Solving the Evaluation Problem of Four-Recognitions-Only in the “Double World-Class” Construction of Chinese Universities

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Abstract

The ‘Double World-Class’ construction has created a new movement for the quality development of higher education in China. It also demands the improvement of higher education evaluation from traditional approaches to monitoring evaluation. This article presents the latest move of higher education evaluation in China, analyzing its various dimensions, multi-value judgment, monitoring platform, and so on. It constructs the Chinese evaluation system based on the ‘Double World-Class’ and proposes an innovative evaluation framework for the ‘Double World-Class’ construction in line with the solution of the system-wide problem of ‘Four-Recognitions-Only’.

Keywords

Double World-Class Construction – Higher Education Evaluation – Four-Recognitions-Only – China

1 Introduction*

Nowadays, the core task of higher education development in China is designated by the government and universities to construct world-class institutions and disciplines, i.e., the 'Double World-Class' movement. It is therefore of great value and significance to establish their according mechanisms of evaluation with Chinese characteristics. The reality is, however, that the Four-Recognitions-Only in higher education evaluation, i.e., the only recognitions of publications, titles, degrees and awards, have systematically hindered the radical Double World-Class movement of university construction in China.

2 The Demand of Solving the Problem of Four-Recognitions-Only by Directing Evaluation toward the Double World-Class Movement

With ambitious goals, the Double World-Class movement as a long-term system-wide project was born in the fierce competition of super powers in the world. Compared to the other key construction projects in the field of Chinese higher education, the Double World-cClass movement should not follow its tradition as before, nor blindly 'borrow' the international experiences such as university ranking exercises as a market-oriented evaluation approach.

The evaluation problem of Four-Recognitions-Only reflects that some universities have failed to properly translate into practices of Chinese characteristics and world-class in the Double World-Class movement, and that some of them have over-attached importance to international and domestic rankings. In fact, the domestic and international ranking schemes have tended to constantly and narrowly rely on publications and awards as indicators, such as ARW (Academic Ranking of World Universities, also known as Shanghai Ranking), QS (Quacquarelli Symonds), THE (Times Higher Education World University Rankings), US News, & World Report (Wang, Liu & Qiao, 2019). Meanwhile, they have based evaluation frameworks mainly from Western knowledge systems which are not necessarily useful in the Double World-Class movement of university construction in China.

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3 Developing Innovative, Multiple Theories of Evaluation for the Double World-class Construction of Universities

Based on existing theories of evaluation, our project on the Evaluation System and Developmental Strategy of Constructing World-Class Universities and Disciplines is guided by a set of new ideas for the evaluation of higher education institutions, which are strategy-serving, innovation-driven, scientific objectivity and world-class. It integrates domestic and international ideas with simplicity and feasibility, based on the concept of Internet+, driven by big data, and backed by dynamic monitoring platform (Wang, 2018). Meanwhile, it makes full use of information technologies to real-time and regular evaluation to objectively reflect the real situation of the Double World-Class construction for the accountability of the government and institutions.

According to the historical, cultural and social context of China, the key elements of constructing the evaluation system for the Double World-Class construction include open evaluation, multi-value judgment, monitoring platform of scientific data, and engagement of multiple evaluators.

3.1 *Open Evaluation*

To solve the problem of Four-Recognitions-Only, the project proposes five evaluative dimensions, including Accomplishment, Contribution, Leadership, Supports and Satisfaction. The first dimension Accomplishment measures how the goals of the Double World-Class construction may be achieved in the process, and the dimension Contribution focuses on how universities may contribute as powerhouses and think tanks by cultivating talents and scientific research to serve national strategy and societal development. Leadership encourages universities to continuously explore in the construction of the modern governance system of universities with Chinese characteristics and evaluates their leadership in both institutional values and heritage of Chinese culture. The fourth dimension on supports monitors how universities may be committed to improving the core technological innovation capability as well as the bridging of research and industries. The last dimension focuses on how universities may be recognized by domestic and international parties in terms of serving state priorities, public interests and the demand from the Double World-Class movement of universities.

Generally, these five dimensions are based on the Chinese context and inspired to design approaches for constructing Chinese model of evaluation. With the further development of the Double World-Class movement of universities, this model of evaluation may be tailored to properly reflect the

construction that all universities can serve national strategies and socioeconomic development in China.

3.2 *Multi-Value Judgment*

The Double World-Class movement of universities has multiple functions of promoting the social and human development, which demands the multi-value judgement in the evaluation of the Double World-Class construction. The evaluation must function to serve national strategies, socioeconomic development and scientific and technological development. Meanwhile, it highlights quality and efficiency of the Double World-Class construction, its social contribution and international influence, cross-disciplinary integration and collaborative innovation, integration with industrial development, in addition to the role of global governance. On the other hand, the Double World-Class construction respects humanities, taking moral cultivation as the foundation of human beings. Without doubt, the evaluation of the Double World-Class construction has the focus on human development.

Based on multi-value judgement, the core elements identified by the evaluation of the Double World-Class construction adheres to five principles: strategic orientation, world-class leading, highlighted priorities, systematic construction and objective presentation, comprehensively evaluating the effectiveness of universities in moral cultivation and educational approaches, innovation and entrepreneurship education, nurturing quality of talents, high-level research capacity, etc., and reflecting the overall strengths of universities in terms of talent cultivation, scientific research, service, cultural inheritance and international exchanges and cooperation.

3.3 *Monitoring Platform of Scientific Data*

Constructing an independent platform for data monitoring provides a basic approach for big-data mining, real-time monitoring, horizontal and vertical results of comparison, etc., serving governments, universities and the general public. Data are collected from governments, universities, third parties and mass media. With the method of data mining, the development of big data and Internet+ technology transforms the massive data about the Double World-Class construction into whatever forms users may use.

As to the presentations of dynamic monitoring results, the platform output data into the interactive dynamic charts in order to comprehensively and timely reveal the efforts of the Double World-Class construction and help universities to identify problems for improvement. With the horizontal comparisons of institutional outcomes of each university and the vertical comparisons of the annual outcomes, these analyses can help universities to find the

shortcomings in the process of the Double World-Class construction and provide scientific evidence for decision-making by governments at all levels in the future.

3.4 *Engagement of Multiple Evaluators*

The multi-body participation in evaluation is not only the core and foundation of achieving multi-value judgement, but also a safeguard of constructing world-class universities with Chinese characteristics. To include international perspectives, the evaluation of the Double World-Class construction must engage international experts and peers in the field of evaluation of higher education. The engagement of international experts and peers helps sustain the professional and international evaluation results, objectively observing the international influence and level Chinese universities may achieve. Third-party evaluators such as evaluation institutes or international organizations are to be engaged to set up the monitoring platform and carry out independent monitoring evaluations (MOE, MOF & NDRC, 2018). More importantly, the problem of Four-Recognitions-Only must also be avoided in the third-party evaluation. To achieve the multiple missions of the Double World-Class construction, a credible professional team of evaluation are to include experts from governments, universities, research institutes and international agencies, guaranteeing the benefits of all-around evaluation outcomes.

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