

Professor Qian Yingyi

Doctor of Social Sciences *honoris causa*

Citation

Born in Beijing, Professor Qian Yingyi was sent to the countryside to work as a farmer for four years upon high school graduation. There he taught himself mathematics and English and discovered an interest in the social and economic issues China was facing at the time. The experience led to a later decision to study economics. After enjoying remarkable academic success overseas, he returned to China to make contributions to his home country.

In 1977, he took the first National College Entrance Examination held after the Cultural Revolution and was admitted to Tsinghua University, where he received a Bachelor of Science in Mathematics. In the following years, he received a Master of Arts in Statistics from Columbia University, a Master of Philosophy in Management Science/Operations Research from Yale University, and a Doctor of Philosophy in Economics from Harvard University.

Professor Qian held appointments at the Department of Economics at Stanford University, the University of Maryland, and the University of California, Berkeley. From 2006 to 2018, he was Dean of the School of Economics and Management at his alma mater, Tsinghua University.

Currently, he is Professor of Economics in the School of Economics and Management and Distinguished Professor of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, both at Tsinghua University. He is also the Chairman of the Founding Board of Trustees of Westlake University, a private research university founded in 2018 in Hangzhou.

Professor Qian won the Sun Yefang Prize in Economic Science in 2009, became a Fellow of the Econometric Society in 2012, and in 2016, together with Prof Xu Chenggang, received the inaugural China Economics Prize, an award widely regarded as the most prestigious academic prize in economics in China, for “the contributions they made to the research of government and enterprise incentive mechanisms in the transition economy.”

As early as the 1980s, Professor Qian chose to study the reform and transition of planned economies to market economies. China was, of course, one of his research focuses. As a leading scholar in this area, Professor Qian’s papers can often be found in top academic journals, and his book *How Reform Worked in China: The Transition from*

Plan to Market was published by The MIT Press in 2017. While many others explore why the Chinese reform worked, his book emphasised how it worked. He observed that, for reformers, it is more important to find a feasible “second best” or even “good enough” reform than the “best” way, because implementation and execution is the key. He argued that “appropriate and adequate institutions,” not “best-practice institutions,” is the way to reconciling the apparent tension between China’s rapid growth and its flawed institutions.

In the end, the book offers a helpful guide for reformers: in order for reform to succeed, it is important to adapt universal economic principles according to local historical conditions and contemporary constraints. Professor Qian’s combination of thorough theoretical analysis and insightful practical guide is a rarity in the economic literature.

When Professor Qian was the Dean of the School of Economics and Management at Tsinghua University, he devoted most of his time to reforming higher education in China. His rich experiences and observations enable him to write a three-volume book titled *The Reform of the University* 《大學的改革》, in which he investigates the ongoing reform in China’s higher education in general and liberal arts education and business education in particular. As in his book on China’s economic reform, he proposes general principles, points out existing problems, and sketches out an action plan for Chinese university reform.

Mr Chairman, in recognition of his great contributions to economics, China’s economic reform in general, and university education reform in particular, I now present Professor Qian Yingyi for the conferment of the degree of Doctor of Social Sciences *honoris causa*.

Citation written and delivered by Professor Larry Qiu Dongxiao