

Cross-Border Higher Education Institutions in Mainland China: A developmental perspective

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Abstract. Cross-border higher education institutions are considered a main way to fulfill the educational internationalization in Mainland China; to some extent they represent the attitude of entering the international market. In this paper, the history, status quo, and future of Chinese-foreign cooperatively-run schools are analyzed and discussed. Cross-border higher education institutions in Mainland China have experienced the process from accidental and disorder to a systematic and quality orientation.

Keywords: cross-border Higher Education, Chinese-foreign cooperatively-run schools, development, internationalization

Introduction

In order to advance the development of cross-border higher education institutions, *i.e.* Chinese-Foreign Cooperatively-run Schools (CFCRSs), the State Council and the Ministry of Education in the early 1980s successively promulgated a series of laws, regulations and policies related to CFCRSs which were realized from accidental and disorder to a systematic and quality orientation. As of April 2014, there were 954 Chinese-Foreign Cooperatively-run Projects (CFCRPs) and 57 institutions which were reviewed by the Ministry of Education (MOE, 2014).

Chinese-foreign cooperation in running schools consists of educational institutions and educational programs. CFCRSs refer to being co-sponsored by a foreign educational institution and educational institution in China to recruit students (MOE, 2003). CFCRSs are divided into institutions with independent legal entity and those without it. The University of Nottingham Ningbo belongs to the former and the International College of University of International Business and Economics belongs to the latter.

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CFCRSs are an essential part of Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools and have a greater impact than CFCRPs. In this paper, through a literature review and from an historical perspective, we attempt to clarify the development route of CFCRSs and analyze the present situation to ascertain strategies for the future.

The past of CFCRSs

In the early 1980s, overseas universities attempted to cooperate with Chinese colleges and universities. Owing to the shortage of domestic higher education resources, the Chinese education market was opened to foreign colleges and universities. With an increasing trend towards international exchanges and cooperation between universities around the world, the introduction of foreign high-quality education resources became a means of improving the quality of education and standardization (Huang, 2006). In order to standardize the development of CFCRSs, the State Council and the Ministry of Education in the mid-to-late 1990s enacted laws and regulations which transitioned CFCRSs to a formal, systematic, and structured development path (Huang, 2003). The policy evolution of CFCRSs in Mainland China can be divided into three stages:

Beginning (1992-1994)

In the 1980s, many developed countries reduced funds for higher education to alleviate economic pressure; therefore, universities cooperated with overseas colleges by providing paid courses to survive (Yang, 2006).

As a world superpower China became their first choice. At that time, China was reforming and opening up and also appealed to more efforts on higher education. The 1993 document *China's Education Reform and Development Outline* emphasized the imperative for China to open further its market to the outside world and to strengthen education exchanges and cooperation under relevant state laws and regulations (The State Council, 1993).

With the influence of national policy and international environment, the first CFCRS was established in 1992—the School of Science and technology of Yanbian University. In order to support the development of CFCRSs, MOE in 1993 issued *Notice About Foreign Institutions and Individuals Cooperating Opening Schools in China* which was the preliminary regulation regarding co-sponsored schools.

During this period, there were 4 CFCRSs established in Mainland China. As can be seen in Table 1, they were the School of Science and technology of Yanbian University, the College of Economics, Trade and Management of Zhengzhou University, the School of China Europe International Business of Shanghai Jiao Tong University, and the Sydney College of Business Administration of Shanghai University.

Table 1 indicates that prior to 1995 these CFCRSs were non-independent legal entity institutions which were only located in three provinces and cities—Jilin, Henan and Shanghai. Among them, there were 3 CFCRSs which were co-sponsored by Chinese universities and foreign organizations or individual institutions while Sydney College of Business Administration of Shanghai University was the only one co-sponsored by a university, the earliest public Chinese-Foreign Cooperative Business School.

Table 1. The CFCRSs before 1995

| University | Mainly co-sponsored | | Year Established | Independent legal entity |
|--|-------------------------------|--|------------------|--------------------------|
| | China | Foreign | | |
| School of Science and Technology of Yanbian University | The government of Yanji city | Zhenqing King (US) | 1992 | No |
| College of Economics, Trade and Management of Zhengzhou University | Zhengzhou University | Taipei Guangxing cultural foundation | 1994 | No |
| School of China Europe International Business of Shanghai Jiao Tong University | Shanghai Jiao Tong University | European Foundation for Management Development (EQUIS) | 1994 | No |
| Sydney College of Business Administration of Shanghai University | Shanghai University | Sydney University of Technology | 1994 | No |

Source: The platform of information monitoring for CFCRSs and the website of the universities above

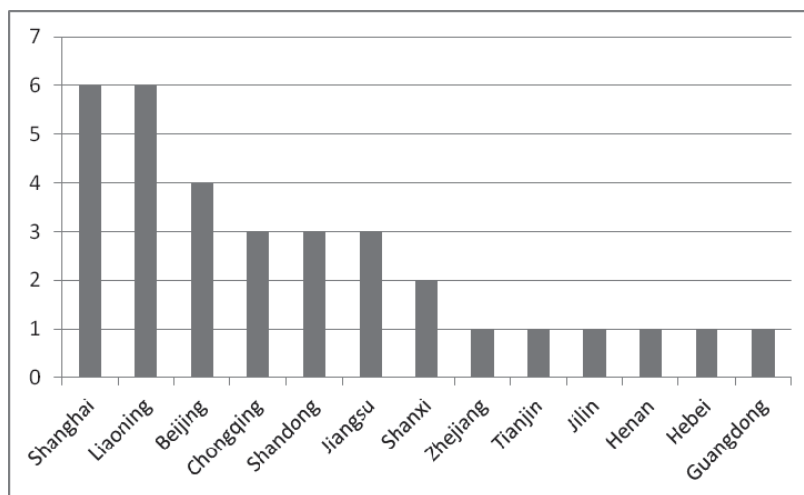
Big leap (1995-2009)

After the World Trade Organization (WTO) began regarding education as service goods, cross-border education became more popular. In order to take advantage of the opportunity of higher education development, many Chinese universities were eager to work with foreign higher education institutions in running collaborative schools. In order to standardize the development of CFCRSs, the State Council in 1995 promulgated *Provisional Regulations on Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools* which detailed rules regarding principle, approval authority, procedure, etc. in running schools (MOE, 1995). *Regulations on Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools* issued in 2003 provided clearer definition and specification and provided basic legal support. By now, CFCRSs were on the way to gradually regularizing development.

In 2007 MOE established two platforms and two mechanisms in order to implement the regulation of CFCRSs and to prevent some institutions and projects from falsely advertising their activities. They included supervision information and certificate authentication platforms, quality evaluation system law enforcement and punishment mechanisms. From 1995 to 2009, CFCRSs increased rapidly. There were 33 co-sponsored by 28 universities which were distributed in 13

provinces around the country. Those in Shanghai and Liaoning province accounted for 36.4% of the total (Figure 1).

It is worth mentioning that at this stage CFCRSs were mainly operated by non-independent legal entities, but there were also 4 independent legal entity institutions: Cheung Kong Graduate School of Business (2002); The University of Nottingham Ningbo (2003); Beijing Normal University-Hong Kong Baptist University United International College (2005); and Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University (2006).



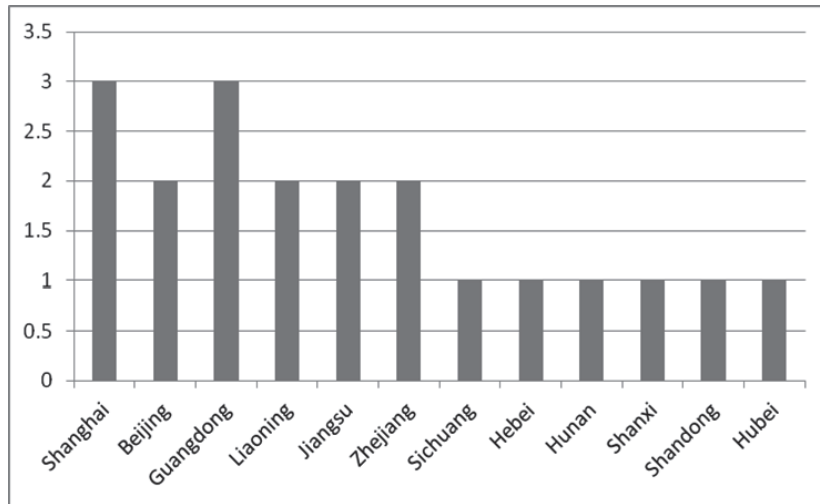
Source: The platform of information monitoring for CFCRSs

Figure 1. Distribution of CFCRSs, 1995-2009

Quality orientation (2010-present)

In 2010 MOE promulgated *the National Medium- and Long-term Plan for Education Reform and Development (2010-2020)* which proposed establishing a number of CFCRSs and several CFCRPs. Since then there have emerged twenty CFCRSs of which four institutions have independent legal entity (Figure 2). Nine of the nineteen Chinese universities co-sponsoring CFCRSs are 985 Project¹ universities. In addition, it should be pointed out that China-EU College of Clean and Renewable Energy at Huazhong University of Science & Technology is the third China-EU school after China-EU International Business School and China-EU School of Law was founded.

¹ The 985 Project is a Chinese government national project launched in 1998 to build a number of world-class universities; by 2014 there were forty-one such universities.



Source: The platform of information monitoring for CFCRSs

Figure 2. Distribution of CFCRSs since 2010

The status quo of CFCRSs

For more than twenty-two years, two distinctive features can be identified: from quantity to quality and from insufficient information to information transparency. The current development situation of CFCRSs is analyzed below from six aspects: organizational patterns, geographical distribution, university participation, country source, educational levels and category, and specialized subjects.

Organizational patterns of CFCRSs

According to the principle organizational elements of composition and organization settings, the organizational patterns of CFCRSs are divided into colleges with independent legal entity and colleges without.

Colleges with an independent legal entity

By April, 2014 there were or had been eight CFCRSs with independent legal entity in Mainland China (Table 2). They constituted 14% of the total.

Table 2 indicates that all the foreign universities are internationally well-known ones from the United States, the United Kingdom and Hong Kong while half of the Chinese Universities belong to 985 Project Universities.

Colleges without an independent legal entity

According to statistics, there are 49 CFCRSs without an independent legal entity which make up 86 percent of the total. Obviously, they are the major part of CFCRSs and were easier to be approved by the government.

Table 2. CFCRSs with independent legal entity

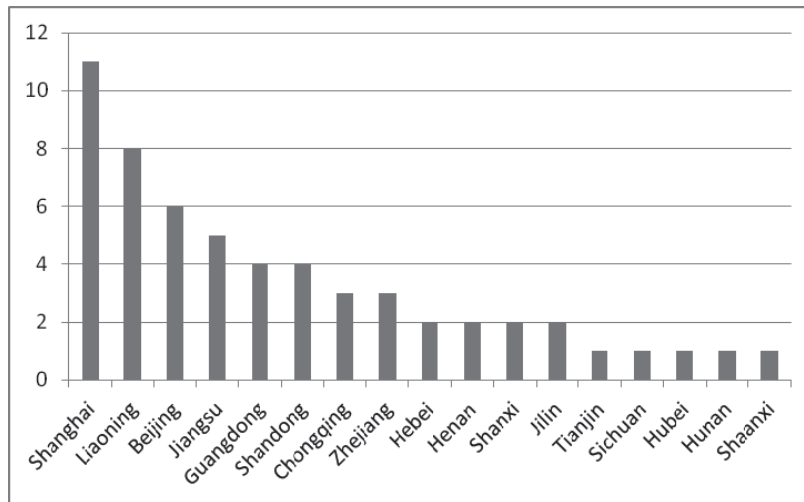
| Name | Province | Year | Chinese | Foreign | Region | Degrees | Certificate |
|---|-----------|------|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------|------------------------------|---------------------|
| Cheung Kong Graduate School of Business | Beijing | 2002 | Shantou University | Li Ka-shing' foundation (foreign) | Hong Kong | Master | Chinese |
| University of Nottingham Ningbo China | Zhejiang | 2003 | Zhejiang Wanli University | The University of Nottingham | the United Kingdom | Bachelor Master Doctor | Chinese and Foreign |
| Beijing Normal University - Hong Kong Baptist University United International College | Guangdong | 2005 | Beijing Normal University | Hong Kong Baptist University | Hong Kong | Bachelor | Chinese and Foreign |
| Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University | Jiangsu | 2006 | Xi'an Jiaotong University | University of Liverpool | the United Kingdom | Bachelor Master Doctor | Foreign |
| New York University Shanghai | Shanghai | 2011 | East China Normal University | New York University | the United States | Bachelor | Chinese and Foreign |
| Duke Kunshan University | Jiangsu | 2012 | Wuhan University | Duke University | the United States | Bachelor Master Doctor | Foreign |
| Wenzhou-Ken University | Zhejiang | 2014 | Wenzhou University | Ken university in the United States | the United States | Bachelor | Foreign |
| The Chinese University of Hong Kong | Guangdong | 2014 | Shenzhen University | Chinese University of Hong Kong | Hong Kong | Bachelor Master Doctor | Foreign |

Source: The websites of the above CFCRSs

Geographical distribution

As can be seen in Figure 3, by April, 2014 there were CFCRSs distributed in seventeen provinces and cities in Mainland China: Shanghai (11), Liaoning (8), Beijing (6), Jiangsu (5), and Guangdong (4). The geographical distribution is largely attributed to their economic and educational development level and also closely related to the extent to which local authorities emphasize the internationalization of their higher education.

The geographical distribution of CFCRSs reflects the imbalanced development of Chinese education. More importantly, the eight CFCRSs with independent legal entity are distributed in Zhejiang (2), Jiangsu (2), Guangdong (2), Beijing (1) and Shanghai (1). These areas have more open educational policies with richer economic and cultural resources.



Source: The platform of information monitoring for CFCRSs

Figure 3. Geographic distribution of CFCRSs

University participation

Chinese universities

At present, there are 47 CFCRSs co-sponsored by colleges and universities in Mainland China. The percentage is only 2.4% of more than 2000 institutions. The percentage, therefore, is very low. Based on current Chinese classifications, universities are divided into four types: 985 Project university, 211 Project² university, and key university (non-985 or non-211) and other colleges.

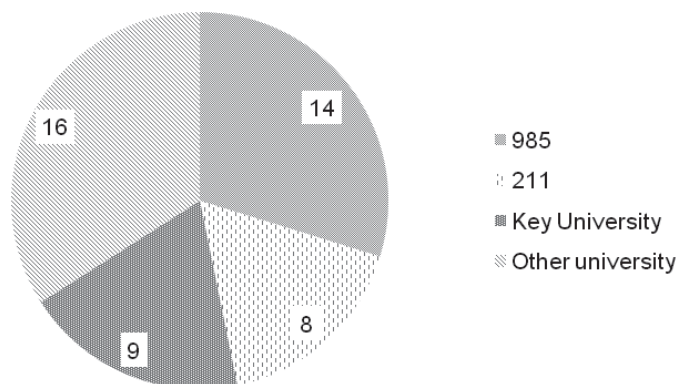
The 985 colleges and universities account for 29.8% of the total. Figure 4 shows the percentage of non-211 universities remains at 53.2% which is higher than 211 and 985 universities, but from the perspective of the number of each type, the percentage of non-211 universities, with more than 2000 colleges and universities, is much less relatively speaking. It also shows that 985 Project universities are more international in terms of cooperating with foreign partners.

Overseas universities

There are ninety-two overseas universities which are involved in CFCRSs, of which there are fourteen universities within top two hundred based on the 2014 World University Rankings by the Times Higher Education Supplement. They are mainly universities in the United States and the United Kingdom, which are University of Michigan (17), Duke University (18), Carnegie Mellon University (24), New York University (38), The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (51), University of Edinburgh (52), University of Pittsburgh (91), The University of Sheffield (121), The

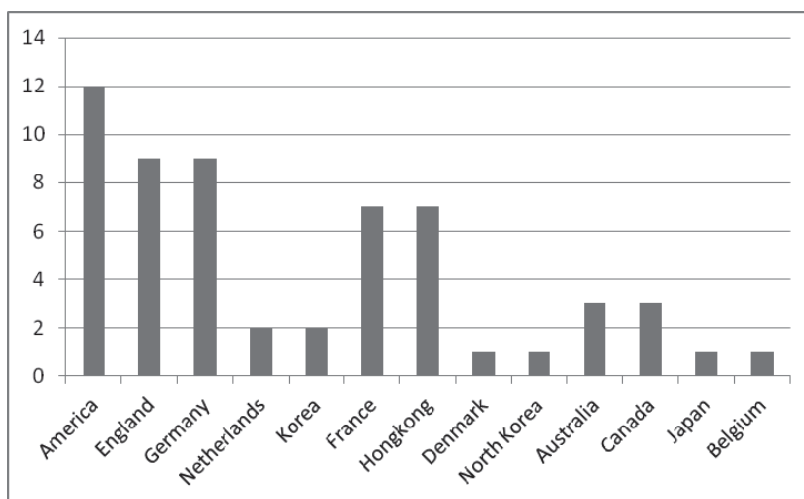
² The 211 Project is a Chinese government national project launched in 1995 to build 100 world-class universities in 21st century.

Chinese University of Hong Kong (129), The University of Leeds (146), Aarhus University (153), University of Liverpool (157), University of Copenhagen (160) and The University of Nottingham (171). Of the seven overseas universities of CFCRSs with an independent legal entity, there are five universities which rank in the top two hundred universities. Accordingly, it is not sufficiently attractive for top universities to be involved in CFCRSs in Mainland China; top foreign universities are more interested in CFCRPs.



Source: The platform of information monitoring for CFCRSs

Figure 4. Distribution of university Category



Source: The platform of information monitoring for CFCRSs

Figure 5. Distribution of countries and regions

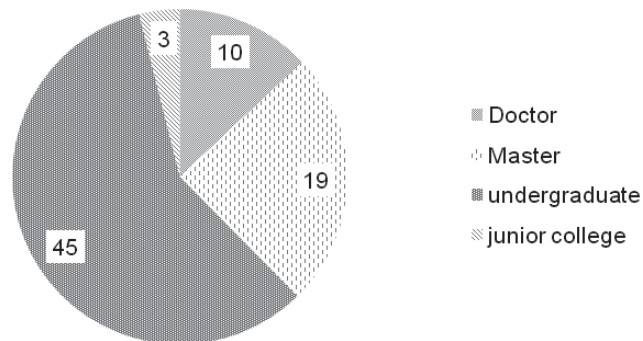
Countries and regions

There are fifteen developed countries (regions) participating in CFCRSs. The top three countries are the United States (12), the United Kingdom (9) and Germany (9) (Figure 5). There are only two CFCRSs which are operated by two or more countries, namely Canada and the United States.

Educational levels

The CFCRSs give priority to education with a record of formal schooling, none of which is a non-degree education provider. It accounts for only 35.1% of those combining academic and non-degree education.

Among them, there are forty-five CFCRSs offering a Bachelor's degree, nineteen CFCRSs offering a Master's degree, 10 CFCRSs offering a Doctor's degree, six CFCRSs with specialized and other education, and twenty CFCRSs with two or more degree education (Figure 6).



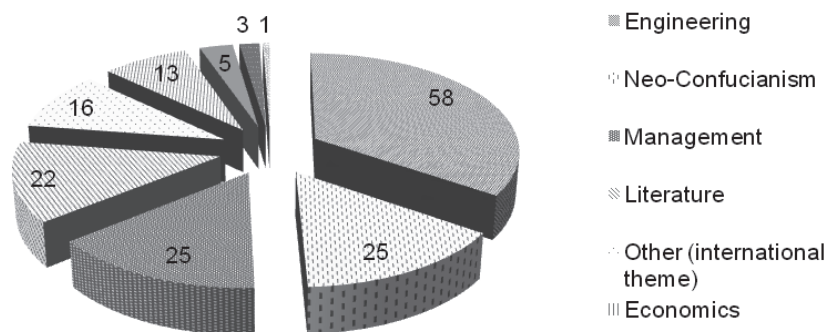
Source: The platform of information monitoring for CFCRSs

Figure 6. Distribution of academic programs by educational level

Distribution of specialized subjects

Figure 7 indicates that there are 168 specialized subjects provided by the CFCRSs. Among them, the number of engineering (civil and electrical engineering) is the largest (58) of all majors with 34.5%. The second is management (business administration and marketing) and natural science (mathematics and chemistry) which are 25 majors for 14.9%. There are twenty-two majors of the literature (including Journalism and Art) for 13.1% and economics (international finance and financial

accounting) with thirteen majors for 7.7%. The remaining majors are pedagogy, medical science, and agronomy. As shown, the majors of science, engineering and management play a main part in the CFCRSs which reflects the choice and demand of Mainland China for overseas higher education.



Source: The platform of information monitoring for CFCRSs

Figure 7. Distribution of specialized subjects

The future of CFCRSs

For the last twenty-two years CFCRSs have experienced three different and important development stages. Quantitatively speaking, the number has increased to fifty-seven cross-border institutions, of which eight are with independent legal entity, fourteen international branch schools in Singapore and nine schools in Malaysia (Zhang, 2014). Future trends of CFCRSs are as follows:

Enhancing and insuring the quality and level of the CFCRSs

First, establishing a number of CFCRSs is a priority for many provinces. For example, Shanghai proposed a number of high-level universities in collaboration with overseas universities (Shanghai education committee, 2010); Zhejiang proposed that by 2015, it should attract well-known foreign colleges and universities to establish two or three Chinese-foreign high-level universities, five to eight cooperatively-run schools of universities (Zhejiang Provincial Education Department, 2010). Guangdong has also stated that it would introduce three to five different types of famous foreign universities by 2020 (Guangdong Provincial Education Department, 2010).

Second, the quality of evaluation and supervision of CFCRSs should be improved and strengthened. With their rapid development in Mainland China, quality assessment and supervision

plays an important role in promoting healthy and sustainable development of CFCRSs. The Ministry of Education plans to make use of the two platforms and two mechanisms in the quality assurance system, evaluating the approval and education of CFCRSs, which results in open and transparent information.

Establishing more high level CFCRSs with an independent legal entity

Compared with CFCRSs of non-independent legal entity, the development of CFCRSs with independent legal entity has greatly lagged behind, even compared with Singapore and Malaysia. Based on the national and many provincial medium and long-term education development outlines, there will emerge more CFCRSs with independent legal entity established in the next decade. That reflects the tendency of CFCRSs in China.

Adjusting regional structure of CFCRSs

As mentioned above, compared with mid-western provinces, the regional layout of CFCRSs in Mainland China is given priority in eastern ones. Currently, there are only eleven CFCRSs in the mid-west while all eight schools with independent legal entity are in the east. And many provinces and cities, including Beijing, Shanghai, Zhejiang, Jiangsu, Guangdong and some others in the east have suggested creating a number of high level CFCRSs by 2020. It is predictable that the CFCRSs will be developed rapidly in the east.

Considering there are fewer CFCRSs in the mid-western part of China, a new strategy should be developed. On the one hand, the central government should allocate more resources to the middle and western part of China and encourage high level overseas universities to cooperate with local universities or colleges in these regions. Although it proposed to open several CFCRPs in *Higher Education Revitalization Plan in Mid-West (2012-2020)* (MOE, 2013), the number is obviously insufficient. On the other hand, local authorities and universities should provide the impetus for developing CFCRSs, especially ones with independent legal entity and for encouraging and supporting universities to create schools in collaboration with world-famous universities. For instance, *The long-term Plan for Education Reform and Development of Sichuan Province (2010-2020)* has clearly proposed that universities should be encouraged to establish CFCRSs.

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