

Higher education research in China:

Past, present, and prospect

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This paper studies the higher education research of China, a rising power in higher education research. Research on China's higher education research began in the late 19th century, but only developed into a specific research field in the late 1970s. In 1984, higher education pedagogy was established as an independent discipline in China. In the following decade, China's higher education research developed rapidly, and sub-disciplines of higher education multiplied rapidly. Since the mid-1990s, China's higher education research has entered a phase of steady development and improvement. Research into theoretical and practical problems of reform and development in China's higher education have been stressed, and many findings have drawn the attention of provincial and national governments. Some results have been incorporated into their decision-making, and exerted great effect on China's higher education reforms. In the future, China's higher education research should, on the one hand, establish even more of a foothold in China, serving the practice of China's higher education; on the other hand, it should strive to form a bridge to the outside world, strengthening exchange and cooperation with other countries. The combination of these efforts should make a significant contribution to the development and prosperity of higher education internationally, and to the maturation of academic research in the field.

KEYWORDS: CHINA, HIGHER EDUCATION, EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

China is now not merely a country with huge a number of students in universities, but also a burgeoning 'great power in higher education research' in the world. Although higher education became a special academic research field in China only relatively recently, its subsequent development has been rapid. It has already become one of the most vigorous fields in China's education research overall, and now occupies numerous research institutes staffed with full-time researchers producing fruitful research

outcomes. This article traces the development of China's higher education research: reviews its past, examines its present situation, and speculates as to its future. The article should thus help the world learn more about China's higher education research and mean that, in the future, more international attention will be paid to its development.

The history of higher education research in China

China's modern higher education system developed from education institutes established in the later Qing Dynasty towards the end of the 19th century, and research on its development was carried out soon afterwards. Famous advocates of modernization, such as Zhang Zhidong, Sheng Xuanhuai and Liang Qichao, put forward propositions regarding the objectives and system of China's higher education, and on the need to send students abroad. During Republican China (1912-1949), with the establishment of China's modern higher education system, a number of famous educators such as Cai Yuanpei (president of Beijing University), Zhang Boling (president of Nankai University), Mei Yiqi (president of Qinghua University), Zhu Kezhen (president of Zhejiang University), each expressed their views on the operation of universities. Among them, Cai Yuanpei, a learned scholar of Chinese literature and philosophy who had attended university in Europe, was representative. He regarded universities as 'institutes for acquiring advanced knowledge' (Zhonghua Publishing House, 1959, p. 23), and insisted that a university 'include all branches of learning and various schools of thought' (Gao, 1980, p. 22). His views had a strong influence on the development of higher education at that time. Researchers compiled and translated several books on higher education, such as *New Theory of Higher Education* (written by E.W. Wilkinson in 1932) translated by Zheng Ruogu (Li, 2000, p. 21), and *Higher Education* published by Meng Xiancheng in 1943 (Li, 2000, p. 21). Such views and remarks on higher education remained fragmentary and spontaneous, however. In general, it can be said that, during the period of Republic China, higher education was not even a field of research, much less an independent discipline.

After the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, China began to develop socialist higher education. From 1953 to 1957, a Newsletter on *Higher Education* was published by the former Ministry of Higher Education, carrying reports of experiences, important investigations and studies besides official announcements and notices (Ministry of Higher Education, 1953-1957). In 1957, an anthology of unpublished teaching material, *Teaching Materials of Higher Learning Institutions' Pedagogy*, was compiled by the teaching and research group of pedagogy at Xiamen University. Though only 'applying general principles of pedagogy to higher education in some points' (pedagogy teaching and research group of Xiamen University, 1957, p.3), it can be considered as an important attempt at establishing China's higher education pedagogy. Regrettably, for political reasons, China didn't pursue its research in this field on the basis of the book but, on the contrary, halted such research for more than twenty years. Had this interruption not occurred, greater contributions from Chinese researchers could have

been expected, the establishment of pedagogy as a sub-discipline within China would have happened much earlier, and research on higher education would have been better able to keep pace with those elsewhere in the world, where large-scale and systematic research in the field largely did not begin until the 1950s.

The establishment of China's higher education research as a discipline

Just as China entered a new era of reform and openness to the outside world in the late 1970s, so did China's scientific research, (including that on China's higher education), which thus entered a healthier phase. Against this background, researchers of higher education represented by such scholars as Pan Maoyuan started to advance research into higher education. In 1978, his articles such as 'Theoretical Research Must Be Done on Higher Education' (Pan,1978a), and 'Carry out Theoretical Research on Higher Education' (Pan,1978b) succeeded in renewing a concern to establish pedagogy as a priority within China's higher education system, after twenty years of delay. The following events represent important early steps in the development of that research:

- In May 1978, the Division of Higher Education, the first organization established with higher education as its focus of study in China, (later converted into the Institute of Higher Education by authority of the State Education Commission in 1984), was founded at Xiamen University. It was the start of higher education research as a specific academic research field in China. Many universities, including Lanzhou University, Beijing University, Qinghua University, Central China University of Technology (Wuhan), successively established higher education research institutes over the following years.
- In 1979, preparations were made to establish the China Association for Research on Higher Education (CARHE) in Shanghai. 8 organizations participated, including Xiamen University, East China Normal University, Beijing Normal University, Nanjing University, Qinghua University, Lanzhou University, Shanghai Jiaotong University, and the Bureau of Higher Education of Shanghai Municipality. A preparatory meeting, attended by 34 organizations, was held in Xiamen in 1980. CARHE was formally established in 1983; it formed a system of more than 10 regional higher education research institutes, to ensure the development of China's higher education research occurred in an organized way.
- In 1981, Xiamen University became the first institution in China to be given the authority to grant Master's degrees in higher education. Other universities, including Beijing University, and Central China University of Technology, began to recruit postgraduate students within the field of higher education in succeeding years; hence, the training of higher education professionals had begun.

- In 1983, *Lectures on Higher Education Pedagogy* was published (Pan,1983). In the same year, higher education pedagogy was listed as an education sub-discipline in the catalogue of disciplines and specialties by the Academic Degree Committee of the State Council. In 1984, the two volume *Higher Education Pedagogy*, edited by Pan Maoyuan and others, was published: it represented the first systematic monograph on higher education published in China, heralding the establishment of higher education as an independent discipline. (Pan,1984)

The years from 1978 to 1984 were the key ones during which China's higher education research was institutionalised, and the discipline of higher education research formally established. During these years, many institutes for higher education research came into existence, the China Association for Research on Higher Education (CARHE) was established, as well as disciplined research into higher education. Both these developments laid a substantial foundation for the development of the research field.

The establishment and development of the discipline of higher education

With the widening reform of China's education system in the mid-80s, China's higher education research became larger in scope, deeper in content. Research on higher education grew swiftly throughout the nation for the following decade. Statistics from the mid-90s show that: over eight hundred higher education research institutes had by then been established, with about three thousand full-time researchers, and about ten thousand part-time researchers; by then too, more than four hundred higher education journals, and more than 15,000 papers and about one hundred books had been published (Pan, 2000, pp. 94-95) These statistics demonstrate the profound progress that had been made; that China had become a 'great power in higher education study' by the 1990s.

China's higher education research has developed along two tracks that are parallel, and even overlapping to a certain degree. One is the development of higher education pedagogy with its branches stressing studies of basic educational theories and applied theories. The other is the development of applied research targeted at the solution of practical problems of reform and development in China's higher education.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION PEDAGOGY

Over the decade since the publication of the first monograph on higher education in 1984, more than 20 further works have been published. They include *Higher Education Pedagogy* (1986) edited by Zheng Qiming and Xue Tianxiang, *Higher Education Pedagogy* (1990) written by Tian Jianguo, *New Theories on Higher Education* (1995) written by Hu Jianhua and others, *Higher Education Pedagogy* (1995) edited by Pan Maoyuan and Wang Weilian, and *New Higher Education Pedagogy* (1996) edited by Pan Maoyuan. Meanwhile, systematic and in-depth studies of such aspects of higher education pedagogy as its scope and focal points, its nature, its system and its study methodology have been carried

out. In 1993, the National Society of Higher Education Science (NSHES) was founded. Its first three annual workshops were all focused on the development of higher education discipline, and achieved many significant results in basic theories and the construction of the discipline.

The development of sub-disciplines within higher education

With the development of higher education pedagogy, sub-disciplines of higher education emerged in 1980s in the light of China's higher education practice. These can be divided into three categories:

The first comprises sub-disciplines that derived from higher education pedagogy. Among these have been general university teaching theories, university curricular theories, university moral education theories, methodology of university learning, history of higher education, comparative higher education, studies on higher educational ideology, methodology of higher education study, and teaching theories of various subjects.

The second includes inter-disciplinary branches resulting from the combination of higher education and other disciplines, e.g. economics of higher education, higher education management, organization of higher education, the psychology of university students, and the 'engineering' of higher education.

The third branch arose from the application of theories of higher education to the analysis of different types and levels of higher education. Included here are higher engineering education, higher teacher education, higher medical education, higher agriculture and forestry education, two-year higher education, higher vocational education, academic awards and post-graduate education, overseas Chinese and foreign student education, higher adult education, and self-learning examinations.

In each of the above-mentioned branch disciplines, monographs have been published, some of which have become textbooks for postgraduate programs. Some of these branch disciplines have been further divided into sub-branch disciplines, for instance higher education management has been divided into a variety of sub-branches or fields of research, such as higher education administration, higher education assessment, psychology of higher education management, research management, curriculum management, and logistics of higher education institutions.

It should be recognised that China's higher education research is not merely confined to the construction and development of higher education disciplines, but is also closely connected to the practical reform and development of China's higher education system. Before the mid-1980s, academic circles in higher education had begun to discuss the challenges to higher education brought about by the revolution of science and technology. They focused on discussions of such problems as the objectives of higher education, discussed educational values, and debated views on how to nurture talent, notions of teaching, and the relationship between traditional education ideas and modernization. Toward the late 1980s, important topics related to the social development

were discussed, including the relationship between higher education and the market economy, the relationship between higher education and culture, the adjustment of the macro higher education system, the reform of higher education management, 'localization' of higher education, teaching reform in higher education institutions, recruitment and entrance examination within higher education institutions, moral education in universities, and development strategies in higher education. These studies have contributed substantially to decision-making in China's subsequent university development and reform.

DEVELOPMENTS IN CHINA'S HIGHER EDUCATION RESEARCH SINCE THE MID-1990S

In the past 5 years, the issue of the *Higher Education Law and the Action Plan to Vitalize China's Education Towards the 21st Century*, and the decisions to introduce measures to enhance 'quality' in education, to move toward mass higher education, and to construct leading institutions of higher education, has substantially invigorated the reform of China's higher. At the same time however, China's higher education research has entered a new era of steady development and improvement.

The number of research institutes, researchers, research journals, results of higher education research in the last five years is almost the same as that of the mid-1990s. A notable numerical increase in the training of postgraduate students of higher education is evident, however. After the Institute of Higher Education at Xiamen University became the first unit with the authority to grant Master's degrees in 1984 and Doctoral degrees in 1986, only four further universities were granted the right to award doctoral degrees, and less than twenty to confer Master's degrees, by 1996. But this number has grown rapidly in the last five years. At present, more than 50 universities conduct Master's degree programs in higher educational economics and management, with a total enrolment of over 500 postgraduate students. Meanwhile, two further universities have been authorised to grant Doctorates in higher education, and the number of doctoral students is still on the rise. Prior to 1994, only six individuals had received doctorates in higher education in China. But by 2001, Xiamen University alone had granted thirty doctorates. This increase in postgraduate programs for higher education researchers has further strengthened the status of higher education as an established field of study in Chinese academic programs, and will also contribute to the further flourishing of China's higher education research, in the longer term.

At the same time, while higher education research still developed along the two parallel tracks indicated above, the two tracks have tended to overlap and harmonise.

Improvement of the discipline of higher education

From the mid 1980s to the mid-1990s, the relative newness and immaturity of China's higher education discipline meant that the major mission of China's higher education research was to construct the discipline and its affiliated sub-disciplines. During that decade, remarkable results were achieved: in the construction of the discipline, basic

concepts and theories of higher education were reviewed and clarified, while the development of the discipline group with higher education pedagogy at its core was solidified. The academic circle of China's higher education paid great attention to the application of these theories to practice, indeed valued it as a means to make the discipline mature. Thus in 1997, the fourth annual workshop of the National Society of Higher Education Science (NSHES) put aside the problem of how to build up the theoretical system of higher education discipline, and took up the topic of 'how best to apply higher education theories into practice, to serve China's higher education development and reforms' (Pan, 1997a)

Over the past five years, the development of the discipline of higher education continued, despite not being the major mission of theoretical research. Many significant findings resulted. Among them, *Multi-disciplinary Methods in Higher Education Research* (Pan, 2001a) considered the contribution and methods of eleven different disciplines including history, philosophy, psychology, culture, science, economy, sociology, politics, management system and comparative education, to research in higher education. The motif of the work is to provide theoretical and methodological preparations for the construction of China's higher education discipline. (Pan, 2001b) Equally, as its title implied, multi-disciplinary methods represent a methodological breakthrough in China's higher education research, paralleling the use of such multi-disciplinary methods in higher education research elsewhere. It is believed that it will greatly help to further develop China's the discipline of higher research, on the basis of pedagogy.

Another work, *Review of China's Higher Education Over the Past 50 Years (1949-1999)* edited by Chen Xuefei, was published in 2000. Replete with documentary detail, it reviews the development of higher education research after the founding of the People's Republic of China, lays out the results of the research, and provides comprehensive information as to the present situation of China's higher education research (Chen, 1999). Two further works of substance with the same name of *Higher Education Pedagogy*, one edited by Xue Tianxiang, another by Wang Weilian, were published in 2000 and 2001 successively. With the jumping-off point of 'higher learning' (Xue, 2000) and 'curriculum and teaching' (Wang, 2001) respectively, these two books represented important developments in the construction of the discipline of higher education research.

Development of applied research

In light of the situation of China's higher education research over the last five years, both theoretical and applied research on the actual practice of China's higher education development and reform became the major mission, with varied research programs emerging into every aspect of the reform and development of higher education. From 1996 to 2000, during the Ninth 5-year Plan of China, applied research on higher education was included in every research program of the state and other ministries, and took up a large proportion of these programs, e.g. programs related to higher education occupied about forty percent of the total of one hundred and eighty five research projects in the Ninth 5-year National Education Program.

Compared with the years before the mid-1990s, applied research has in recent years, paid more attention to the development of the basic theories of higher education, resulting in the attainment of higher academic levels. Noteworthy too, is that many research results have been operationalised and adopted by the government; in turn, some have exerted a profound influence on the reform of China's higher education. Among them, the implementation of measures to enhance 'quality' education and the decision to move towards mass higher education are two of the most significant. In a sense, it can be argued that these two important decisions that have affected the whole development of China's higher education, occurred as the result of the education research. The following sections briefly examine these two examples.

QUALITY EDUCATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Quality education was a concept introduced to the Chinese system in the early 1990s, but it was not further studied and operationalised until some five years ago. Since then, quality education has become a hot topic in China's education research, and close attention has been paid to it across society. A recent survey revealed over 12,383 papers entitled 'quality education' in the biggest Chinese academic research website – www.CNKI.net – from 1995 to 2001, including 2,519 papers discussing quality education in universities; while at least 200,000 entries listed in the biggest Chinese web – www.Sina.com – listed 'quality education'.

Academic discussion within higher education was initially heated as to what constituted quality education, as also its necessity within universities. Many scholars disagreed with the idea, arguing that the concept was anti-scientific, for genetics were inherent, while education was acquired after birth, and thus could not change people's genetic makeup. Others indicated that the meanings of quality education were unclear, indeed confusing, so it was better to use the long-standing expression 'all-round education—moral, intellectual and physical'. Still others considered quality education in universities unnecessary, since quality education was the task of elementary education and had nothing to do with universities.

After years of exploring theories and distilling practice, most scholars have now come to agree on the basic concepts and theories of quality education. First, the definition of quality education is now considered scientific. It is now recognized that personal qualities are a product of both the nature of a person and the impressions formed via interaction with their environment, notably including education. Second, the connotation of quality education has been enriched. Mental attributes have been added to the formerly all-round development in moral, intellectual, physical, and aesthetic dimensions. Third, the scope of quality education has been extended. Quality is now seen as vital in the training of qualified personnel in universities, by contrast with the former view of quality education as the task of elementary education. The enforcement of the broader notion of quality education in universities has been urged, as against the former stress merely on science and technology education and narrow professional

specialization. Now, the emphasis is particularly on liberal education, including its harmonization with education in the sciences, in order to train personnel not only with high-tech skills but also with a broad, high-quality background in the liberal arts. The importance of the implementation of quality education has been realized, indeed has become a key principle in China's higher education reform and the training of personnel (Pan, 1997b)

After settling the problems of the basic theories of quality education, higher education researchers turned their attention to discussing how to carry it out in universities. Scholars generally thought that it could be enforced given that the ideas of education were changed, and that the breakthrough consisted of its promise to enhance liberal education. The ways and means of carrying it out have been especially probed, and can be summed up as follows: the first effort has been to integrate quality education into specialist courses; the second is to offer specific quality education courses, such as general education courses; the third is to implement the notion of 'quality education' in practice through university formal education and extracurricular activities. The first means has been adopted as the principle strategy by many scholars in China, while the second is more popular in many western countries.

This heated discussion, and the in-depth research on quality education, both caught the attention of the state educational decision-making institutions. Thus, in the mid-1990s, the former Division of Higher Education within the former State Education Commission decided to trial quality education in over fifty universities throughout China. Following this trial, in January 1999, the *Action Plan to Vitalize Education Towards the 21st Century*, which put forward the 'Project of Trans-century Quality Education', was issued by the State Department and the Ministry of Education, expanding the scheme in an effort to improve the quality of Chinese education, and the creativity of the whole nation. In June 1999, the *Decision to Deepen Education Reform and Enforce Universal Quality Education* was issued by the State Department, which enshrined the idea of quality education as a key reform principle within China's education system. Specific regulations as to quality education in universities are detailed in these two documents. The adoption of this policy by government and the introduction of quality measures into higher education can be seen to have originated in the pioneering work of higher education researchers.

MASS HIGHER EDUCATION IN CHINA

Mass higher education is currently a worldwide trend. Many developed nations entered this phase in the 1960s-1970s, while some developing countries followed in the 1980s-1990s. Statistics released by UNESCO indicate that in 1996, the world average higher education gross enrolment rate was 16.7% (UNESCO, 1998, p. 11) while that of China was much lower (8.03%) (Xie, 2001, p. 141) This led some to ask whether, as a developing country, there was any necessity for China to develop mass higher education.

Before the mid-1990s, the problem of mass higher education had not aroused the attention of many scholars in China, although the problems of the developing scale and speed of higher education had been energetically discussed. For example, different opinions existed as to the speed of development: whether to develop in a moderate manner, to develop with steady steps, to take vigorous action to develop higher education, or to speed up development. After the mid-1990s, when the problem of whether China's higher education should proceed to mass higher education was brought into the open, heated discussions quickly followed. Many scholars thought that China should proceed to institute mass higher education, arguing that it was a 'necessary choice' or a so-called 'strategic choice'; other scholars disagreed, arguing that it was a 'misleading theory' in China considering the actuality of the Chinese situation. Even those who proposed that mass higher education should be instituted, held different standpoints on how to realize it and by what index it should be measured. Such arguments led to more intensive research on mass higher education, and also aroused the government's attention.

The publication of the *Action Plan to Vitalize Education Towards the 21st Century* in 1999 contained a demand to increase the enrolment ratio in higher education for youth aged 18-22 to fifteen percent by 2010. The 10th 5-Year *Plan of Chinese Gross National Product and Social Development*, issued in 2001, reset this deadline to 2005, underlining the priority attached by the government towards the development of higher education. Only a few years earlier in 1995, the *Future Plan* set the rate for 2010 at eleven percent, which shows that the government didn't see mass higher education as such a key element in its reform agenda. Once again, it can reasonably be concluded that the heated discussions and in-depth research by academic researchers in recent years have contributed greatly to this change.

Having reached general agreement on the necessity for China to develop mass higher education, China's higher education researchers have now turned to probe the details, especially vital problems of education quality: funds, academic and administrative staff, allocation of education resources, education structure, enrollment and employment. Many valuable results have emerged from this research, leading to the view that mass higher education is not only measurable via the increase in number of higher education institutions and the number of students admitted, but also must be paralleled by improvements in education quality. On the basis of other research, it is now held that the speed of higher education development should be moderate, (that is a little in excess of the rate of GNP increase), rather than too fast, nor too slow. Still other research has led to the recognition that a precondition of mass higher education is the diversification of schooling, including the diversification of measures of educational quality. The government is to take up its responsibility of planning, controlling and managing during this process of mass higher education, and to make relevant policies on to address problems such as the scale of development, raising funds, exploiting and allocating resources, and graduate employment, etc. (Pan, 2001b)

The research programs discussed above are only two which, in recent years, have exerted great influence on governmental decision-making in China, and at the same time, contributed to higher education research internationally. Just as the introduction of quality education consists largely of innovation and development in liberal education and general education in Western countries, so too debates on China's mass higher education have helped to enriched the world's understanding, previously dominated by the work of figures such as Martin Trow (1973) while also providing theoretical and practical model for other developing countries.

Besides the two studies cited above, other important problems of higher education have been studied during the past five years:

- Reforming the idea of higher education for the 21st century;
- the model of China's higher education for the 21st century;
- Reform of teaching contents and curriculum system in higher education institutions in the 21st century;
- The nurturing of talented, creative people in universities;
- The relationship between the knowledge economy and the reform and development of higher education;
- The idea of sustainable development in higher education;
- The industry of higher education;
- Quality and efficiency of higher education;
- Adjustment of higher education macro-structures;
- Reforming systems of higher education management;
- Developing world-leading universities;
- Reforms to the aims and models of higher vocational education;
- Development and regulation of private higher education;
- The impact of entering WTO.

CHINA'S HIGHER EDUCATION RESEARCH IN THE 21ST CENTURY

It can be concluded from the examination of the history and the present situation of China's higher education research in the latest 20 years that, despite a late start, it subsequently developed rapidly and has achieved some striking successes. The first of these consists of drawing theories from practice, in creating the research discipline of higher education in China. The second consists of the application of theories to practice, thus the theories of higher education have been used to probe and solve problems that arose in the course of China's actual higher education reform and development. We take

these two as essential pillars, upon which the China's higher education research was based; after which, higher education became one of the most vital, flourishing research fields in education. Its huge number of researchers, research institutions, academic journals and significant results, has led China increasingly to be seen as a 'great power in higher education research' by foreign experts.

It is noteworthy that the two research pillars mentioned above were constructed internally, in light of the actual reforms and development of higher education in China; this is strikingly different from the beginnings of the systematic study of education with the translation of Japanese educational works in the late 19th century, and the early drawing on the experiences of European countries, America, and later the former Soviet Union. Not until the nineteen eighties did academic circles begin to suggest that the study of education begin with Chinese features and be based in China. The discipline of higher education in China came into being and developed in China, and although it has learned from the theories and experiences of some western countries, mainstream higher education theories in China have always been characterized by a strong native flavour. Hence the construction of China's higher education disciplines and research paradigms has been characterized by Chinese features. For example, China's higher education research stresses the development of theories in order to construct disciplines, while western higher education research is more focused on research 'problems'. Since examples of the discipline of 'higher education' are rare in western countries, China's 'discipline-oriented' higher education assumes a particular prominence. (Wang, 2001,p.360). *Lectures on Higher Education Pedagogy* (Pan, 1983) is not only the first professional monograph with this title in China, it also represents a substantial international contribution. Researchers of higher education in China have also initiated further important research, resulting in, for example, the rule of the relationship between internal and external dynamics of education, the definition of higher education, and studies of the functions of higher education and higher education. All these studies are of some theoretical value and of some innovation; they deserve to take their place among higher education research internationally.

The 21st century is the century of the knowledge economy. If it could be said that higher education research in 20th century China was still a newly cultivated field, and that higher education institutions were on the margins of the society, then as higher education institutions gradually become central to society in the 21st century, higher education research will also thrive. It will occupy a more important place in education research, and will exert a greater effect on the reform and development of higher education. Looking to the future, we suggest that higher education research in China should pursue the following two strategies in the early 21st century:

- First, research should continue to be based on actual conditions in China. This principle will strengthen the construction of higher education discipline, raise the scientific level of higher education theories, develop higher education disciplines with Chinese features, and gradually form the corpus of China's

higher education theories. Thus, higher education research should be systematically applied to the reform and development of China's higher education system, and exert greater effects on governmental decision-making. As Chen Zhili (2002), Minister of Education, said recently, 'education research should aim to serve governmental decision making; that is, some vital problems in education reform should become hot topics in education research, and investigations be carried out on them at a broader and deeper level. Education research is expected to bring forth new ideas, and suggest new ways for governmental decision making.'

- Second, research should strive by every means to reach out to the world. We should enhance exchange and cooperation with foreign countries in the future, to make our research results known and ratified by the international higher education research community, and gradually raise the status of China's higher education research and its theoretical disciplines, worldwide. At the same time, we should actively take part in international research programs considering important problems of higher education, in order to contribute to the promotion of the development of higher education research, and the academic research more generally, worldwide.

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