

**BOOK REVIEW: Morgan, W. J., & Wu, B. (Eds.).
(2013), *Higher Education Reform in China: Beyond the
Expansion*. Routledge. 190 pp., ISBN: 9780415726160.**

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Although the book, *Higher Education Reform in China: Beyond the Expansion*, is more than a decade old as this book review is written, the reviewers assert that it is worth reviewing for its relevance to ongoing social and educational trends and insights into the present and future development of higher education (HE), mainly in developing countries. Overall, Morgan and Wu's book contributes to Sustainable Development Goal 4, which stipulates ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all (United Nations, 2019). To respond to this goal, chapters 2 and 3 of this book respectively provide extensive discussions about lifelong learning for adults and the role of distance education in HE, which is popular during the COVID-19 pandemic in the last few years (see Em, 2021, Heng, Sol, & Em, 2023).

In addition to this, chapters 4 and 5 contribute to the expansion of HE enrollment in China by extensively focusing on private HE and reforming China's HE funding mechanism. These two chapters connect not only to current education issues related to inclusive schooling and equitable access to education but also to how to delegate power to higher education institutions, which is popular in the decentralized management of staff, resources, financials, and community participation, especially in developing countries like, for example, Cambodia (see Em, Khan, & Nun, 2022). Moreover, chapter 7 explains that the majority of doctoral graduates chose to work in HE and research institutions and to work in scientific and research-related jobs, not in high-ranking government officials, which is similar to that of most developing countries. Then, chapter 8 provides a response to Chinese education system reforms and the promotion of education quality.

The accounts of HE in chapter 8 tell readers about developing a new curriculum and reforming pre-service and in-service teacher professional development (see Em, Nun, & Phann, 2021). The educational reform in Hong Kong is discussed in Chapter 9 for educational and social integration. Therefore, chapters 8 and 9 contribute to equitable access and education quality, which are core components of current education policies in most countries.

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Along with the rise of HE enrollment, there have been some issues discussed in chapters 1 and 10, portraying the regional gaps and divisions of HE development and brain power stored overseas respectively. These are timeless lessons for readers and practitioners to learn and reflect on the real, practical context of higher education both in China and worldwide. In brief, the review of this book significantly contributes to the ongoing situation of higher education in developing countries.

A major transformation of HE in China took place over the past decade with rapid growth in the number of its graduates from less than one million a year in 2000 to stand at 6.3 million a year in 2011. China attempted to make HE available to many more of its citizens while continuing to develop its graduates' quality. China is exceptional among lower-income countries in using tertiary education as a development strategy on such a scale. The purpose of this book was to provide a critical examination of the challenges to the development and sustainability of HE in China and to consider the prospects for Chinese and foreign providers and other stakeholders concerning future HE in China.

A Brief Summary of the Book Coverage

Part I comprises four chapters addressing the process of widening the provision of HE such as the regional division of HE. The reform is to widen access for poor regions and people, but it increases the unequal share of HE resources by region. Chapter 1 entitled, "The Regional Division of the HE sectors in China: A Spatial Analysis", shows the regional gaps and divisions of HE development. The first HE reform was based on the principles of decentralization and the co-funding system which have a heavy impact on the direction, location, and redistribution of resources. This leads to four zones of HE in different regions. For example, Zone IV, comprising (Shaanxi, Hubei, Liaoning, Jilin, and Heilongjiang), is different from Zones II and III and will be confronted with double constraints of both lack of resources and local financial conditions because of the decline in the central government and poor economic performance. It seems an unfair and also inefficient practice for the central government funding to be concentrated on a few municipalities, such as Zone I (three municipalities of Beijing, Shanghai, and Tianjing, and an eastern coastal province, Jiangsu). This is particularly true for Beijing and Shanghai, which have been over-developed, according to the authors.

Chapter 2 entitled, "Adult Higher Education in China: Problems and Potential", focuses on adult education (lifelong learning for adults). The programs for adult HE includes both academic qualifications and non-academic qualifications. Adult HE academic qualifications are awarded upon the successful completion of the required courses. Admission requires applicants to reach the minimum scores in the national adult HE entrance examinations. HE institutions provide both day and evening university programs, correspondence education programs, and adult HE institutions. Adult HE enrolments increased from 100,000 in 1999 to 2.9 million in 2003. However, the current structure of university adult HE in China, in respect of both teaching and learning, does not fit in well with this concept of lifelong learning. HEs in China employ retired teachers and temporary teachers, even lowering the qualifications when recruiting. There is also a lack of laboratories, classrooms, and library resources in Chinese HE.

Chapter 3 entitled, "The Role of Distance Education in Higher Education in Contemporary China", identifies the role of distance education in HE in early 21st century China. Distance education is likely to continue to be an important means of providing continuing and professional education. It has two forms. The first includes China Central Radio and Television University, correspondence colleges, and evening universities, and the

second form is ICT-based distance education. Distance education and the Open University of China, have no entrance examination, making HE more accessible to a wider population. There appear to be three main problems to solve: the quality of the programs and learning experience, the credibility of the awards, and the shifts in pedagogy needed. The enrollment of urban students increased four times as many as rural enrollment, which reflects the increased economic and social inequality between rural and urban, and western and eastern/coastal populations.

Chapter 4 entitled, “Private Higher Education in China: Problems and Possibilities”, focuses on private HE in China. Although private HE has achieved tremendous developments since its establishment, there have been many problems with poor educational quality in private HE institutions compared to public HEs. But, private HEs in China also have higher tuition and higher unemployment among graduates. This has caused social stratification because the fee for private HE is high and only students with wealthy family backgrounds could afford them. Globalization, broadly speaking, benefits from developed and developing countries via the growth in the number of productive assets, cross-border investment, and economic growth.

In part II, there are three chapters. Chapter 5 entitled, “Thirty Years of Reforming China’s Higher Education Funding Mechanism”, describes thirty years of reforming China’s HE funding mechanism. The main goals were to allow the local government the freedom of managing funds by decentralizing the financial system controlled by the central government. Until the mid-1980s, HE in China was funded solely by the central government which faced enormous pressure to expand HE. The HE law was passed in 1998, introducing an HE funding mechanism (Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China, 1998). After that, many positive outcomes were achieved, such as widening participation, the diversity of institution type and educational provision, more equal distribution of public resources, fairer enrolment, and greater efficiency of both financial resources and HE institutions generally, but new issues and problems have also appeared such as unequal allocation of resources, the rent-seeking phenomenon, and the debt crisis.

Chapter 6 is entitled, “The Labor Market for Graduates in China”. The chapter analyses the current Chinese job market for HE graduates regarding the perspectives of job seeking, starting salaries, and the comparative advantages of different types of job seeking. In 2003, the findings of a nationwide survey of HE graduates showed that 61.5% of full samples had confirmed their next careers or study prospects, while 31.9% had signed their first job contract after graduation, but 27.3% had failed to find jobs. The average starting monthly salary for postgraduates was 3,005 Yuan RMB, exceeding the 1,501 Yuan RMB for undergraduates and 1,300 Yuan RMB for college graduates (PKU GSE, 2003). The empirical evidence shows a steady increase in the rate of return to HE and a lower percentage of highly educated workers in China compared with the corresponding international average, encouraging further development.

Chapter 7 is entitled “The Occupational Orientation of Doctoral Graduates in China”, which is divided into two perspectives. First, they inspect the exact expectation factors of the graduates themselves, including their expected working regions, working types, working contents, working unit, and income. Secondly, they inspect the dimension structure of their occupational orientation. Most of them chose to work in HE and research institutions and in scientific and research-related jobs. The doctoral graduates expected monthly wage and mean reservation wage were 6,300 RMB and 4,026 RMB, respectively. The Chinese doctoral graduates’ occupational orientation has a distinctive regional aggregation: their primary choice is the Eastern region. The middle and Western regions are lacking in attraction for

them. In terms of their actual employment, about 90% of those surveyed indicated that their jobs suited their fields of study fairly well or relatively well.

Part III, chapter 8 is entitled, “Higher Education and Chinese Teachers”. China reformed its curriculum at all levels of its education system, so universities needed to reform pre-service and in-service teacher professional education to prepare both new and experienced teachers for the challenge and demands of the new basic education curriculum reform. The new curriculum reform focuses on basic knowledge and skills, student-centered modes, learning content with real life, a sense of social responsibility/sharing, establishing an assessment system, promoting a greater variety of textbooks, and teacher professional development.

Chapter 9 is entitled, “Education Reform in Hong Kong: Implications for Higher Education and Lifelong Learning”. Before the reform, the Hong Kong system was six years of primary schools, followed by five years in secondary schools and a further two years to the A-level stage (then the successful students can access university). The majority of secondary schools mainly taught in English. However, after the 1999 reform, the whole secondary system changed to a six year system, and core subjects were reformed, too (reformed to meet the HE needs in China).

Chapter 10 is entitled, “Brain Power Stored Overseas? An Australian Case Study of the Chinese Knowledge *Diaspora*”. This chapter focuses on an Australian example of the Chinese knowledge diaspora (transnational human capital). Equipped with their Chinese cultural and educational backgrounds, academic experience in the West, and active membership in the international knowledge system, the Chinese knowledge diaspora has emerged as a kind of modern cosmopolitan literati. The long-standing issue of brain drain, especially from poorer countries to the leading institutions in the wealthiest nations, certifies that the flow is primarily steered by the economic strength and the capacity of educational and scientific systems.

Conclusions about our Assessment of the Book

This work is useful for the relevant stakeholders interested in how to expand HE enrollment. The first chapter helps researchers investigate what causes unequal access to education in poor regions and its consequence on local economic development. It also helps practitioners and development officials to come up with effective solutions to problems. The second chapter also informs the researchers that there is little information or analysis about Chinese adult HE. The sharp rise of student enrolment in adult HE, private HE, and distance HE has led to a lack of human and material resources, which can be useful lessons for practitioners to deal with, and for the researcher to investigate the challenge and its effects on learning achievement. The higher HE law in 1998 introduced an education funding mechanism, that can be useful for practitioners, and development officials to adapt or adopt in their particular contexts. It is a handy source for development officials, practitioners, researchers, and students to learn why China can make HE and the labor market ever closer to the equilibrium of supply and demand. The accounts in chapter 7 show that the majority of doctoral graduates prefer working in the eastern region to the middle and western regions. Therefore, it is useful for the researchers to instigate, and policy-makers to solve these issues. And there are many different kinds of preferential policies for underprivileged HE students, such as free tuition or accommodation, fee reduction, scholarship, stipend, or student loans, which is good for practitioners to adapt. The book would have been much better if chapter 3 had included actions to deal with new issues such as unequal access to HE, unequal allocation of resources, and economic and social inequality between rural and urban.

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