Asserting Global Leadership in Higher Education:

*Governance with Strong Government in China*

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**Introduction**

In the last few decades, China has recorded an unprecedented growth in higher education in terms of enrollment (system capacity) and enrollment rate (enrollment relative to age cohort). In light of Trow’s definition of three-stage higher education development (Trow, 1973), China’s higher education system has experienced a transformation from elite to a mass form within a short period. The growing opportunities in higher education may increase the quality of the population and their life chances. However, the same process has also created challenges in the continued development of higher education, particularly when such a rapid expansion outstrips the ability of institutions to maintain the quality of higher education.

Setting out against the policy context of Chinese higher education going through the process of massification, this chapter critically examines the strategies that the Chinese government has adopted to assert its global leadership in higher education. With particular reference to changing university governance, this chapter focuses on the major measures that the Chinese government has adopted (1) in developing a “world-class university” and (2) in the recruitment/attraction of overseas talent for employment in the country. The following discussion begins with the transformation of governance strategies in managing universities against the context of intensified global competition, followed by the examination of major schemes in building world-class universities and attracting global talent to assert global leadership in higher education. The final part of the chapter discusses the changing university governance and implications for educational development as well as the strategies/measures recently adopted by the Chinese government to transform its universities.
“Governance without Government” in Public Sector Management

The growing influence of neo-liberalism and its subsequent tides of marketization and privatization have shaped how Asian states manage economic affairs as well as how public policy is formulated and the public sector is managed (Carroll 2012; Stubbs 2009; Hayashi 2010). To adapt to the challenges of globalization, many Asian states (including China) have adopted a neoliberal approach as they unleash the power of the market in enhancing capital formation, promoting resource allocation, and sustaining economic growth/welfare gains (World Bank 2002; Carroll and Jarvis 2013; Jomo 2001). Embracing the market principles for enhancing the efficiency in resource allocation, the state has experienced its role being decentered and replaced by a reliance on subnational governments and participation in entities, markets, or even families and individuals. As a reflection of Asia’s contemporary economic dynamism being increasingly driven by global market forces, many Asian states have assumed the responsibility of creating an institutional and operational environment to support market-based activities; this condition is characterized by the retreat of the state from direct service provision toward privatization and corporatization of service delivery as well as the increasing use of regulation and regulatory systems of governance to subject economic and social space to market forces (Cammack 2012; Wong and Flynn 2001; Mok et al. 2010). Jarvis and Carroll (2015) correctly stated that the Asian states joining the wave of neoliberal policy reforms have inevitably circumscribed the role of the state in favor of markets, which results in “deepening of financialisation and marketisation, or more fundamentally as attempts to construct market societies modelled on liberal capitalism” (p. 2; see also Carroll and Jarvis 2014a, 2014b).

In the context of this wide political economy, governments across different parts of the globe have tried to adopt decentralization in governance to download responsibilities of public policy provision and social service delivery to subnational governments and to markets
and participating entities in managing the social and economic needs of citizens at local levels (Jayasuriya 2001; Carroll and Jarvis 2013; Stubbs 2009). Higher education governance is not immune from the growing influences of diverse interests shared by multiple actors, especially under tremendous pressure to move beyond the ivory tower and to work with different industries, businesses, and the society (Hawkins and Mok, 2015). Specifically, the call for entrepreneurial universities has driven contemporary universities to become increasingly proactive in searching for different partners to diversify funding sources and engage in teams with diverse backgrounds and expertise to solve multifaceted problems (Gornitzka and Maaseen, 2014; Mok, 2013). Under this broad social and political background, “collaborative governance” has become increasingly popular, especially when no single institution can formulate integrated policies and comprehensive strategies to manage citizens’ heightened expectations for well-coordinated and efficiently delivered public services aimed at addressing rapid social, economic, and political changes. The collaboration between the government, business sector, and civil society, which is aimed toward co-production and the coordination of service delivery and public policies to meet changing social needs, has become particularly prominent in public sector management at the international level (Donahue, 2004).

By bringing multiple stakeholders together to engage in collaborative governance, the state perceives its decision-making role as becoming less dominating; other non-state actors (the market and civil society) advocate significant role-shaping policy agenda and policy implementation, particularly when “collaborative governance” requires the active participation of non-state stakeholders (Ansell and Gash, 2007). The growing popularity of “collaborative governance” can be expected to result in a new regulatory state with a silent feature of “governance without the government” in public management (Peters and Pierre, 1998; Rhodes, 1996). The present chapter sets out against the aforementioned wide policy background to examine how university governance has changed in mainland China,
especially when the central government has tried to encourage non-state actors (including the market) to provide higher learning. At the same time, the state proactively helps universities to become globally competitive by engaging in university governance through strategic investments in selected universities. With consideration of the rise of non-state sector involvement in higher education provision and the resulting competition to drive universities to perform, the present chapter mainly focuses on the development of the university governance model in China.

From State-control to State-governed Market Approach in University Governance

During Mao’s era (from 1949 to 1978), the Chinese government utilized education as a political tool to ensure its citizens’ political loyalty to the ruling regime. Higher education institutions (HEIs) then had no autonomy over the administration, syllabi, curricula, textbooks, enrollment, and allocation of school/university seats (Hao, 1998; Ngok, 2007). Instead, the central government formulated educational policies, distributed educational resources, exerted administrative control, recruited teaching staff, and decided on the curricula and textbooks to be used (Ngok, 2007; Yang et al., 2007). In sum, the state “monopolized the provision, financing, and governance of education” (Ngok, 2007, p. 143). As stated by the Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China (MOE) in the 1960s,

*The establishment, change, and cancellation of programs in all these universities must be approved by the MOE...University teaching should be according to the syllabi designed or approved by the Ministry...No programs, syllabi, and textbooks should be changed easily. Any substantial changes must be approved by the Ministry.*

(Hu, 2003, p. 4)

According to Neave and van Vught (1994), the higher education system in China had long been regarded as a state-controlled model because of the strict central control. The rigid
regulations and inflexibility in university governance inevitably resulted in the insufficient supply and low quality of tertiary education, which hindered sustainable economic growth, especially when we compare the HE enrollment rate of 1.7% in China with the world average level of 12.3% in 1980 (UNESCO, 1985). Caveated by the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) and the importance of HE in economic development and social progress (Ngok, 2007), the Chinese government thereafter adopted a series of policies to release its rigid control over HE and to protect “the initiatives and enthusiasm of educational institutions” (Mok & Chan, 2012, p. 114; see also Hawkins, 2006). The 1980s appeared as “a turning point in government–university relationships in China” (Yang et al., 2007, p. 579). As Minister of Education Zhu Kaixuan stated in the 1990s, “Education is no longer dissociated from the economy…Education is closely linked with the economy, and has become an organic component and key content of the plans for economic and social development” (Rosen, 1997, p. 259). The Decision of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party of China on the Reform of the Educational System in 1985 (the 1985 Decision hereafter) and the Education Law of the People’s Republic of China in 1995 were promulgated to emphasize the pivotal role of HE in the process of Chinese modernization. As Zhong (2011) argued, the value of education adopted by the central government changed from “an instrument merely to serve proletarian politics” to “a wider conception” (p. 118).

Although the 1985 Decision introduced the concept of decentralization and devolvement of power to lower levels (Ngok, 2007), it also enabled the central government to continue supervising the education sector and provide basic guidelines for future development. The Chinese HE system was indeed not entirely released from strict control until the promulgation of the Program for China’s Educational Reform and Development by the State Council in 1993 (the 1993 Program hereafter). Containing six parts and 50 articles, the 1993 Program “actively encourage and fully support social institutions and citizens to establish schools according to law and to provide correct guidelines and strengthen administration.”
Therefore, “democratic parties, people bodies, social organizations, retired cadres and intellectuals, collective economic organizations, and individuals subject to the Party’s and governmental policies” were encouraged to “actively and voluntarily” contribute to “developing education by various forms and methods” (Mok, 2003, p. 258; see also Wei & Zhang, 1995). Minban colleges, second-tier colleges, and transnational cooperation have become increasingly popular after the establishment of the 1993 Program.

To create numerous opportunities to meet the pressing demand for higher education, the Chinese government has allowed the non-state sector and actors to take up the provider role in offering higher learning opportunities for its citizens. Figure 1 clearly indicates a steady increase in the number of students enrolled in minban colleges run by the non-state sector. At the same time, overseas higher education institutions have been encouraged to either set up their offshore campuses in collaboration with local educational institutions or to offer transnational programs to meet the diverse learning needs of young Chinese people. Figure 2 shows the steady increase in the number of students studying overseas. The diversification of the higher educational provision has indeed transformed the traditionally elite higher education system into a mass one within a relatively short period. The following section discusses how the Chinese higher education has expanded in the last two decades and prompted the Chinese government to adopt different reform measures to improve the quality of its higher education and consequently assert its global leadership.
Figure 1: Rise of minban colleges in China


Figure 2: Number of Chinese students studying and returning from abroad (1978–2015)

Diversified Educational Opportunities and Massifying the Higher Education System

Although mainland China is a latecomer in higher education development, the Chinese government diligently attempted to increase higher education opportunities in the late 1990s. In 1998, the MOE stated in “The Action Plan to Vitalize Education in the 21st Century” (MOE, 1998) that the government aimed to achieve a gross enrollment rate of 15% by 2010. The goal was later adjusted to reach this percentage by 2005\(^1\). Starting in 1999, China recorded an unprecedented growth in both the higher education enrollment and gross enrollment rates. The enrollment increased from 1.08 million in 1998 to 1.6 million in 1999. In 2014, the number was 7.2 million, which was more than 10 times that in 1994 (0.9 million). In addition to the rapid growth in system capacity, the enrollment rate of higher education, which is measured by the higher education enrollment relative to the number of students enrolled in primary education in the corresponding year,\(^2\) dramatically increased. The enrollment rate was 5% in 1998 and leaped to 8% in 1999. In 2014, the enrollment rate surged to 37%, indicating a fivefold increase in the relative higher education opportunities in the last 20 years (the enrollment rate was 3% in 1994) (Figure 3).


\(^2\) The annual statistics on the size of age cohort is not publicly available. The number of students enrolled in primary school is used as a proxy, as China implemented compulsory education in 1986.

Note: Enrollment of higher education is measured by the number of students enrolled in regular higher education institutions in mainland China. The enrollment rate of higher education is measured by the enrollment of higher education relative to the cohort size of the same age and transformed in percentage. The enrollments of primary education are used as the proxy for the corresponding cohort size because the direct measure of cohort size is not available.

**Strategies to Enhance Quality Amid the Massification of Higher Education**

The quality of higher education is important for the sustainable development of higher education as well as for the national competitiveness in the globalizing world. In the context of the intensifying competition among world-class universities and meeting the pressing needs of the knowledge economy, East Asian governments have attempted to groom their elite universities to become globally competitive (Mok, 2005; Mok and Yu, 2011). In the era of massification, the Chinese government has adopted a variety of strategies to develop higher education with “a change from quantity-to-quality orientation,” i.e., changing the focus from quantity flow to an elevated emphasis on the quality of service provided in higher education.
education (Li, Whalley, Zhang, and Zhao, 2011). Against this backdrop, the Chinese government has underscored the quality of higher education in the guideline of the country’s development since 1996 (Ninth Five-Year (1996–2000) Plan\(^3\), Item 20). Moreover, the 11\(^{th}\) Five-Year (2006–2010) Plan stated that the development of higher education should emphasize upgrading quality and optimizing structure (Section 3 of Chapter 28)\(^4\). The quality of higher education institutions is largely tied to the research capacity of the scholars in the institutions. The talent requirements in China are thus extremely urgent. In the context of brain drain, the quest for global talent has become prominent in China. Welch and Zhang (2008) suggest that Asian countries have all suffered significantly from the effects of brain drain. Numerous scholars from China have travelled abroad to study in the past several decades, but only less than 30% have returned (Welch and Cai, 2011). The following discussion critically examines the major measures that the Chinese government has adopted to groom leading universities and recruit/attract overseas talent to work in the country. Special attention is given to how the Chinese government has engaged in the “war for talent” through the implementation of the “Chang Jiang Scholar Scheme,” a scheme designated to recruit and attract leading scholars and researchers from overseas to work in the country. The last part of the chapter reflects upon the changing university governance model in managing the highly competitive higher education sector.

(1) Asserting World-class University Status for Global Leadership

The terminology “world-class university” is not new, but it has only recently become popular among governments and universities worldwide, with the ideology, “embedded in the

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\(^3\) Ninth Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development of the People’s Republic of China, retrieved 12 September 2016

\(^4\) 11\(^{th}\) Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development of the People’s Republic of China, retrieved 12 September 2016
higher education policies and strategies of a range of nations” (Deem et al., 2008, p. 84). The realization of world-class universities, which are defined by scholars as being interchangeable with “global research university” or “first-class university” (Li, 2012, p. 320), is a desire of every researcher, HEI, and government (Yonezawa, 2003). The transformation from agricultural to industrial, and currently to knowledge economies, has spawned the “transition to more knowledge-based economies, coupled with growing competition from non-OECD countries,” and has necessitated the capability to explore and disseminate “scientific and technological knowledge, as well as other intellectual assets, as a means of enhancing growth and productivity” (OECD, 2004, p. 11). As the foundation of national competitiveness in economic, social, and political arenas, HE is ranked as a top priority in the public policy agenda setting (Hazelkorn, 2009). The changes in demography and the concomitant decline in student population have inevitably led to the “scramble for students” (Matsumoto & Ono, 2008, p. 1) or “battle for brainpower” (Wooldrige, 2006, p. 2), thereby attracting attention (or over-attention) to the “rising significance and popularity of rankings which attempt to measure the knowledge-producing and talent-catching capacity of higher education institutions” (Hazelkorn, 2009, p. 3).

However, even the quest for world-class university status has become an unprecedented trend across the globe, particularly in the Asia Pacific region, where scholars have yet to reach a consensus on the definition of “world-class university” or develop strategies and measures appropriate for obtaining the status (Altbach, 2004). Niland (2000) proposes nine aspects essential to pursue or sustain a world leader status for HEIs: high-quality faculty, excellent research fame, talented undergraduates, international recognition, diversified resources, extensive networks, comprehensive disciplines, technical advancement, and efficient/effective administration. Altbach (2004) narrows this spectrum into four major domains, namely, research excellence, academic freedom and an intellectually stimulating environment, internal self-governance system, and adequate investments. According to Salmi
(2009), a world-class university should be distinguished by its superior outputs: qualified graduates catering to the needs of the labor market, advanced research publishable by top scientific journals, and the efficacious knowledge transfer in technical innovation and industry updates. Similarly, Douglass (2016) evaluates a world-class university on the basis of the following: influential research outcomes, intrinsic culture of excellence, updated facilities and an internationally renowned brand name, and heed paid to local engagements. Hence, he proposes the notion of “flagship university” to replace “world-class university,” arguing that universities should develop their own strengths in line with their unique visions and missions and emphasizes the importance of role differentiation and “fit for purpose” when assessing a university’s performance.

In the context outlined above, an array of national governments have indeed adopted rankings to “direct or inform initiatives” or have taken them as “a quasi-funding mechanism” (Hazelkorn, 2009, p. 19). With the perception toward global rankings being a zero-sum competition, a growing trend has emerged in the Asia and Pacific region: a strong government intervention in university governance through focused efforts to groom a few selected universities to assert their “world-class status” despite the absence of an official definition for “world-class university” (Mok and Hallinger, 2013; Mok, 2016). Table 1 presents different schemes to make selected universities competitive in various forms of international ranking exercises. China, similar to other Asian countries, has made serious efforts to seek “world-class university” status.

Table 1: Different funding schemes of selected countries and regions in East Asia for world-class university status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country/Region</th>
<th>Funding Scheme</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mainland China</td>
<td>• Project 985</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Project 211</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• “Double World Class” Project</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>• Comprehensive Education Reviews</td>
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<tr>
<td>Role Differentiation Exercise</td>
<td>Program for Promoting Academic Excellence of Universities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Positioning Hong Kong as International Key Player in Higher Education</td>
<td>Five Year – 50 billion Excellence Initiative</td>
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<tr>
<td>University Merging and Deep Collaboration</td>
<td>Development Plan for World-class Universities and Research Centers for Excellence</td>
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<td>Research Assessment Exercises</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teaching and Learning Quality Process Reviews</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Management Reviews and University Governance Review</td>
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<tr>
<td>Taiwan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Flagship University Project</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Global 30” Scheme</td>
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<tr>
<td>Competitive Funding Allocation Method</td>
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<tr>
<td>21st Century Centers of Excellence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Global Centers of Excellence</td>
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<tr>
<td>World Premier International Research Centre Initiative</td>
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<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Brain Korea 21</td>
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<tr>
<td>World-Class University Initiative</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brain Korea 21 Plus Project</td>
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<tr>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
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<tr>
<td>“World-Class Universities” Program</td>
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Realizing the urgent need to groom a few universities to compete for global rankings, the Chinese government has never shied away from adopting differential treatment policies by concentrating funding support on a few top public universities through different incentive schemes and to obtain excellence. Projects “211” and “985” could be taken as the most eminent attempts of China to secure world-class positions. In 1983, Kuang Yaming, the president emeritus of Nanjing University, along with other distinguished scholars/administrators, wrote to Deng Xiaoping and argued about the necessity of building several first-class universities with concentrated national funding. Then the co-signed letter of Nanjing University President Qu Qinyue to then Prime Minister Li Peng in 1990 emphasized
their desire to promote a limited number of Chinese universities to world-class positions once again (Qu, 2002).\(^5\) As the responses to these appeals, Project “211” and “985” were introduced and implemented in 1993 and 1998, respectively, with funding support concentrated on selected universities (Li et al., 2011).

Projects “211” and “985” aimed to enhance the teaching, research, and management capacities. Project “211” received 36.83 billion RMB in 1995–2005, whereas the investment for Project “985” accumulated 90.476 billion RMB (55.4 billion from the central government and 35.076 billion from the local authorities) until 2012 (Ying, 2011; see also MOE, 2012). The trend of stratification is shown by their host of over 50% doctor candidates, national key disciplines, and state key laboratories, although only 39 universities were selected in this project, which is less than 3% of nearly 2000 full-time state universities in China. Several key documents of the Projects 211 and 985 were invalidated by the MOE in 2016, which indicates that both projects were valid. The state adopted a new strategic plan, “Double World Class Project” (shuang yiliu), to develop China’s world-class universities and disciplines. The project, initiated in 2015 (State Council of People’s Republic of China, 2015), mentioned that the government targets the development of a certain number of leading universities and disciplines such that they will be recognized as world-class and included in the world’s top-tier by 2020. In the second phase of the plan, the number of world-class and top-tier universities and disciplines should increase further, and the overall quality of higher education should improve significantly by 2030. Moreover, the quantity and quality of China’s world-class universities and disciplines are targeted to be the world’s front-runners, and China hopes to be recognized as having a strong higher education system by the mid-21\(^{st}\) century. Central to these new initiatives for facilitating the selected universities’ quest for

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excellence is the further concentration of funding support to highly selective groups of universities or disciplines. The development of such universities or disciplines widens the gap between the “have” and the “have not.”

The performance of Chinese universities is measured through Salmi’s criteria; the number of Chinese universities in the Top 300 has increased from two (Shanghai Jiaotong University, 2003) to 13 (Shanghai Jiaotong University, 2015)\(^6\). Table 2 indicates that few public universities in China have steadily climbed up the ladder in different university leagues produced by the QS, Times Higher Education, and the Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU) by Shanghai Jiao Tong University.

Table 2 Top Mainland Universities (global rankings)

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tsinghua</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>151–200</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peking</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>151–200</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UST China</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>201–300</td>
<td>101–150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fudan</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>226–250</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>201–300</td>
<td>101–150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jiao Tong</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>301–350</td>
<td>201–250</td>
<td>151–200</td>
<td>101–150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhejiang</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>301–350</td>
<td>201–250</td>
<td>151–200</td>
<td>101–150</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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\(^6\) We recognized other widely cited league tables, such as *Times Higher Education* and Quacquerelli Symonds World University Rankings. However, the rising trend of Chinese universities cannot be fully demonstrated in the past few decades given that open-accessed information is limited (only available for the ranking from 2011–2016 in *Times Higher Education* ranking and 2016 in QS ranking).
(2) Competing for Global Talent: Chang Jiang Scholars Program

The state strongly believes in addressing the “brain drain” problem in the higher education development and has been working hard to strengthen the strategic planning for talent development. Attracting global talents to HEIs in mainland China is a crucial strategic plan. The Chang Jiang Scholars Program\(^7\) of the recruitment of global eminent scholars is a large and influential national program that attracts outstanding scholars from around the world. Moreover, the program can be regarded as a typical case of the “state-governed market approach” in that the government allowed the non-state sector to engage in the national talent program while maintaining strong governance.

The program (changjiang xuezhe jiangli jihua) was established by the MOE and Li Ka-shing Foundation (LKSF) in 1998 under the coordination of Chen Zhili, the State Councilor, and the Education Minister in China. The program aims to attract global high-achieving academic scholars to mainland China to enhance the development of Chinese universities. The program allows universities in mainland China to provide preferential measures to recruit high-achieving academic scholars in these universities by appointing them as Chang Jiang Chair Professors or Chang Jiang Distinguished Professors. The program also awards seminar scholars the Chang Jiang Achievement Award.\(^8\)

Partial Market Approach When Managing Competition

The program is a national program that attracts global intellectuals to mainland China but involves a market approach in terms of engaging the market force and introducing competition among universities and applicants. The name of the program “Chang Jiang” is

\(^7\) The program is also known as the Cheung Kong Scholars Program and Yangtze River Scholars Program.

\(^8\) For details, see http://www.1000plan.org/qrih/channel/5, Accessed on 5 January 2017.
also known as Cheung Kong in Cantonese, which shares the same name of the Cheung Kong (Holdings) Limited. The Hong Kong entrepreneur Mr. Li Ka-shing is the founder of the company and LKSF. LKSF is a Hong Kong-based charitable organization founded in 1980 that provided abundant financial support for the program. The program received an initial funding of 60 million HK dollars (approximate 7.7 million US dollar) from LKSF for the appointments of Chang Jiang Scholar Chair Professors or Distinguished Professor and 10 million HK dollars (approximate 1.3 million US dollar) for the Chang Jiang Achievement Award.9

The press release by LKSF about the 10th anniversary of the program10 mentioned that the total investment in the program in the first 10 years was approximately 454 million RMB (approximate 66 million US dollar), of which 124 million RMB (approximate 18 million US dollar) was funded by Mr. Li and 330 million RMB (48 million US dollar) was provided by the MOE. Therefore, the national prestigious scholar programs involve a large amount of money while engaging the LKSF (as the market force) to contribute approximately 27%. The contribution of LKSF to the program was recognized by the government. LKSF was invited to join the ceremonies of the program with senior government officials. For example, Mr. Li, the founder of LKSF, was invited to give a speech in the first appointment ceremony of the Chang Jiang Scholars in 1999, which Vice Premier Li Lanqing and Education Minister Chen Zhili attended. In the 10th anniversary of the program, State Councilor Liu Yangdong thanked Mr. Li for his continuous support and recognized Cheung Kong Scholars as a “super brand” in education. Moreover, the events were held at Beijing’s Great Hall of the People, which is usually used for legislative and ceremonial activities by

9 For more details, see the official website of Chinese talent program: http://www.1000plan.org/qrjh/channel/5 and the website of LKSF http://www.lksf.org/20081205-2/.
the central government and the ruling Communist Party. The participation of senior government officials and the venue of the ceremonies of the program indicate that the government placed heavy emphasis on the program and recognized the contribution of LKSF.

In addition to the introduction of the market force in funding the program, the program encourages competition among universities and applicants. The latest version of the implementation policy of the program (MOE, 2011, Items 13–15) indicated that universities should set up the post of Chang Jiang Scholar in universities and open the applications for global recruitment. Applicants can apply for the post through self-nomination or nomination by experts, embassies, or consulates abroad. Universities that apply for the program are responsible for convening an academic committee to evaluate the applicants and recommend qualified candidate(s) to the MOE. These procedures suggest that the application is initiated by the universities and invites competition among applying universities and applicants. Since 2005, the program has expanded the hosting universities beyond mainland China to cover those in Hong Kong and Macau, and the disciplines have been expanded to humanities and social sciences11.

**Strong Government Role in Governance**

Although the program involves a partial market approach, it is under strong state governance. The policy of implementing the program was issued by the MOE and specifies the recruitment criteria and responsibilities of Chang Jiang Scholars. Moreover, the MOE decides the recipient of the Chang Jiang scholarship. The MOE organizes an expert committee to peer review the candidate(s) after an initial review of applicants recommended by universities. The

11 The Ninth Press Conference of the MOE in 2005, the introduction of the Chang Jiang Scholar Achievement Award.

list of selected Chang Jiang Scholar candidates will be publicized. The MOE has the
discretionary power to handle disputes regarding the candidates. The appointment with the
scholars and the certificates are also issued by the MOE (MOE, 2011, Items 16–19). A
representative from LKSF stated in a press conference with the MOE that the planning and
implementation of the program (together with the Chang Jiang Scholar Achievement Award)
were mainly conducted by the MOE and the Chinese Academy of Science.12

In 2011, a new Chang Jiang Scholars Program was launched by the MOE in line with
the implementation of the National Long-term Development Plan (2010–2020) and the
National Long-term Talent Development Plan (2010–2020). The program was treated as an
important part of the national key talent project and supports national development for
high-end intellectuals (MOE, 2011, Items 1–2). These statements in the new implementation
policy indicate that the program has been fully integrated into the state’s national
development plan and imply improved governance from the state.

The new policy specified that the new program is funded by the dedicated funding from
the central government (MOE, 2011, Item 8). The MOE reviews the performance of the
appointed scholars and annually allocates the financial support of the program for universities
(MOE, 2011, Item 27). The “visible hand” of the MOE can also be observed in the measures
of promoting the program in universities of western China. In 2011, the MOE stated that it
would provide preferential policies to support universities of western China to attract
intellectuals to apply for the program in these universities (MOE, 2011, Item 23). Moreover,
the MOE specifically stated that universities of eastern China are not allowed to recruit
Chang Jiang Scholars appointed by universities of the western area (MOE 2014, Item 4).

12 See the previous footnote for the source.
Discussion

Reflections on Reform Strategies: Achievements and Challenges

More than 18 years have passed since the Chang Jiang Scholar Program was initiated in 1998. The program has made great achievements and gained global acclaim. It utilized funding from the non-government sector and encouraged competition among universities and applicants, while the state was able to maintain strong governance on the program. This strong-governance market approach has attracted numerous world-renowned scholars to Chinese universities and enhanced the competitiveness of universities in teaching and research.

As of September 2016, 3,032 scholars have been awarded as Chang Jiang Scholars, of which 1,991 are distinguished professors, 830 are chair professors, and 211 are young scholars.\textsuperscript{13} Figure 4 presents the number of scholars from 1999–2015.\textsuperscript{14} The Chang Jiang Young Scholarship has been a new scheme of this program since 2015. The number awarded (211) that year was larger than the total number of chair professors (49) and distinguished professors (152) in the same year.

\textsuperscript{13} All the statistics of Chang Jiang Scholars program (unless otherwise stated) are calculated by the author based on the information extracted from MOE.

\textsuperscript{14} The program started in 1998 and awarded the first batch of scholars in 1999. The number of scholars in 2014 was a lump sum for 2013 and 2014.
Figure 4 Number of Chang Jiang Scholars, 1999-2015

The report from MOE on the achievement of the program (MOE, 2014) and the press release by LKSF\(^\text{15}\) indicated that the scholars have contributed significantly to research and teaching in hosted universities. Several scholars became chief scientists that headed national projects funded by the National Natural Science Foundation, National Social Science Foundation, and National Science and Technology Research Projects. Several scholars became chief directors of national key laboratories and national engineering (technology) research centers. Several scholars were granted National Natural Science Awards, National Innovation Awards, National Technology Progress Awards, Higher Education’s Humanities, and Social Sciences Achievement Awards. Many scholars were granted prestigious international awards. Moreover, they held important positions in international academic organizations or leadership positions in universities or were editors of international key academic journals (MOE, 2014).

They also played an important role in teaching and cultivating students and young scholars by

\(^{15}\) Mainland’s higher education reform, academic leaders nurtured as “Cheung Kong Scholars Programme” Celebrates 10th Anniversary. [http://www.lksf.org/20081205-2/](http://www.lksf.org/20081205-2/).
teaching core curricula and developing interdisciplinary and emerging disciplines (MOE, 2014).

However, the program has produced unequal development across regions, provinces, and disciplines (Jiang, forthcoming). As of 2016, 65% of the scholars are in the eastern area (1981 out of 3032 scholars), whereas less than 15% are in the western area (421 out of 3032 scholars). Beijing (832 Scholars), Shanghai (399 Scholars), and Jiangsu Province (266 Scholars) in the eastern area have more than 250 scholars, whereas Hainan and Ningxia Provinces in the western area only have one scholar (Jiang, forthcoming). The allocation of the funding support of the program is also unequal across disciplines. The program has expanded the coverage of natural sciences and engineering to the humanities and social sciences since 2004. However, more than 80% of the scholars are from natural science and engineering fields. The Chinese government’s strategic provision of funding to groom few universities to rank highly in global league tables has also intensified the inequality among universities, thereby stratifying universities and the treatment of students throughout the country (Mok and Jiang, 2017; Mok and Han, 2017).

**Governance with Strong Government Presence in Managing Universities**

The above discussion has also demonstrated how the Chinese government attempted to engage non-state actors by involving both local and overseas providers in creating higher education opportunities. The government implemented these schemes to achieve its strategic goal of development while selectively identifying a few universities for competition at the global level to emphasize China’s world-class status. Mok et al. critically examined the different types of higher education institutions, particularly those offered by *minban* colleges and transnational higher education in collaboration with overseas institutions, and argued that the higher education development in mainland China has gone through marketization,
privatization, and transnationalization (see, Mok and Wang, 2014; Mok and Chan, 2012; Mok and Han, 2017). Nonetheless, the emergence of the education market in China should not be understood as a free marketplace similar to its counterparts in the UK and the USA because the Chinese government has never committed to the free education market philosophy. The rise of the education market by having more non-state actors (including both local and overseas players) in offering learning opportunities for Chinese citizens should be interpreted as the policy tools. Such measures are carefully and tactically employed by the government to increase higher education enrollment, diversify learning experiences, and meet the changing needs of the market rather than the government’s commitment to opening the education sector freely to the market. The above analysis of the Chang Jiang Scholars Program was initiated by the Chinese government to attract eminent scholars and overseas talents and enhance the global competitiveness of its universities for world-class university status. Therefore, “a partial market approach” was adopted by introducing the non-government sector to provide funding and encouraging competition among universities and applicants. In the first 10 years of the program, LKSF provided approximately 15 million funding support, which significantly increased the amount of the scholarship award. However, the market approach is “partial” because the influence of the government can be observed in the implementation of the program. The government launched a New Chang Jiang Scholars Program in 2011 by incorporating it as part of the national strategic plan to develop high-end intellectuals. The funding of Program was fully supported by the government, and the competitions among universities and applicants for the program were encouraged.

Mok conceptualized the rise of non-state actors and the market in education provision in China. He argued that the education market is deliberately created by the state as a tool to fulfill its national development goals to allow the non-state actors or sectors to engage in higher education provisions (Mok, 2005). Mok labeled the Chinese “marketization of
education” as a form of “institutional transition,” which implies “a transition from highly centralized economic planning system to market economy” (Mok, 2000, p.122) rather than a total withdrawal from state control (Mok, 1999). Thus, the emerging education market characterized by the diversified provision of higher education learning opportunities captures the “state-governed market approach” adopted by the ruling regime. The above empirical analysis shows that the Chinese government’s tactical use of the market forces as a policy tool to steer reforms in higher education indicates the strong government role in university governance. Other countries have reinvented the management of the public sector by making the market and the civil society highly prominent in public policy provision and service delivery through “collaborative governance,” whereby “governance without the government” emerges in public sector management. However, the Chinese approach to public sector management (including university governance) is state-governed, wherein other non-state stakeholders are the only policy tools that perform a supplementary role under the strong state control instead of receiving the active participation of the non-state stakeholders in deciding and co-producing policy objectives and outcomes, as what the western counterparts do (Ansell and Gash, 2007; Pierre, 2000). The above discussion suggests that the Chinese government remains and maintains a decisive position in directing the development of higher education even though the higher education sector has gained diversified providers. Despite the introduction of more competition to drive universities’ performance, public universities in China, especially the selected few top universities, would continually enjoy “preferential treatment” with special allocations from the government for strategic developments. Other universities that would not enjoy such treatment are disadvantaged when competing with the top public universities under the 211 and 985 funding schemes. Thus, the university governance model that most public universities in China have experienced is a “state-governed market” model steered by the central government, which is different from the “market” or “corporate governance” and the “collaborative governance” of the UK or the shared
governance that the US universities have adopted.

We conceptualize the Chinese approach in university governance in light of different university governance models, such as bureaucratic governance in Russia; corporate governance in Hong Kong, Australia, and the UK; and shared governance in the USA. We argue that the university governance model of China can be considered as “governance with strong government presence” even though the education market emerges in China. The Chinese government’s orchestration in the quest for world-class university status by grooming a few selected universities and attracting or recruiting global talent for global ranking shows the prominent role of the state in university governance. Such university governance is different from the university governance models in the UK, Europe, and the USA, where higher education has encountered increasing market influence, thus leading to “corporate governance,” “shared governance,” and even “collaborative governance.” Instead of moving toward “governing through governance” (Bache, 2003, p.301) or “meta-governance,” where the state becomes a contractor, performance monitor, bench maker, and target setter engaged in the management of “the complexity, plurality and tangled hierarchies found in prevailing modes of coordination” (Jessop, 2004, p.70), the discussion on the changing university governance in the USA suggests that the conflicting experience emerges with “governance with strong state presence” in public sector management through “bureaucratic governance” in practice when the higher education sector is managed. China’s developmental state may devolve because of the growing influences of neoliberalism. However, the “hollowing out” of the nation state against the globalization context is yet to be proven, especially when many nation-states, such as China, have been successfully transformed as adaptive states that handle rapid socio-economic and significant political changes (Mok, 2017).
Conclusion

The university governance model shows how “centralized decentralization” operates in China. The Chinese government has encouraged more non-state actors to participate in higher education provision. However, the central government continues to influence the development of higher education through its central coordinating and monitoring role via the MOE. Therefore, several higher education experts conceptualize the university governance model in China as “bureaucratic governance” with strong state control, whereas the emerging education market has not operated under free market principles and mechanisms because it is only a “state-governed market” that serves the national development goals rather than adopting “corporate governance,” as did China’s counterparts in Hong Kong, the UK, Australia, and several European countries. The above case analysis shows the influence of the state in university governance and demonstrates “strong government presence” in university governance. The allocations of special funding support to the selected universities and the special measures adopted in attracting global talent vividly indicate the “bureaucratic governance” model adopted by the Chinese government to assert the global leadership in higher education.

Moreover, the “bureaucratic governance model” employed in university governance has inevitably led to negative consequences, especially when inequality is intensified in educational development. Li (2012) argued that while most economies in East Asia move to mass HE systems before they pursue world-class status, China has embarked on the two tasks simultaneously since the late 1990s (see also Mohrman & Wang, 2010). Nonetheless, the unintended consequences concomitant with the rapid higher education expansion should not be ignored. Marginson (2016) stated, “the quality of mass higher education is often problematic” (p. 1), such as the aggravating education inequality and declining quality in Chinese HEIs (Wu & Zheng, 2008; Zheng, 2006); the emotional satisfaction as self-perceived
weak country for “large portions of the country were controlled by European nations, the United States, Russia, and Japan through military and economic means” (Mohrman & Wang, 2010, p. 162); or the “hierarchical, stratified and meritocratic” tradition (Li, 2012, p. 330). The central government has conducted various projects that combine top–down and bottom–up policy developing process ever since its decision to expand the HE system in China by implementing “centralized decentralization” in university governance.

References


http://works.bepress.com/mokkh/244/.


