ Encourage and support “Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools” (CFCRS)
- ✓ Establish schools with nationally-recognized diplomas

Policy Transformation

1995

“The Education Act of the People’s Republic of China”

&

“The Regulations on Chinese-Foreign Cooperative Education”:

- ✓ Support schools and other educational institutions to import quality educational resources
- ✓ Cultivate international talents by conducting Chinese-Foreign Cooperative (CFC) education in accordance with the law

Policy Transformation

2003

“The Regulations of the People's Republic of China on Chinese-Foreign Cooperative Education”:

- ✓ Extend governmental encouragement from vocational to higher education
- ✓ Enhance the quality of teaching and learning by cooperating with reputable overseas HEIs
- ✓ Loosen the constraints on profit-making

Policy Transformation

The government issued a series of circulars, opinions, and advisory measures to encourage the continued growth of TNHE along the path of the legal system. In this progress, the regulations on transnational education have been employed as the main thread to strengthen the concept of quality management.

2003



2009

- ❖ *“Measures for the Regulations of the People's Republic of China on Chinese-Foreign Cooperative Education”*
- ❖ *“Notice on the Launching of the License for Chinese-Foreign Cooperative Education and Projects”*
- ❖ *“Notice on Further Regulating Chinese-Foreign Cooperative Education”*
- ❖ *“Conducting Assessment of Chinese-Foreign Cooperative Education”*

Policy Transformation

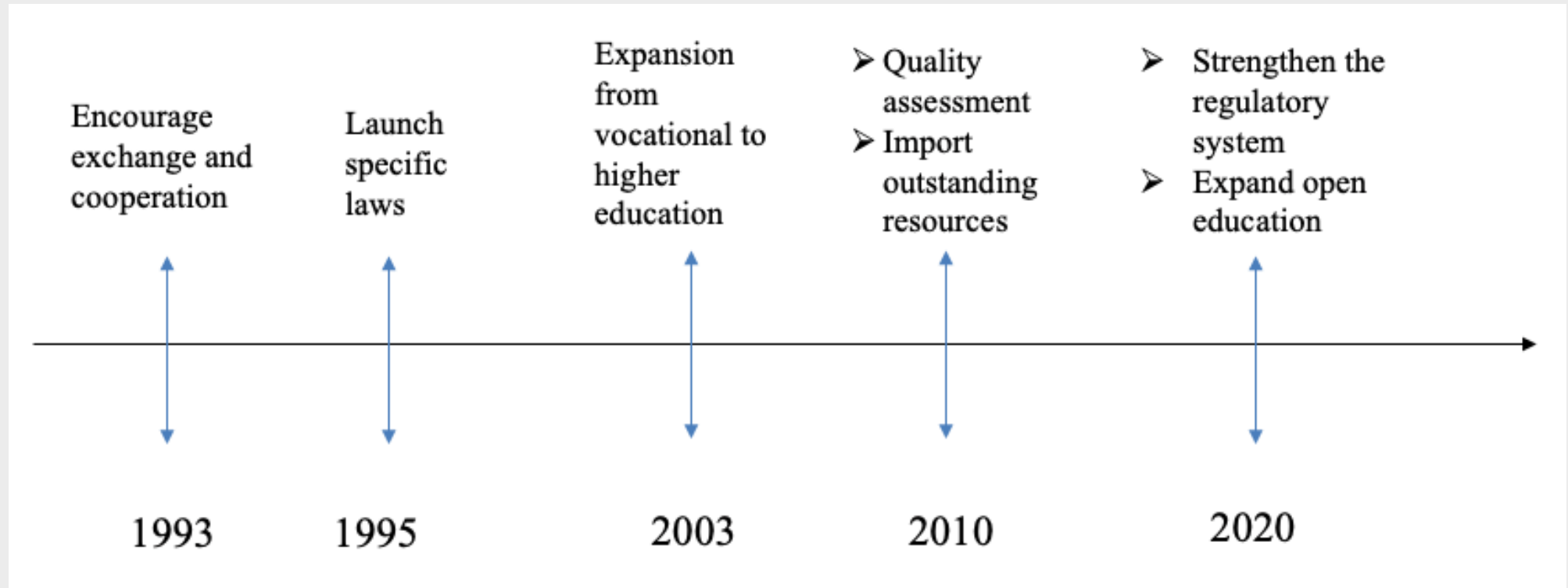
2010

- ❖ *“The National Medium and Long-Term Education Reform and Development Plan (2010-2020) ”*
- ❖ *“Strengthen the quality assurance of Chinese-foreign cooperation in higher education”*
- ❖ *“Strengthen the administrative supervision of Chinese-Foreign cooperative schools”*
- ❖ *“Opinions on the open education in the new era”*

2020

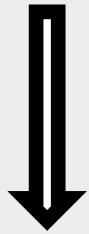
Policy Transformation

- By the end of 2019, the MOE suspended over 200 Chinese-foreign cooperation institutions and programs owing to issues including **insufficient import** of quality educational resources, **low quality of teaching and learning**, and **inferior assessment**.
- The government's policies have shifted from from multiple guidelines and measures to quality building, indicating a movement from **quantity** to **quality**.

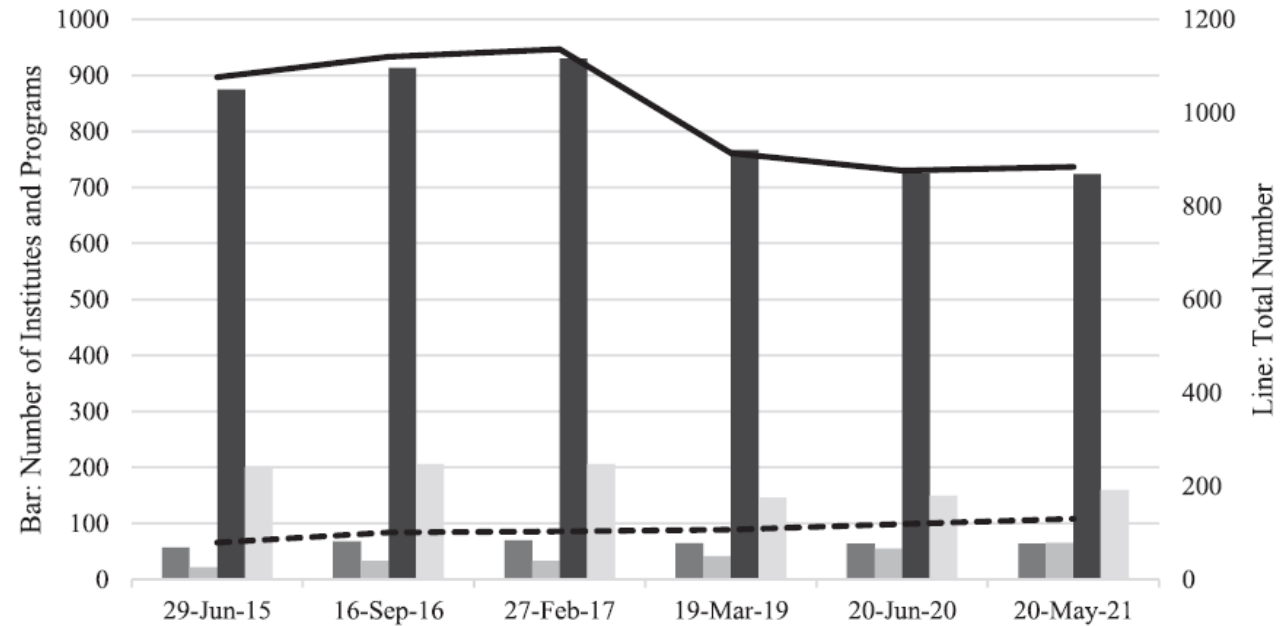


Policy Transformation

Quantity



Quality



	29-Jun-15	16-Sep-16	27-Feb-17	19-Mar-19	20-Jun-20	20-May-21
Institutes (undergraduate)	57	68	70	65	64	64
Institutes (graduate)	22	33	33	42	55	66
Programs (undergraduate)	875	914	930	767	726	724
Programs (graduate)	201	206	206	146	150	160
Total of Institutes	79	101	103	107	119	130
Total of Programs	1076	1120	1136	913	876	884

Fig. 10. Number of Chinese-foreign cooperative institutes and programs, 2015–2021.

(Source: MOE (2021e).)

Note: Some institutes are duplicated counted if they are offered at the undergraduate and graduate levels.

Responses from Sino-foreign cooperative universities



Challenges

- Collaborative universities: the absence of a well-defined external quality assurance agency by the host and home universities is evident (reviewed externally by their home campuses)
- Host and home universities did not establish a well-structured administration system smoothly. For example, *the two branch campuses only participated in two alliances, and they need actively to participate in regionalizations (UIC, 2021).*

Challenges

- **Standardization:** Ensuring that standards are consistently applied across a diverse range of transnational institutions and programs can be difficult, particularly when there is significant variation in the quality of teaching, research, and facilities.
- **Accreditation:** While China has made progress in developing a national accreditation system for transnational higher education institutions, there are still concerns about the consistency and rigor of the accreditation process, as well as the potential for corruption and political interference.
- **Faculty quality:** China's higher education system faces ongoing challenges in recruiting and retaining high-quality faculty members, particularly in the sciences and other technical fields, where competition with industry and overseas home institutions can be intense.

Discussion

- The current transnational higher education quality assessment system in China is a mode of institutional accountability that is spearheaded by the government. Nonetheless, this form of accountability has been found to be somewhat deficient in its efficacy.
- It is imperative to effectively engage the eagerness and ingenuity of higher education stakeholders in overseeing and administering universities, in order to bolster the legitimacy of quality evaluation and ultimately augment the efficacy of China's higher education quality evaluation mechanism.
- Resource allocation in terms of major shortages and local differences.



THANK YOU!



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