

Main trends in the development of the system of higher professional education in China

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The article examines the key directions in the evolution of the system of higher professional education in China in the context of globalization and modernization. The authors analyze statistical data, educational initiatives and reforms of recent decades, emphasizing the increasing focus on the quality of education, integration with the global educational space and the development of innovative programs. Particular attention is paid to cooperation between universities and enterprises, as well as teacher training and infrastructure development. The study emphasizes the importance of international exchange and partnership in the process of forming a competitive vocational education system capable of meeting the challenges of modern economic and technological development.

Keywords: higher professional education, China, globalization, internationalization, trends.

В статье рассматриваются ключевые направления эволюции системы высшего профессионального образования в Китае в контексте глобализации и модернизации. Авторы анализируют статистические данные, образовательные инициативы и реформы последних десятилетий, подчеркивая усиление фокуса на качестве образования, интеграции с мировым образовательным пространством и развитии инновационных программ. Особое внимание уделяется сотрудничеству между университетами и предприятиями, а также повышению квалификации преподавателей и развитию инфраструктуры. Исследование подчеркивает значимость международного обмена и партнерства в процессе формирования конкурентоспособной системы профессионального образования, способной отвечать на вызовы современного экономического и технологического развития.

Ключевые слова: высшее профессиональное образование, Китай, глобализация, интернационализация, тенденции.

Chinese traditional education underwent a significant transformation in the early twentieth century after extensive interaction with Western culture and science. The catalyst for this transformation was China's efforts to overcome the multifaceted crisis caused by military and economic conflicts with Western powers in the second half of the nineteenth century. This period of change witnessed key events including the Xinhai Revolution, democratic reforms, the rise of the Marxist movement, and the creation of the People's Republic of China (PRC).

Modern Chinese education predominantly reflects Western educational principles, primarily aimed at preparing people to contribute to the construction of a post-industrial, information society based on a market-oriented economy. This approach has proven to be remarkably effective, as evidenced by China's remarkable economic progress over the past three decades.

The article uses comprehensive approach to analyzing and discussing the evolution of China's education system. This approach integrates historical analysis, comparative studies, and empirical observations to provide a nuanced understanding of the changes and challenges faced by China's education system.

The article employs historical analysis to trace the origins and development of China's education system from its traditional roots to its modern incarnation influenced by Western educational principles. This method involves examining key historical events, such as the Xinhai Revolution and the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC), and their impact on the education sector.

By comparing China's education system with those of Western countries, the article sheds light on the adoption and adaptation of Western educational principles in China. This comparative approach helps in understanding the unique challenges and successes of integrating foreign educational models into a distinctly Chinese context.

The article relies on empirical observations to discuss the current state of China's education system, including its structure, admission processes, and the outcomes of its higher education institutions. This involves analyzing the data on enrollment rates, graduation rates, and the global rankings of Chinese universities.

The article delves into the analysis of specific policy initiatives, such as Project 211 and Project 985, which aimed at improving the quality and international standing of Chinese universities. This analysis examines the goals, implementation strategies, and impacts of these projects on China's higher education sector.

The modern Chinese education system, regulated by the laws of the People's Republic of China, includes several levels: preschool education, basic school education, covering primary, secondary and higher schools, secondary specialized or vocational education and higher education. Notably, Chinese universities tend to specialize in specific disciplines, comparing to the broader, interdisciplinary approach of many well-known European and American universities. To attract foreign students, education at all Chinese universities is bilingual, both Chinese and English.

Admission to higher education in China is highly competitive and is celebrated as a significant achievement for young people. In addition, there is a system of incentives for academically gifted students and orphans, facilitating their entry into higher education institutions. The admission process is based on certificate grade point average and results from a nationally standardized test administered within one day. Applicants are subsequently categorized based on their test scores, with those with the highest scores gaining admission to tertiary institutions, while those with lower but still qualifying scores are given places at provincial institutes. This system not only creates a powerful incentive for focused work in secondary school, but also improves the quality of selection of applicants.

Chinese higher education institutions offer education at three levels:

- Bachelor's degree programs (lasting 4–5 years);
- Master's level programs (lasting 2–3 years);
- Doctoral programs (usually lasting 3–5 years).

Technical, educational, linguistic and medical specialties are highly valued by young scientists, while social sciences (such as economics, law, political science and journalism) and medical faculties face shortages. Master of Business Administration (MBA) programs have been gaining popularity in recent years. While the primary language of instruction is Chinese, some higher education institutions, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, offer programs in English, providing students with options for language preferences.

Despite the significant number of universities within the country, a significant proportion of Chinese applicants prefer to enroll in foreign universities. This preference stems from the belief among many students that foreign education provides a distinct advantage in a competitive job market. Some students are looking for an alternative to the strict Chinese language exam system. In 2019, according to the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 459,8 thousand Chinese students received education abroad [1, p. 4]. Notably, 92 % of these Chinese students self-funded their education, approximately 7 % received government support, and 1 % were sponsored by enterprises and organizations [2].

China's higher education institutions do not follow a single curriculum. This discrepancy arises from the need to take into account regional nuances, availability of teaching staff and educational resources. Various forms of education are offered, including full-time, part-time, evening and external programs [1].

Successful students are eligible for increased scholarships and fellowships funded by various corporate foundations that actively seek highly qualified graduates. It is noteworthy that about 85 % of higher education graduates in China start careers in their respective fields, which is a commendable global statistic. In addition, China boasts an extensive network of vocational education institutions, including vocational schools, which provide training for mid-level specialists. There is also a network of institutions engaged in retraining and advanced training of personnel, in which more than 12 million people are educated and trained. In addition, a significant number of Chinese citizens choose to study abroad. For example, about 30 thousand foreign students from more than 100 countries study at Belarusian universities, with the largest contingent coming from China (more than 7 thousand) [3].

China has now implemented an accelerated capacity building strategy that includes support for higher education. This strategy aims to rapidly increase the nation's human and productive capacity even as China continues to provide educational services. Cooperation with foreign universi-

ties and scholarship programs targeting government officials, teachers, university faculty and students play a key role in achieving this goal. Such initiatives also facilitate cross-border transfer of expertise. At the same time, the National Strategy provides for measures aimed at creating favorable conditions for the repatriation of qualified specialists to China.

China is increasingly emphasizing the need to strengthen ties between higher education institutions, research centers and real productive structures such as corporations and enterprises. This trend reflects the growing specialization in education, where individual programs are designed to meet the specific requirements of employers, often represented by professional associations or large corporations. In addition to traditional work experience, there is the concept of «vocational internship», which involves more extensive work and specialized training in managerial or technological skills [2]. In addition, enterprises, as potential employers, have the opportunity to participate in the modernization of the educational process, which may include the provision of industrial laboratories for practical training.

China is implementing programs aimed at early identification and support of talented individuals among students, scientists, inventors and others. These initiatives are aimed at stimulating their development and promoting career growth. It is noteworthy that in China, a talented university graduate or candidate of science sent for further study abroad is guaranteed a certain level of salary upon return, as well as living and working conditions comparable to foreign colleagues in leading educational or business centers of developed countries.

Chinese universities serve as centers of national science, and each institution strives to maintain a high level of scientific and innovative activity to maintain its status. These universities host about 100 laboratories and 40 engineering centers, equipped in accordance with international standards. Moreover, Chinese universities have played a key role in the creation of about 200 technology parks and technopolises, which carry out large-scale development and innovation projects, receiving significant funding either from the state budget or from private investors.

Another notable aspect of China's higher education system is its admission of international students. Approximately 450 higher education institutions in China have the right to admit foreign citizens to study. Currently, students from more than 100 countries, including the US, Canada, the UK, Australia, Russia and the EU countries, are studying in China. Eligible candidates must have completed secondary education, be at least 18 years of age, be fluent in Chinese and English, and undergo an interview, usually including a test and subsequent discussion of the results. Those with different levels of language proficiency can enroll in specialized courses to master the Chinese language, with standard programs designed for 2 years, and accelerated ones for 1 year [4].

The revival of the Chinese higher education system can be traced back to the mid-1990s, when initiatives were put forward to improve the quality of Chinese education and increase its international recognition. In the 1990s, two long-term programs to support the development of domestic universities were introduced: Project 211 and Project 985. Under these programs, universities were taken with identifying their own shortcomings, drawing inspiration from the best practices of foreign universities and implementing measures to bridge the gap between the higher education system China and global international standards. To achieve these goals, significant funding was provided to universities participating in these projects.

The higher education landscape in China is evolving rapidly, influenced by a combination of domestic needs and global trends. Chinese universities are increasingly seeking to internationalize their programs. This includes attracting foreign students, establishing partnerships with overseas institutions, and contributing to global research efforts. The government continues to promote initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative to enhance academic exchange.

There is a growing focus on fostering innovation and research capabilities within higher education institutions. The government is likely to continue investing in research funding and infrastructure to support the transformation of universities into research-led institutions that contribute to technological advancement. The complexity of modern challenges is leading to a movement towards interdisciplinary education. Higher education institutions in China are expected to promote programs that combine different fields, breaking down silos to better prepare students for real-world problems.

As global concerns about climate change and sustainability grow, higher education institutions in China may increasingly incorporate these themes into their curricula and research agendas. This includes promoting awareness and education around sustainable development goals (SDGs). Ongoing reforms in higher education policy are expected, particularly regarding admission standards, funding, and governance structures. The focus may shift toward improving quality and ensuring that institutions are held accountable for educational outcomes.

The concept of lifelong learning is gaining traction in China, with more flexible educational pathways being developed for adult learners. This includes online courses and certification programs designed for working professionals looking to upskill or transition careers. To enhance the global recognition of Chinese degrees, there will likely be a stronger focus on quality assurance measures and accreditation processes. Institutions will be encouraged to meet international standards to improve the competitiveness of their graduates.

The future of higher professional education in China will likely be driven by innovation, collaboration, and a commitment to quality and practical skills development. Institutions will have to adapt to both domestic demands and global educational trends to remain competitive and relevant.

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