

Governance of Higher Education Institutions in China: Structures and Trends

LIU Baocun

Institute of International and Comparative Education

Beijing Normal University

Outlines

- 1. Background of Governance of Higher Education
- 2. Governance of Higher Education System
- 3. Governance of Higher Education Institutions
- 4. Problems and Reforms of Governance of Higher Education Institutions
- 5. Conclusion

1. Background of Governance of Higher Education

- The governance and management of higher education institutions in China is specified by different national laws and regulations.
- The governance and management system of Chinese higher education has its roots in a long history of centralized culture, and the administrative and management system of the country, but it is also affected by the current administrative and management system of China.

- 1.1 Culture of Centralized Governance and Management

- Qin Dynasty established a centralized system of governance which lasted for more than 2000 years.

- The culture of centralized governance and management has a strong impact, not only on China's political system but also on every aspect of governance and management of the country, including the governance and management of education.



● 1.2 The Structure of the Political System

- The political system China was established in October 1949 on the mainland, including the legal system, and a series of laws and practices related to such essential issues as state political power, the system of government, and the relationship between state and society.
- The five leading organs of the political system, namely the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, the State Council, the National People's Congress (NPC), the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) National Committee, and the Central Military Commission, constitute the decision-making system of the political system at the national level, and have a strong impact on the governance and management of higher education institutions.



● 1.3 The Development of Higher Education in China

- *Number of higher education institutions, number of students and gross enrollment rate in china (2010-2016)*

Year	Number of Higher Education Institutions	Number of Students (millions)	Gross Enrollment Rate (%)
2010	2723	31.05	26.5
2011	2762	31.67	26.9
2012	2790	33.25	30
2013	2788	34.60	34.5
2014	2824	35.59	37.5
2015	2852	36.47	40.0
2016	2880	36.99	42.7

2. Governance of Higher Education System

- 1.1 The vacillation between centralization and decentralization

The evolution of the higher education governance system in China

Time	Type of system
1950-1957	Centralized and unified governance system
1958-1962	Decentralization and hierarchical management
1963-1965	Unified leadership and hierarchical management
1966-1976	Decentralization and disorder
1976-	Unified leadership and hierarchical management

- 2.2 The Current Higher Education Administrative System in China

- The current administrative system of higher education is characterized by the unified leadership of central government and hierarchical administration by the central and provincial governments. The system operates at two levels, in three sequences, and with one executive body.

- The two levels are the levels of the central government and the provincial governments.
- At the first level, the State Council and the Ministry of Education are responsible for the central administration and overall guidance of the provincial governments and relevant central ministries and commissions with regard to the national principle of education and related policies, funding, and planning.
- At the second level, provincial governments and departments or commissions of education are responsible for the direct administration of higher education institutions affiliated to them.

- The three sequences refers to differential governance of higher education institutions according to their affiliations.
- The first sequence is the State Council, the provincial governments, and public and private institutions under the administration of the local governments.
- The second sequence is the State Council, the Ministry of Education, and public institutions affiliated to the Ministry of Education.
- Furthermore the third sequence is the State Council, central ministries and commissions, and public institutions affiliated to them.

- One executive body refers to the Ministry of Education.
- The Ministry of Education is responsible for the planning of national higher education development, establishment of new institutions, relevant policies, and regulations, evaluation of the quality of teaching and issues concerning teachers and students.
- Provincial governments run their own departments or commissions of education to lead the development of local higher education institutions with the guidance of the Ministry of Education.
- The other ministries and commissions of the State Council provide administration and coordination for higher education institutions affiliated to them with the guidance of the Ministry of Education.

- The functions of the Ministry of Education include
- policy-making and planning of higher education reform and development
- planning and coordination of higher education management, developing the standards for the setting up of higher education institutions
- developing discipline and major catalogue and relevant teaching regulations
- approving the establishment, name change, closure and adjustment of higher education institutions
- evaluating higher education, management of the overall outlay of higher education
- managing faculty and staff, admission of students and employment of graduates
- planning research, establishing policy on international cooperation and exchange
- and providing policy on degrees and the recognition of diplomas and degrees.

- The functions of the provincial government departments or commissions of education include
- guiding and supervising local colleges and universities
- implementing national policies, laws and regulations
- forecasting local demand for skills and qualified personnel
- drawing up a local development plan
- developing the budget allocation and audit of accounts
- promoting domestic and international cooperation

3. Governance of Higher Education Institutions

- 3.1 The System of Leadership of Higher Education Institutions
- The leadership system of a higher education institution defines the relationships among various leading forces in that institution. The most important leading forces in higher education institutions are the political force represented by the CPC Institution Committee and the administrative force represented by the president. Under the influence of political and economic development, the system of leadership changed frequently, adjusting the relationship between the political force and the administrative force.

The evolution of the leadership system of higher education institutions in China

Time	Type of leadership system
1950-1956	Presidential responsibility
1956-1961	The Institutional Affairs Committee take overall responsibility under the leadership of the CPC Institution Committee.
1961-1966	The Institution Affairs Committee headed by the president take overall responsibility under the leadership of CPC Institution Committee.
1966-1976	Revolutionary Committee taking overall responsibility under the leadership of CPC institution committee.
1976-1985	President shares responsibility under the leadership of CPC Institution Committee.
1984-1989	Presidential responsibility
1989-	Presidential responsibility under the leadership of CPC Institution Committee

- *The Higher Education Act* promulgated in 1998 defines the leadership system clearly. In higher education institutions run by the state, the president takes overall responsibility under the leadership of CPC Institution Committee in higher education institutions.
- The leading role of CPC Institution Committee is the key feature of the decision-making system of higher education institutions in China. It is different from either the decision-making system dominated by the administrative forces or the decision-making system dominated by the academic forces.

- Key features of the current leadership system of higher education institutions
- First, the CPC Institution Committee plays a role of collective leadership.
- Second, the president is the legal representative of the higher education institution.
- Third, the academic committee and teaching and administrative staff congress are responsible for democratic management and supervision.

- 3.2 The Organizations and Structures of Higher Education Institutions
- A typical higher education institution has one CPC Institution Committee secretary, three to five CPC Institution Committee vice secretaries, one president, and three to five vice presidents, who constitute the university level team of collective leadership.
- The secretaries and presidents are the main members of the Institution Affairs Committee, which is quite similar to the governing board in other countries. The secretaries and presidents distribute the work among them and are responsible for different functions, tasks and disciplines.

- The operation of higher education institutions is based on two kinds of interconnected organizations to implement the management: functional organizations and academic organizations.
- The functional organizations, each with definite functions of management, include organizations at three levels: university, school, and department.
- The academic organizations mainly include three different kinds of organizations: academic committees, academic degree evaluation committees, and teaching and research organizations.

4. Problems and Reforms of Governance of Higher Education Institutions

- **4.1 Challenges to Higher Education Institutions**
- At the beginning of the 21st century, the world is undergoing great development, profound changes and major adjustments. The world has become multi-polar after the end of the Cold War, and international competition has become stronger. The globalization of the economy, development of the knowledge economy, dramatic changes in science and technology, and competition for talented personnel and professionals are intensifying with each passing day. Higher education has been given unprecedented importance and the demands on higher education have also been raised to a new standard.

- When we focus on China, the country is currently at a key stage for reform and development. In recent decades, all-round progress has been made in economic, political, cultural, and social development as well as in promoting ecological awareness.
- As industrialization, informatization, urbanization, marketization, and internationalization develop dramatically, China is exposed to increasing pressure by its huge population, limited natural resources, the environment, and the transformation of its pattern of economic growth.

- 4.2 Problems of Governance of Higher Education Institutions
- the relationship between the functions of the central government and local government
- lack of autonomy of higher education institutions
- the boundaries between political power, administrative power, and academic power are not clear

● 4.3 Reforms of Governance of Higher Education

- The strategic goal is to improve the quality of higher education in an all-round way and build a powerful system of higher education for the country.
- To achieve this goal, the operational system of higher education institutions shall be deepened, adhering to the principle of public good. A vigorous system should be put in place, whereby higher education institutions can provide diverse forms of education and are run by multiple entities under government guidance and with public participation.

- In the new system, the government should take the lead in running higher education institutions, while public and private institutions develop simultaneously and members of society are encouraged to participate in higher education governance to further stimulate the vitality of education, and meet the multi-layer and diverse educational needs of the public.

- In the field of higher education governance, the government called for reforms to promote the educational governance system and modernization, to increase the ability of educational governance to cope with the challenges and overcome the problems of higher education. The new system of higher educational governance emphasizes empowerment, university autonomy, shared governance, and social participation in policy-making.

- From these policies we can see the reform trend of governance of higher education in China.
- The responsibilities of governments at all levels shall be well defined.
- The autonomy of higher education institutions is to be implemented and expanded.
- The governance structure will be improved.

5. Conclusion

- China has a long history of traditional higher learning, but a relatively short history of modern higher education institutions. The centralized system of governance and management of higher education institutions in China is deeply influenced by the country's long history of centralized culture and the current system of administration and management of state political power. Such a governance system has both advantages and disadvantages, though it faces various challenges, difficulties, and problems. From the 1980s, the governance of higher education institutions has been undergoing reforms and changes, and it is expected that these reforms and changes will continue in the coming decades, as set out in the ambitious plans for the comprehensive economic and social reform of the country. A steady and prudent path rather than radical change is expected to improve the governance system of higher education institutions.

Thanks for Your Attention !