

Themes, Providers, Methods, and Purposes of the Overseas Leadership Development Programmes



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Abstract This chapter provides an overview of the overseas leadership development programmes for higher education institution (HEI) leaders in the central and western regions of China. Between 2012 and 2018, 13 cohorts, comprising 1,452 Chinese HEI leaders, attended 66 leadership development programmes in eight countries. This chapter synthesises four aspects of those overseas leadership development programmes: the programme themes, the programme providers, the pedagogical methods used, and purposes. Suggestions for future overseas leadership development programmes are given. This chapter serves as the foundation for the impact studies reported in the following chapters of the book.

Keywords Overseas leadership development programmes · Programme themes · Programme providers · Pedagogical methods · Programme purposes

1 Introduction

Enhancing global competitiveness and regional equality have been two major goals for the Chinese government. To balance the development of higher education within China, the *Overseas Leadership Development Programme for Higher Education Institution Leaders in the Central and Western Regions of China* was launched in 2012. These programmes were purposefully designed as part of a national education development strategy, *Revitalization Plan for Higher Education in the Central and Western Regions (2012–2020)* (Ministry of Education, China, 2013). Co-funded by the Lee Shau Kee Foundation and the Peihua Foundation in Hong Kong and administered by the Ministry of Education (MoE), China, these programmes provided 31-days of overseas leadership development to Chinese public HEI leaders. The timeline for the original programmes was from 2012 to 2017, and it targeted the highest administrative leaders in the HEIs (i.e., the chairmen, presidents or other equivalent positions). In 2014, the programmes' mid-term evaluation conducted by the MoE, China revealed its profound and positive impact on the professional learning

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and development of the HEI leaders. Hence, the programmes were extended for one more year, until the end of 2018. The total number of participants was increased from 1,000 to 1,452. In addition to HEI chairmen and presidents, the participants in 2018 included HEI mid-level leaders, for example, directors of academic affairs (Lee Shau Kee Foundation, 2018).

Against this background, this chapter synthesises key information about the programme providers, themes, methods and purposes run between 2012 and 2018. The data comprised leadership development programme documents, timetables and participants' learning reports. Document analysis was applied to examine the programme content, themes, pedagogical methods and purposes.

The first part of this chapter presents an overview of all the leadership development programmes delivered from 2012 to 2018, including the year/cohort, the number of programmes, themes and the countries in which leadership development was delivered. The second part provides an in-depth analysis of leadership development programmes conducted in eight countries. Drawing on the participants' learning reports, the last part of the chapter looks into the content and pedagogical design of these programmes and proposes recommendations for future programmes.

2 An Overview of the Overseas Leadership Development Programmes

Between 2012 and 2018, a total of 1,452 Chinese HEI leaders from 497 HEIs in 25 provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities in the central and western regions of China participated in 66 leadership development programmes provided by over 130 HEIs in Australia, Canada, Finland, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, the U.K., and the U.S. (Lee Shau Kee Foundation, 2018; Yang, 2019) (Table 1). Each leadership development programme lasted for 31 days, which included seven days of pre-leadership development in China, 21-days of overseas residential leadership development and three days of post-leadership development feedback and dissemination back in China. The leadership development programme providers were universities and other educational organisations located in North America (Canada and the U.S.), Europe (Finland, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands and the U.K.) and Australia. Each year, between nine and 12 programmes were organised (except in 2012, when there were only five overseas leadership development programmes). On average, each programme consisted of 22 participants.

Taking a closer look at the programme themes, the most frequently repeated themes were *University strategic planning and resource allocation* (Australia, 11 times), *University governance and development* (the U.S., 9 times), and *Pedagogy in higher education institution and student development* (Canada, 8 times; Australia, 1 time). About half of the cohorts studied *University human resource management and teachers' professional development* (the U.S., 6 times), *How can higher education*

Table 1 Overseas leadership development programmes for Chinese HEI leaders 2012–2018

Year/Cohort	Programme No.	Programme theme	Country
2012 (first cohort)	1	University governance and development	U.S
	2	University strategic planning and resource allocation	Australia
	3	Quality assurance of higher education	U.K
	4	How can higher education serve local economic development	Germany
	5	University human resource management and teachers' professional development	U.S
2013 (second cohort)	1	University governance and development	U.S
	2	University strategic planning and resource allocation	Australia
	3	Quality assurance of higher education	U.K
	4	How can higher education serve local economic development	Germany
	5	University human resource management and teachers' professional development	U.S
2013 (third cohort)	1	University governance and development	U.S
	2	University strategic planning and resource allocation	Australia
	3	Quality assurance of higher education	U.K
	4	Student-centred teaching service system	U.S
	5	Educational leadership development for leaders in higher vocational education	Germany
2014 (fourth cohort)	1	University governance and development	U.S
	2	University strategic planning and resource allocation	Australia
	3	Quality assurance of higher education	U.K

(continued)

Table 1 (continued)

Year/Cohort	Programme No.	Programme theme	Country
	4	Pedagogy in higher education institution and student development	Canada
	5	How can higher education serve local economic development	Germany
	6	Educational leadership development for leaders in higher vocational education	Germany
2014 (fifth cohort)	1	University human resource management and teacher development	U.S
	2	University strategic planning and resource allocation	Australia
	3	Quality assurance of higher education	U.K
	4	Student-centred teaching service system	U.S
2015 (sixth cohort)	1	University strategic planning and resource allocation	Australia
	2	University governance and student administration	U.S
	3	The transformation of local universities	Finland
	4	Pedagogy in higher education institution and student development	Canada
	5	How can higher education serve local economic development	Germany
	6	Educational leadership development for leaders in higher vocational education	Germany
2015 (seventh cohort)	1	University human resource management and teachers' professional development	U.S
	2	University governance and development	U.S
	3	Quality assurance of higher education	U.K
	4	University strategic planning and resource allocation	Australia

(continued)

Table 1 (continued)

Year/Cohort	Programme No.	Programme theme	Country
	5	How can higher education serve local economic development	Germany
	6	Student-centred teaching service system	U.S
2016 (eighth cohort)	1	Pedagogy in higher education institution and student development	Canada
	2	University governance and development	U.S
	3	How can higher education serve local economic development	Germany
	4	The transformation of local universities	Finland
	5	University strategic planning and resource allocation	Australia
	6	Experience of the educational administration and governance in the universities of applied science	The Netherlands
2016 (ninth cohort)	1	Pedagogy in higher education institution and student development	Canada
	2	University human resource management and teachers' professional development	U.S
	3	University research and education for innovation and entrepreneurship	U.K
2017 (tenth cohort)	1	University research and education for innovation and entrepreneurship	U.K
	2	University governance and development	U.S
	3	The collaboration between university teaching, manufacturing and research	Germany
	4	University strategic planning and resource allocation	Australia
	5	Pedagogy in higher education institution and student development	Canada

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Table 1 (continued)

Year/Cohort	Programme No.	Programme theme	Country
2017 (eleventh cohort)	1	University governance and development	U.S
	2	Pedagogy in higher education institution and student development	Canada
	3	University strategic planning and resource allocation	Australia
	4	The development of universities of applied sciences	Ireland
	5	Educational leadership development for leaders in higher vocational education	Canada
2018 (twelfth cohort)	1	Developing first-class universities and first-class disciplines	U.K
	2	University governance and development	U.S
	3	Pedagogy in higher education institution and student development	Canada
	4	University research and education for innovation and entrepreneurship	U.K
	5	Pedagogy in higher education institution and student development (for directors of academic affairs)	Australia
2018 (thirteenth cohort)	1	Developing first-class universities and first-class disciplines	U.S
	2	University human resource management and teachers' professional development	U.S
	3	Pedagogy in higher education institution and student development	Canada
	4	University strategic planning and resource allocation	Australia
	5	From teaching to learning: student-centred teaching reform (for directors of academic affairs)	Ireland

serve local economic development (Germany, 6 times) and *Quality assurance of higher education* (the U.K., 6 times).

The rest of the programme themes appear to be more cohort-specific and include *Educational leadership development for leaders in higher vocational education* (Germany, 3 times; Canada, 1 time), *University research and education for innovation and entrepreneurship* (the U.K., 3 times), *Student-centred teaching service system* (the U.S., 3 times), *The transformation of local universities* (Finland, 2 times), *Developing first-class universities and first-class disciplines* (the U.S., 1 time; the U.K., 1 time), *University governance and student administration* (the U.S., 1 time), *Experience of the educational administration and governance in the universities of applied science* (the Netherlands, 1 time), *The collaboration between university teaching, manufacturing and research* (Germany, 1 time), *The development of universities of applied sciences* (Ireland, 1 time) and *From teaching to learning: student-centred teaching reform* (Ireland, 1 time).

As to the programme organisation and delivery, the two organisers in China, the National Academy of Education Administration (NAEA)¹ and the China Education Association for International Exchange (CEAIE),² proposed the countries to visit, the overseas programme providers and programme themes to the MoE. Based on their proposals, the MoE made the final decisions on the themes and providers.

3 The Design, Organisation and Delivery of the Overseas Leadership Development Programmes

Document analysis of the leadership development programmes and their timetables shed light on five prominent characteristics of these leadership development programmes (Table 2).

First, regarding the programme providers, each country had at least three main providers, who worked collaboratively with other institutions to host the 21-day residential leadership development programmes. Most of the programme providers appointed by the MoE, China, were internationally prestigious universities. The programme documents revealed the reasons behind these decisions. These prestigious universities enjoy a globally renowned reputation for providing high-quality education in a wide range of disciplines. Learning about their histories, traditions and practices had the potential to broaden the horizons of the Chinese HEI leaders. Moreover, these prestigious universities have extensive networks established with

¹ The National Academy of Educational Administration was established in 1955 and is directly under the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China. It is the highest institution for training leading cadres at all levels and in all types of education. It is an important force in educational scientific research and educational decision-making and consultation in China.

² The China Education Association for International Exchange was established in 1981 and is directly under the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China. It is a national organization for the Chinese education community to carry out non-governmental foreign education cooperation and exchange.

Table 2 A summary of the countries, themes, providers and methods of 13 leadership development cohorts in eight countries

Country	Theme	Providers	Methods
U.K	Quality assurance of higher education	10 HEIs 2 organisations	28 lectures 2 classroom observations 2 workshops 1 video tutorial 10 campus/city/company visits
U.K	University research and education for innovation and entrepreneurship	8 HEIs 2 organisations	36 lectures 1 classroom observation 2 workshops 2 campus visits 1 meeting with government officials (the mayor)
U.K	Developing first-class universities and first-class disciplines	9 HEIs 1 organisation	24 lectures 2 campus/government visits
U.S	University governance and development (east)	3 HEIs	49 lectures 4 campus visits 1 meeting with government officials
U.S	University human resource management and teachers' professional development (west)	5 HEIs	38 lectures 5 campus/company visits 1 meeting with government officials (Federal office of education)
U.S	University governance and students' affairs (east)	4 HEIs	29 lectures 7 campus visits, 2 round-table discussions, 1 forum
U.S	Student-centred teaching service system (east)	4 HEIs 2 organisations	21 lectures 4 campus visits
U.S	Developing first-class universities and first-class disciplines	4 HEIs 2 organisations	17 lectures 8 campus visits
Germany	How can higher education serve local economic development	3 HEIs	27 lectures 4 classroom observations 1 workshop, 5 campus visits
Germany	The collaboration between university teaching, manufacturing and research	3 HEIs	24 lectures 4 classroom observations 2 workshops 5 campus visits

(continued)

Table 2 (continued)

Country	Theme	Providers	Methods
Canada	Pedagogy in higher education institution and student development	5 HEIs	25 lectures 4 case studies 4 workshops 7 campus visits
Australia	University strategic planning and resource allocation	3 HEIs	32 lectures 2 classroom observations 2 workshops 8 campus visits
Australia	Pedagogy in higher education institution and student development	5 HEIs	18 lectures 9 campus/government/company visits
Finland	The transformation of local universities	5 HEIs	27 lectures 7 seminars 7 city tour/ campus visits
Ireland	The development of universities of applied sciences	6 HEIs	20 lectures 6 campus/company visits 1 meeting with government officials (Irish Ministry of Education)
Ireland	From teaching to learning: student-centred teaching reform	4 HEIs	19 lectures 9 campus/company visits 1 meeting with government officials (Irish Ministry of Education)
The Netherlands	Experience of the educational administration and governance in the universities of applied science	6 HEIs	23 lectures 4 campus/institution/company visits 1 workshop 1 meeting with government officials (Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science)

other institutions, companies and local communities. Hence, it was easier to rely on their local resources to organise campus and company visits as well as city tours. Some of the main programme providers had set up administrative offices to coordinate various international visits and leadership development programmes. Having central coordination with experienced staff seemed to contribute to the success of these leadership development programmes.

Second, regarding the pedagogical methods, all the countries used a combination of different approaches, including lecturing, classroom observations, campus/lab/company visits, workshops and meetings. The most commonly used method, unsurprisingly, was lecturing. A rough count of the total numbers of lectures delivered in each programme, indicated that trainers in the Netherlands, the

U.S., the U.K. and Australia tended to use this conventional approach more often than their counterparts in Ireland, Finland, Canada and Germany. Visits were arranged to labs and companies to provide the Chinese participants with a more illustrative view of how the collaboration between university and local industries works. In addition to these traditional methods, we identified other approaches in the programmes. When attending programmes in the U.K., Germany, Australia and Finland, the Chinese HEI leaders had the opportunities to observe classroom teaching. In Canada, case studies were used for the Chinese participants to discuss and resolve particular leadership challenges that they encountered at work. In the U.K., video tutorials on the mentoring system in universities were employed as well.

Third, regarding programme content, all the providers presented their best practices for higher education development in the programmes. To varying extents and in different sequences, all the leadership development programmes covered the following key topics: To contextualize the programme, an introduction to the university's history, the university administrative structure and the relationship between the university and the society was given to the Chinese participants. For idea sharing and international benchmarking, the programme providers shared their experience of building a higher education quality assurance system, the degree accreditation system, a student evaluation system and the university staff professional title system.

Another key aspect of the programme dealt with the collaboration between education, research and industry. Visits were organised to research labs, libraries, lecture halls and companies to provide the participants with a more interactive learning experience. As the participants were Chinese HEI leaders, more concrete leadership development on strategic planning, financial management, staff development, international collaboration and the design of study programmes and curricula was provided.

Fourth, in addition to developing the professionalism of Chinese HEI leaders, the leadership development programmes served as platforms for cultural exchange and bilateral collaboration. During the 21-day residential leadership development, the Chinese HEI leaders stayed in at least two to three cities. Short visits to nearby cities were also part of the programmes. Nearly all the programmes reserved time for the Chinese participants to meet government officials (e.g., ministry administrators) from the hosting countries. This arrangement suggested that overseas leadership development programmes can achieve both educational and networking objectives. By financing and organising this large-scale leadership development, the Chinese central government has conveyed a message to the world that China is investing in the development of its central and western regions through the professionalisation of HEI leaders. Education is therefore seen as an essential national strategy for balancing China's economic development and enhancing China's global competitiveness (Liu, 2021; Yang, 2002).

Fifth, although it was not explicitly written into the leadership development programmes as a goal, many Chinese HEI leaders mentioned in their learning reports that they had built valuable networks with their overseas programme providers as well as with other Chinese HEI leaders during the learning process. The impact of leadership development appears long-lasting. Leaders from institutions that shared

similar profiles and development goals have sought further collaboration in teacher and student exchange, dual degree programmes and joint research projects. In the following chapters of this book, we will look more closely at the impact of these overseas leadership development programmes at the individual and institutional levels.

4 Suggestions for Further Development

Drawing upon the document analysis of the leadership development programmes and the Chinese HEI leaders' learning reports, this chapter proposes the following suggestions for future overseas leadership development programmes.

Regarding the programme content, some trainers from prestigious universities placed a major emphasis on their own histories, traditions and best practices. Undoubtedly, the Chinese HEI leaders found that these lectures broadened their professional horizons. However, some of the participants wished to learn more from these overseas institutions with profiles similar to their own. The Chinese organisers can consider aligning the socio-cultural context, students' needs, available resources and specialisations of the overseas programme providers with the participants' own institutions. This might better serve their learning needs than inviting world famous universities to be the main leadership development providers.

Programme method-wise, the majority of the leadership development took the form of lecturing. Chinese-English interpreters were assigned to support the learning process, and this arrangement was greatly appreciated by the Chinese HEI leaders. Nevertheless, from the participants' viewpoint, they had hoped for more interactive approaches, such as workshops, classroom observations, dialogues with governmental officials and lab/company/campus visits. Some participants preferred having in-depth discussions with the trainers in a small group rather than listening to the trainer lecturing to the whole group. To meet these needs in the future, resources, such as the number of trainers and interpreters, can be increased. It is also worth mentioning that some of the programme providers reserved time for weekly reflection and question and answer sessions. The participants found these sessions most helpful in terms of knowledge construction and dissemination.

With respect to translating the learning outcomes into practice, most participants saw it as a long process. This process started with sharing leadership development experience, observations and reflections with other leaders in the same institution. Some leaders then utilised the professional networks they had built during the leadership development programme to establish new collaborations. For instance, from 2012 to 2018, more than 300 memorandums of collaboration have been signed between the Chinese HEIs and their overseas leadership development providers as the result of the overseas leadership development programmes (Yang, 2019). Regarding the introduction of major changes to their home institutions, the Chinese HEI leaders claimed that the changes should be implemented incrementally rather than forcefully. The readiness of the leaders, teachers and staff at various levels was

a decisive factor in institutional-level changes. Hence, sending one senior leader to study abroad for three weeks was a good start, but it was not enough to form a critical mass of change agents. With the given resources, the whole top leadership team, together with some mid-level leaders, could join the overseas leadership development programme together and then design and enact changes collectively. Making real changes happen in an institution depends on change supporters who are committed to the change goals and processes.

5 Conclusion

This chapter presents an overview of the overseas leadership development programmes examined in this book. The hosting countries were mainly English-speaking countries, and many world-prestigious universities provided the leadership development. Based on document analysis, four key characteristics of these overseas leadership development programmes were summarised, namely, the status of the programme providers, the pedagogical methods, the key themes and the educational and networking purposes of the programmes. Lastly, drawing upon the participants' learning reports, some suggestions for future overseas leadership development programmes were proposed.

In the following chapters, the research team will analyse the impact of these leadership development programmes from both individual and institutional perspectives. Professional learning theories and leadership theories were applied as analytical lenses and used to open up the process and to discuss our findings in relation to earlier research studies.

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