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# The Quest for World-Class Universities in China: Examining Faculty Members' Subjectivities under the Logics of Neoliberal Globalization

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## **Abstract**

This study provides a deeper knowledge and understanding about the ways in which multiple local and global discourses shape the policies that emphasize the building of world-class universities in China. As such, it examines the influence of neoliberal forces of globalization on institutional and individual responses to these policies, with attention to their transformational impact on the subjectivities of the faculty members. This qualitative case study (Creswell, 2009; Stake, 2005; Thomas, 2011a) was informed by an engagement with a number of interrelated and complementary critical social theories, namely, a Foucauldian analytical framework (Foucault, 1980a, 1980b, 1987, 1993), critical policy theories (Ball, 1994, 2005; Ball, Maguire & Braun, 2012; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010) and globalization studies (Rizvi, 2008, 2014; Rizvi & Lingard, 2006; Burawoy, 2000). In-depth interviews were conducted with fifteen faculty members from a high-ranking university in a less developed province in China, and data were analyzed through drawing upon the relevant national and institutional policies, examining China's specific historical and cultural realities, and engaging with the above-mentioned critical theoretical framework. This study has found that the quest for world-class universities in China is consistent with the logics of neoliberal globalization as manifested through a discourse that values efficiency, deliverability and performance, and encourages competition, excellence and high rates of return. It provides insights into the terms and enactment of various educational and economic policies in China that are driven by such a neoliberal rationality, and how this rationality was negotiated within a particular local context, entered into the university system to influence governance of higher education, as well as gradually penetrated the minds of academics to shape their subjectivities. This study fills an empirical gap by examining, from a critical lens, the complicated process of construction of academic subjects in relation to specific

policy enactment. It provides theoretical possibilities for future critical policy studies and studies on neoliberal globalization. It also identifies significant issues emerging from China's current pursuit of WCUs, particularly with regards to raising critical awareness and reconsideration of the roles of faculty members and the question of balancing quality and equity in the process of policy enactment.

**Key words:** subjectivity, neoliberalism, governmentality, critical policy analysis, globalization, higher education in China, world-class universities

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## **Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to my family. To my husband, Jie Wen, I am truly grateful that you are part of my life. Thank you for your emotional and practical support over the years. To my beloved parents, Yuxiang Lu and Yanli Zhang, thank you for your encouragement and unconditional love. To my dear sister and best friend, Baiyu Zhang, thank you for always being there for me and inspiring me to keep moving forward. Finally, to my little boy, Ethan, thank you for the joys you have brought to my life. You have made me better, stronger and more motivated.

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## **Chapter One: Statement of the Research Problem and Theoretical Framework**

### **Statement of the research problem and research questions**

The field of education policy research, like any other “social and cultural activity in general” has encompassed “multiple dynamics, multiple and partly overlapping histories, and is in constant motion” (Apple, 1997, p. 125). The past few decades, on a global scale, have witnessed a “shift from welfare to neo-liberalism (Jessop, 2002), from government to governmentality, from politics to ethics, from discipline to subjectivity” (Ball, 2013, p. 120). Consequent to this shift, there have been enormous educational, as well as political, economic and cultural changes nationally and globally, and the ways that universities and academics are governed have taken new forms. These changes are unprecedented and demand a timely academic response.

As Ozga (2008) reminds us, we are living in an era that is governed by numbers (also cited in Ball, 2012a, 2013a, 2015). With intensified forces of globalization and neoliberalism, higher education has become one of the arenas that compete for excellence and efficiency, as it is perceived as key to national development and productivity growth (Salmi, 2009; Torres & Schugurensky, 2002). The quest for world-class universities (WCUs), therefore, has become a high priority for governments around the world. Great attention has thus been devoted to creating various quality assurance and international benchmarking measures to evaluate how well each university performs with the new policies that emphasize building WCUs. Meanwhile, quite a number of research studies have well documented how this educational/political agenda of building WCUs has been localized and implemented in different places around the world (Bernasconi, 2011; Byun, Jon & Kim, 2013; Huang, 2015; Jayaram, 2011; Postiglione, 2011; Rhee, 2011; Mukherjee & Wong, 2011; Valida, 2009; Wang, Wang & Liu, 2011; Xavier &

Alsagoff, 2013; Yang & Welch, 2012). Inadequate attention and research effort, however, have been given to an examination of the complex policy enactment process (Ball, Maguire & Braun, 2012), and in particular, how faculty members respond to the national agenda of building WCUs and how their understandings of higher education and their subjectivities are shifting in the face of the enormous changes caused by globalization, neoliberal forces and specific cultural influences such as the national history, and socially transmitted behavior patterns and beliefs.

Through a critical analysis of selected policy documents and interviews with fifteen faculty members at a high ranking Chinese university in a less developed province, this study attempts to explore the following questions: 1) How are faculty members at a Chinese university responding to and interpreting the policies that emphasize building WCUs in China? 2) How are these faculty members constituted and constituting themselves as particular sorts of subjects in the complex policy enactment process? 3) What are the effects of the specific national socio-cultural practices in determining who they are and how they come to understand themselves as academic subjects? And, 4) How are broader forces of globalization and neoliberalism, in the form of a commitment to build world-class universities, affecting how professors in China are coming to understand themselves as particular sorts of scholars or academic subjects? These are the major research questions that I intend to address in this research.

### **Elaboration of the problem**

The main objective of this study was to deepen the understanding of the process of neoliberal governance and the shaping of academic subjectivities, more precisely, how individual faculty members were being constituted and constituting themselves in the enactment of policy of building WCUs within a specific context. In short, I was concerned to understand “the way in which small processes, everyday mundane practices work to disadvantage, damage, undermine,

exclude, marginalize particular social groups” (Ball, 2011). I wanted to examine how various prevailing discourses within this neoliberal education agenda had found their way to influence faculty members and their teaching, research and the university academic culture as a whole. I wanted to examine how Chinese faculty members at one university interpreted and translated policy into their teaching and research practice. I wanted to understand the different forms and roles of the “governance network” in the contemporary Chinese higher education system (Ball, 2012b). Last, but not the least, this study was concerned to analyze China’s policies on building WCUs in terms of their contributions to the enhancement of social justice. It was the researcher’s hope that the findings of this study could help to shed light on these issues, since each of them demands a timely academic attention due to their salient role in shaping the academic culture and defining what higher education really is.

I chose to study the academic community (15 professors) from a high-ranking university in China for a number of reasons. First, since the founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, especially during the last two decades, the enormous development in China has attracted worldwide attention. In the field of higher education, in 1949 there were only 117,000 students enrolled in regular higher education institutions (HEIs) in China (Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China, 2011, February 25), and this number increased to approximately 26,253 million in 2016 (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2016). From the early 1990s, the Chinese government has launched several initiatives that emphasized and supported the building of world-class universities, such as Project 211<sup>1</sup> and Project 985<sup>2</sup>, and has since achieved

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<sup>1</sup> Project 211 was one important strategic initiative taken by the Chinese government, with a commitment to support an estimate of 100 national key universities to reach the level of world-class by the 21st century. It was officially launched in November 1995, and was terminated in 2016. During this period, a total of 112 institutions of higher education had been

remarkable progress in terms of enhancing its national key universities' research capacity, international academic reputation, and international rankings. In the past 20 years, China is “remaking the knowledge economy landscape” (Marginson, 2008). Yang and Welch (2012) wrote,

between 1995 and 2005, the annual number of scientific papers produced in China rose from 9,061 to 41,596, with the annual output of papers rising by 16.5% in contrast to South Korea (15.7%), Singapore (12.2%), Taiwan (8.6%), the EU (1.8%), and the US (0.6%) while in the UK the number did not rise at all. In 2008, China produced 112,000 scientific papers, and the number of papers by Chinese researchers in five top research journals – *Nature*, *Science*, *Cell*, *Lancet* and *New England Journal of Medicine* – tripled to 21 papers a year. China is set to take the first place within 10 years (Moore 2010).

(Yang & Welch, 2012, p. 662)

China' role in the international academic community is becoming increasingly salient. Just as Li and Chen (2011) predict, Chinese universities may contribute to “a reshaping of global intellectual culture” (p. 241).

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selected to receive extra financial support from the central and local governments. (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2010, 2016 & n.d.)

<sup>2</sup> Project 985 was another influential strategic endeavor taken by the Chinese government, aiming at supporting a number of most competitive universities in China to become world-class. It was first proposed by Jiang Zemin, the former President of the People's Republic of China, in May 1985. A total of 39 universities were selected to be included in the Project 985. In 2016 it was officially announced ineffective. Project 985, together with Project 211, has been replaced by a new national university development scheme, known as “Double First Class University Plan”, which aims at developing world-class universities and disciplines. In September 2017, the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Finance, and the National Development and Reform Commission of the People's Republic of China jointly released the full list of the sponsored universities and disciplines. (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2011a, n.d. & 2017)

China has experienced an unprecedented economic, political, social and cultural change in the past three decades. Tensions have emerged when the traditional Confucian culture that worships education and educators encounters the new commercialization and privatization of higher education that treat education as a service and educators as service providers, and when the historically-shaped localized cultural discourses negotiate with numerous changes consequent to the contemporary processes of globalization. The pursuit of WCUs in China, therefore, is not merely an educational, economic or political issue – it involves cultural dimensions. It has to be understood in relation to China's long feudal history, the one-hundred-year (1839-1945) history of being invaded by external powers, and contemporary times which have been marked by its struggles for economic and social development and innovation. The pursuit of WCUs in China, therefore, can be viewed as a much contested terrain which mirrors the issue of dominance and resistance as raised in some postcolonial studies (Bhabha, 1994; Spivak, 1988). The colonial discourse has had a huge impact on shaping Chinese people's notions of modernity, development and knowledge. The "western knowledge" and educational models are highly valued. Western degrees are more preferred over domestic ones. Academic articles published in western journals are more valued, and learning a foreign language, especially English, is emphasized. On the other hand, Chinese leaders emphasize China's WCUs have to possess "Chinese characteristics", and there is a dynamic between the western dominant discourse and the Chinese indigenous civilization and culture. As Rizvi et al. (2006) suggest, this issue of dominance and resistance requires more urgent attention than ever with the "contemporary material conditions characterized by the global movements of capital, people and ideas that no longer follow the familiar one-way colonial path from center to periphery, but involve more complicated flows and networks of power" (p. 254).

Meanwhile, though there is recognition and affirmation of the spectacular education achievements made by China, literature has also documented criticism over the problems that have occurred as a result of China's ongoing higher education reforms, which leads to the central concerns that this PhD study is seeking to address (Cai, 2012, Chen & Wu, 2011; Wang, 2014; Wang and Seddon, 2014; Yi, 2011). What can be learned about how these forces of globalization, economic development and neoliberalism are affecting universities in China? How are professors in contemporary Chinese universities responding to and being shaped by the policies in the current context of tremendous economic, political, cultural and educational shift? What are the complex forms through which Chinese faculty members are being influenced by the current higher education policies which emphasize the making of Chinese universities as world-class institutions of higher learning?

The second reason to examine Chinese universities is because there is a gap in the literature, in terms of both the lack of empirical studies that examine faculty members' subjectivities related to China's policy of building WCUs, and the inadequate studies that employ a critical theoretical lens to understand China's policies that emphasize the building of WCUs.

In terms of the research content, existing literature that examines the agenda of building WCUs in China generally touches upon the following three aspects: 1) the contexts of this education agenda and the government's initiatives, 2) the institutional strategies towards building world-class universities, and 3) challenges and problems that emerged in the policy implementation process and critical reflections on this national education agenda. However, little attention has been given to exploring the complex and subtle ways in which faculty members are affected by the policy enactment and are negotiating their subjectivities in the enactment process.



The notion of “policy enactment”, as opposed to the traditional conception of “policy implementation”, is introduced by critical policy sociologists such as Stephen Ball (Ball, 2009; Ball, Maguire and Braun, 2012) and Ozga (2000). In an interview, Ball stated that the use of the term “policy implementation” suggested “a linear process whereby policy moves into practice in some direct way that is both mysterious but obvious” (Mainardes & Marcondes, 2009, p. 304). Viewing policy only as “an attempt to solve a problem” (Ball et al., 2012, p. 2) marginalizes or ignores “the other moments in processes of policy and policy enactments that go on in and around schools” (p. 2). Therefore, Ball et al. (2012) suggest to use the term “policy enactment” instead to capture or uncover the “the jumbled, messy, contested creative and mundane social interactions” that link policy texts to practice (p. 2). In this sense, policy is viewed as a process, which is “as diversely and repeatedly contested and/or subject to different ‘interpretations’ as it is enacted (rather than implemented) in original and creative ways within institutions and classrooms but in ways that are limited by the possibilities of discourse” (pp. 2-3). In other words, policy enactment is a process that privileges and silences certain voices, and therefore inevitably involves social justice issues in the sense that policy will benefit or marginalize certain social groups. In this sense, policy research that examines the subjectivities of faculty members in the process of the enactment of China’s policies that emphasize the building of WCUs will open up discussions on social justice issues in the ongoing higher education reforms as they pertain to Chinese universities. This objective is seldom addressed in existing literature.

Yang (2006) examined the current status of China’s education policy research, and found that due to the tradition of China’s intellectuals, as well as the consequence of marketization, there was a lack of criticism and “sufficient reflections on the actuality of policy phenomena and their processes” in the majority of education policy research conducted by researchers in China

(p. 217), and more importantly, a lack of critical indigenous perspectives that “focus on the local context” (p. 218). As Yang suggests, it is imperative for China to “interrupt this tendency to provide possibilities for a decolonizing educational policy and practice”, and Chinese intellectuals “need to develop their unique perspectives and values based on rich local experience and an awareness of their local society and culture” – “to grasp the meaning of locality in the situation when nation-states experience transnational destabilization” (p. 218). The study, therefore, also seeks the possibility to refine the existing theories that can explain the discursive formation of academic subjectivities of faculty members in relation to policy enactment at contemporary China in response to the emphasis on creating WCUs.

The third and final reason to study the case of a Chinese university comes from my personal and emotional ties to China, and also my previous experience as a student and later a faculty member at a Chinese university. I have witnessed how faculty members in Chinese universities are now “working within a new value context” with the introduction of market forces into the educational system (Ball, 1994, p. 51). As Stake (2005) suggests, a case study researcher should select the case from which the most data can be obtained. I believe my knowledge about China and its higher education system, my proficiency in Chinese language, as well as my social ties and cultural sensitivity have the potential to facilitate my data collection and analysis.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study fills an empirical gap by examining from a critical lens the complicated process of construction of academic subjects in relation to specific policy enactment. It provides theoretical possibilities for future critical policy studies and studies on neoliberal globalization. It also identifies significant issues emerging from China’s current pursuit of WCUs, particularly with regards to raising critical awareness and reconsideration of the purpose of higher education,

the roles of faculty members and the question of balancing quality and equity in the process of policy enactment.

### **Theoretical framework**

To examine the academic subjectivities of faculty members within the context of WCUs in China with regards to policy enactment in the contemporary era of globalization, this study draws upon a number of interrelated and complementary critical social theories. First and foremost, the Foucauldian analytic framework (Foucault, 1980a, 1980b, 1987, 1988a, 1988b, 1993) is used to understand the power relations and techniques of governance in the process of subjectification. Second, to make sense of the interrelationship between subjectification and policy enactment, this study draws on some theoretical work in the field of critical policy sociology, namely, the theorizing of policy enactment (Ball, 1994 & 2005; Ball, Maguire & Braun, 2012) and studies on the impact of globalization on policy (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). Third, to understand how globalization is influencing the local/global relationship, reshaping education and research imaginaries and raising new research challenges, some globalization studies are visited (Rizvi, 2008, 2009, 2014; Rizvi & Lingard., 2006; Burawoy, 2000). I embrace what Ball (1994) and Harvey (1990) have proposed, that any critical social research is “not bounded by a single (grand) theoretical perspective” (Harvey, 1990, p. 8); rather, “the concern is with the task rather than with theoretical purism or conceptual niceties” (Ball, 1994, p. 2).

**The Foucauldian analytic framework: Foucault’s notions of power, knowledge, subjectivity and governmentality.** As discussed earlier, the main purpose of my study was to understand how faculty members were constituted and constituting themselves as particular sorts of subjects in the enactment process of China’s policies to build WCUs, and how their subjectivities simultaneously influenced their teaching, research and the university academic

culture as a whole. Given this purpose, I believe it is most pertinent and important to draw upon Foucault's critical analytical framework on power knowledge, governmentality and subjectification.

Foucault's work has contributed greatly to sociological studies on education. In the following paragraph, I will discuss three of Foucault's most influential concepts, *power*, *knowledge* and *human subject*, the examination of which, as Foucault himself indicated, had been the center discussion of his work. His analytic insights have provided important resources for many scholars working across a range of disciplines including the field of education. Closely related to these three concepts is his theory of governmentality, which is discussed together with his concept of the subject. I will then explicate how these concepts have informed my research.

***Power as a productive network.*** Foucault rejects the traditional liberal and Marxist theories of power, which consider power as a commodity that is possessed by an elite few. He believes the notion of repression "is quite inadequate for capturing what is precisely the productive aspect of power" (Foucault, 1980a, p. 119). To reject this "repressive hypothesis", he wrote,

If power were never anything but repressive, if it never did anything but to say no, do you really think one would be brought to obey it? What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body much more than a negative instance whose function is repression. (Foucault, 1980a, p. 119)

For Foucault, power is not merely something that one can possess, but something that can be “employed and exercised through a net-like organization” (Foucault, 1980b, p. 98). It is not only an external force, but a set of practices, when exercised, internationalize, individualize and normalize one’s notions and behaviors. It is “like a shifting and changing interactive network of social relations among and between individuals, groups, institutions and structures that are political, economic and personal” (Ball, 2012, p. 30). This kind of “disciplinary power”, as Foucault (1980a) argues, is everywhere, and is often localized rather than centralized. The effect of disciplinary power is circulated in a manner “continuous, uninterrupted, adapted and individualized throughout the entire social body” (p. 119). Compared with the effect of apparatuses developed by the monarchies of the Classical period, such as the army and the police, the exercise of disciplinary power is less noticeable but “much more efficient” and “less open to loopholes and resistances” (Foucault, 1980a, p. 119).

Meanwhile, Foucault does not deny sovereign power. He thinks that the State is important, but “the State can only operate on the basis of other, already existing power relations” (1980a, p. 122). To explain the relationship between the power of sovereignty and that of discipline, Foucault (1980b) wrote,

The powers of modern society are exercised through, on the basis of, and by virtue of, this very heterogeneity between a public right of sovereignty and a polymorphous disciplinary mechanism (p. 106)...sovereignty and disciplinary mechanisms are two absolutely integral constituents of the general mechanism of power in our society (p. 108).

Power relations, as Foucault argues, “form the basis for the functioning of the State” (Foucault, 1980a, p. 123), and “a society without power relations can only be an abstraction”, since “to live in society is to live in such a way that action upon other action is possible – and in fact ongoing”

(Foucault, 1983, p. 223). This network of power relations disciplines people to act in certain ways which simultaneously strengthens this network. Normalization, as well as the discursive production of knowledge, thus, comes into being, which will be discussed in the next session.

For Foucault, power is not an evil, but rather “strategic games” (Foucault, 1987, p. 130). Power is “not necessarily repressive, prohibitive, negative or exclusionary (although it can be all of these things)” as it is also positive (Gaventa 2003, p. 4). Foucault (1987) wrote,

I don't see where evil is in the practice of someone who, in a given game of truth, knowing more than another, tells him what he must do, teaches him, transmits knowledge to him, communicates skills to him. The problem is to know how you are to avoid in these practices - where power cannot play and where it is not evil in itself - the effects of domination which will make a child subject to the arbitrary and useless authority of a teacher, or put the student under the power of an abusively authoritarian professor, and so forth. I think these problems should be posed in terms of rules of law, of relational techniques of government and of ethos, of practice of self and of freedom. (p. 130)

For Foucault, it is neither possible nor necessary to escape from all power relations, but rather it is important to recognize the technologies of power and those of self and how to mobilize them in the interests of certain political objectives.

Then how is Foucault’s notion of power related to my research on how faculty members are constituted and constituting themselves as certain subjects in the policy enactment process? As Ball (2011) suggested, “the teacher subject is constructed in a network of social practices which are infused with power relations” (p. 611). Disciplinary power, in this case, can be understood as the internalized and normalized mentality that is shaped by the historically, politically, culturally, and geographically specific set of rules that these faculty members, as well

as other people involved in the policy making and enactment process, consciously or unconsciously follow. The educational policies are the result of the negotiation of various external historical, economic, cultural and political forces, and the policies themselves are also practiced as both a form of disciplinary power, as well as a form of sovereign power that likely leads to certain disciplinary effects that (re)shape the academic culture of a university and the subjectivities of the faculty members. Through practicing this new disciplinary power, the university and the faculty members are also producing a new educational agenda which immediately becomes part of the existing power system.

The significance of Foucault's notions of power for my study is not simply to help me to say that "things are not right as they are"; it is to point out "what kinds of familiar, unchallenged and unconsidered modes of thought" upon which our accepted practices rest (Foucault, 1988b, pp. 154-155). It is to identify and examine the political, cultural and ideological dynamics in policy enactment and the subjectivities of faculty members. More importantly, it is to explore the possibility of detaching certain negative/unjust/oppressive disciplinary rules from the policies, as well as from faculty members' thoughts and practices, so that, if possible, to contribute to the creation of anti-oppressive policies, or, teaching and research pedagogies within the context of building WCUs in China.

***Knowledge and truth as effects of power.*** Foucault objects to the essentialist view of knowledge/truth, which views knowledge as universal and objective. Rather, he suggests that truth and knowledge are effects of power, and are created through discourses. Discourses, as Foucault defines them, are "practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak", and "are not about objects; they do not identify objects, they constitute them and in the practice of doing so conceal their own invention" (Foucault, 1972, p. 49).

Discourse is “the domain of subconscious knowledge”, which is, secretly based on an “already said”; and that this “already said” is not merely a phrase that has been already spoken, or a text that has been written, but a “never said”, an incorporeal discourse, a voice as silent as a breath, a writing that is merely the hollow of its own mark. (Foucault, 1972, p. 25; also cited in Ball, 2013, 19-20)

Ball (1994) further elaborated Foucault’s notion:

Discourses are about what can be said, and thought, but also about who can speak, when, where and with what authority. Discourses embody the meaning and use of propositions and words ...it (discourse) is ‘more’ than that (language and speech). We do not speak a discourse, it speaks us. We *are* the subjectivities, the voices, the knowledge, the power relations that a discourse constructs and allows. We do not ‘know’ what we say, we ‘are’ what we say and do. (pp. 21-22)

In his recent book on Foucault and Education, Ball (2013) deepened this elaboration:

Discourse is the conditions under which certain statements are considered to be the truth (p. 19)...But statements are not necessarily speech acts; they can be grids diagrams and equations (p. 20)...the operation of discursive practices is to make it virtually impossible to think outside of them; to be outside of them is, by definition, to be made, to be beyond comprehension and therefore reason (pp. 20-21).

Ball’s remarks, full of Foucauldian wits, provide a lucid understanding of how knowledge/truth/rationality is produced through discourses. For Foucault, discourse is not only what we say and do, but also the historically/politically/culturally constructed rules that govern what is said or to say and how to act in a particular way. Foucault further defined knowledge/truth, and explained the relationship between knowledge/truth and power:



truth isn't outside power, or lacking in power...truth isn't...the privilege of those who have succeeded in liberating themselves. Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its régime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true. (Foucault, 1980a, p. 131)

These discourses, mechanisms or techniques produce and sustain truth. Linked in this circular relation with systems of power, truth is to be understood as “a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements” (Foucault, 1980a, p. 133).

Foucault’s notion of knowledge has great implications for this study. In the enactment of policies that emphasize building WCUs in China, knowledge may take various forms and can be both the material and conceptual. Whatever form it takes, knowledge (or more precisely, what counts as knowledge) is determined by the socially available discourses and are materialized in many forms such as policy documents and artefacts. In addition to the prevailing discourses in the specific historical, political, cultural, geographical, economic and social contexts, the construction of knowledge is also limited by each individual educator’s experience and mentality. For example, it is based on a certain sort of “knowledge” that underscores the Chinese national government’s decision to build WCUs. This sort of knowledge is constructed through the negotiation of various available discourses that are reflected in texts such as the national development plan, the government’s economic or educational report, certain academic research

articles, newspaper articles as well as in the circulation of discourses involving some traditional perceptions of education, and the specific understanding of the nation's history. The various national and/or local education agencies, again, draw on certain knowledge, interpret this education agenda and then draft certain education policy documents for universities to enact. Again, these policy documents are made and justified based on certain knowledge, such as the consensus among the policy makers that there is an urgent need to build WCUs. This imperative is driven by neoliberal agendas and fueled by forces of globalization. When it comes to the institutional level, the university again interprets the national/local policy documents and then transforms them into institutional policy documents and practices, based on their specific contextual circumstances (such as the university histories, school cultures and material conditions) and, more importantly, their specific values and beliefs. The faculty members, both as the receivers and the creative actors in the policy enactment process, are required to follow the policies by the top-down power, but meanwhile interpret the institutional policies (interpret the interpretations of interpretations) and then translate them based on their values and knowledge which are shaped by the available discourses within the existing power relations in which they are implicated. They are performing who they are while enacting the policies. It is the operation of discourses that continuously shape how education is understood, how the world-class university is defined, and what it means to be a "desirable" faculty member.

The actual process of "knowledge" production and operation is complicated and full of tension. It involves numerous stakeholders within the policy network. In each phase of policy enactment, conflicting types of knowledge may fight for voices, as the available discourses to each knowing subject may not be in tacit agreement. Policy makers or faculty members always have some priorities over others given certain economic/social/political contexts or sometimes

simply based on their own specific preference. As a result, negotiation takes place at each stage of policy enactment. Just because of the different priorities, knowledge is also non-essential; it is relational and always subject to change, depending on who defines what knowledge is and under what conditions. It is also worth noting that knowledge is both overt and covert. This makes it more important to identify the taken-for-granted forms of knowledge, and to examine the process of knowledge production.

Foucault's notions of knowledge and power relations are significant in that they point to the importance of identifying the accepted discourses in the contemporary Chinese society, especially in the higher education system. Foucault's notions provide inspiration for the researcher to explore the mechanisms that enable faculty members to distinguish truth from non-truth, and to become who they are as particular sorts of academic subjects.

*Subject as effects of power and the art of governmentality.* As Foucault suggests, the word "subject" can be understood in two different ways: "subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge", and "both meanings indicate a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to" (Foucault, 1982, p. 212; also cited in Ball, 2013, p. 125). This explication of "subject" well explains the process of subjectification, in other words, how individuals are subjected and constitute themselves within a particular context. Subjectivity is not "who we are", but "what we do" – "an active process of becoming" (Ball, 2013, p. 125).

Foucault developed the notion of "governmentality" to link the "technologies of domination – the ways in which the subject is constituted by power–knowledge relations" and "of technologies of the self – the ways in which individuals constitute themselves through practices of freedom" (Allen, 2011, p. 43). In other words, technologies of domination

“determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination, an objectivizing of the subject” (Foucault, 1988, p. 18); while the technologies of the self, as Foucault wrote,

permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality (1988, p. 18).

Foucault believes in the freedom of people. He believes that people react very differently to the same situation. In Martin’s interview with Foucault in 1982, Foucault said, “the way people act or react is linked to a way of thinking, and of course thinking is related to tradition” (Martin, 1988, p. 14).

Foucault believes that technologies of the self have to be studied together with technologies of domination:

I think that if one wants to analyze the genealogy of the subject in Western civilization ... he has to take into account the interaction between those two types of techniques – techniques of domination and techniques of the self....The contact point, where the individuals are driven by others is tied to the way they conduct themselves, is what we can call, I think government. Governing people, in the broad meaning of the word, governing people is not a way to force people to do what the governor wants; it is always a versatile equilibrium, with complementarity and conflicts between techniques which assure coercion and processes through which the self is constructed or modified by himself. (Foucault, 1993, pp. 203-204)

“Government” here, as Foucault suggests, can be understood in a more comprehensive sense: it refers to both the management by the state of administration and the mentalities, rationalities, and techniques through which subjects are governed (Mayhew, 2004). It is a “continuum, which extends from political government right through to form of self-regulation, namely, technologies of the self” (Lemke, 2000, p. 59). Governmentality, in Foucault’s words, is “the conduct of conduct” (Foucault, 2002, p. 337) – “a form of activity aiming to shape, guide or affect the conduct of some person or persons” (Gordon, 1991, p. 2). This activity, as Gordon nicely captures, “could concern the relation between self and self, private interpersonal relations involving some form of control or guidance, relations within social institutions and communities, and finally, relations concerned with the exercise of political sovereignty” (p. 2).

In Foucault’s later work, governmentality appeared as a significant focus in his thinking about the exercise of power and power relations. He used the term “rationality of government” or “art of government” to describe “a way or system of thinking about the nature of the practice of government” (Gordon, 1991, p. 3). Foucault traced a genealogy of governmentality from its form as the “pastoral power” in the early Christianity to its post-war forms as neoliberal thought in western societies (p. 3). His notion of government allows for a more complex analysis of how neoliberal forms of government lead to controlling individuals through not only direct state apparatuses, but also indirect techniques. Lemke (2000) provided a good example:

The strategy of rendering individual subjects "responsible" (and also collectives, such as families, associations, etc.) entails shifting the responsibility for social risks such as illness, unemployment, poverty, etc. and for life in society into the domain for which the individual is responsible and transforming it into a problem of "self-care". One key feature of the neo-liberal rationality is the congruence it endeavors to achieve between a

responsible and moral individual and an economic-rational individual. It aspires to construct responsible subjects whose moral quality is based on the fact that they rationally assess the costs and benefits of a certain act as opposed to other alternative acts. As the choice of options for action is, or so the neo-liberal notion of rationality would have it, the expression of free will on the basis of a self-determined decision, the consequences of the action are borne by the subject alone, who is also solely responsible for them. This strategy can be deployed in all sorts of areas and leads to areas of social responsibility becoming a matter of personal provisions (Rose & Miller 1992; Garland 1996, p. 452-5; Rose 1996, p. 50-62; O'Malley 1996, p. 199-204). (Lemke, 2000, p. 12)

An example from my research can further elaborate this notion. In the long Chinese history, it is considered an honorable mission and moral responsibility for educators to “*chuandao shouye jiehuo*” (proselytize, instruct, and dispel doubt). With marketization and commercialization of higher education and various consequent education reforms, however, the expected roles of educators are shifting subtly. The ways in which educators see themselves as educators are also changing, not only directly as a result of the enforcement of governmental intervention, but through different social/cultural media, and more importantly, the ways educators understand their own practices and labour given broader forces of globalization and the impact of neoliberal agendas in higher education. The faculty performance evaluation systems, as well as many other market-driven forces, may all gradually change the ways educators see themselves and perform or enact their own subjectivities. Unlike the traditional government apparatus, in many cases, some reforms appear to be ideologically neutral, so that the transformation has happened in a subtle way in that educators may believe that what they are doing is based on their own will and rationality, and is for their own benefit.

Foucault's notions of governmentality are specifically useful in the realm of education policy studies. Policy, through a Foucauldian lens, is not merely the materialized representation of power possessed by the state or other authorities, but also involves the complex contexts in which the dictated, materialized policy is practiced and constantly and continuously reinterpreted and re-translated. This process is never ending, just like the process of subjectification. The individual subject, therefore, should not be understood in essentialist terms, but as an effect of disciplinary power, and is produced through subjection to the inscription of his/her body within historically specific discourses. The subject, as Foucault asserts, can never exist alone outside of the power relations. He wrote,

(Individuals) are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power. They are not only its inert or consenting target; they are always also the elements of its articulation. In other words, individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application. (Foucault, 1980b, p. 98)

Put in a different way, an individual itself is "one of the prime effects of power that certain bodies, certain gestures, certain discourses, certain desires, come to be identified and constituted as individuals" (Foucault, 1980b, p. 98). As Butler (1997) later explicates, people produce themselves as subjects through performing the discourses through which they talk and act.

One particular contribution of Foucault's notion of subject and governmentality is his advocating of changing "the political, economic, institutional régime of the production of truth" – how not to be governed that way (Foucault, 1980a, p. 133). He wrote,

It's not a matter of emancipating truth from every system of power (which would be a chimera, for truth is already power) but of detaching the power of truth from the forms of

hegemony, social, economic and cultural, within which it operates at the present time.

(Foucault, 1980a, p. 133)

Related to the field of education, these remarks not only suggest significance of identifying and/or creating - anti-oppressive teaching and research pedagogies, but also point out a starting point for such efforts.

Related to this research, Foucault's notions of the subject and governmentality are significant at least in the following two ways. First, these notions have greatly informed my research through framing my research questions, informing what kinds of data to collect and how to collect and analyze them. As mentioned earlier, the central question of my study was to explore how the faculty members had been constituted and were constituting themselves as particular sorts of subjects in the academy, which was exactly inspired by Foucault's notions of subject and governmentality. Later on, in my data collection and analysis process, Foucault's notions on how the "technologies of the self" and "technologies of dominance" operate interactively on the production of self have informed my understanding of both the disciplinary and productive relations of power in the constitution and formation of academic subjectivities for faculty members in one Chinese university context. I was inspired to explore how higher education policy documents, in the forms of faculty performance evaluation systems, rankings, exams, hiring criteria, and institutional meetings, operate together to continuously redefine the meanings of good university, good teaching, good research, and most importantly, the meaning of a "good professor". In addition, I am interested in examining how the individualized, internalized and normalized knowledges are produced and reproduced in the process of faculty members' performing and enacting their subjectivities, which simultaneously produce new discourses and professional cultures. More importantly, Foucault's notions allow me to seek the



possibility of challenging the existing discourses within the current Chinese higher education system by disrupting the reproduction of certain values and beliefs on higher education.

Foucault's notions of subject and governmentality also create a productive space to reflect on my own identity, positionality, and especially, my role as a researcher. "What are we in our actuality?" This Kantian question should be given attention, not only in terms of an exploration of outside forces and their impact on faculty members in the academy, but also in terms of reflecting on the limits of our own self-constitution and formation as researchers. Indeed, what lens do I wear? What values do I cherish? On top of these, how do I become who I am as a consequence of my access to certain discourses rather than others? And, what is possible for me to become? These ethical concerns are what I need to bring into my research.

To sum up, I have drawn upon four of Foucault's influential notions: power, knowledge, subject and governmentality. These elements "neither are reduced one to the other nor absorbed one by the others, but whose relations are constitutive of one another" (Flynn, 2005 p. 262, also cited in Ball, 2013, p. 27). The conduct of the individual subject is governed through power relations, which operate on the discursive elements that continuously produce and sustain certain knowledges and regimes of truth. It is through this complex process that the individual self is constituted and also constitutes himself or herself as a particular subject. As I discussed previously, Foucault's analytical framework informs my research in significant ways, and empowers me to create a space for "thoughts and new possibilities for action" (Rabinow & Rose, 2003, p. xi).

### **Policy sociology as a critical response to traditional educational policy research.**

Since this study aims to examine how faculty members are constituted and constituting themselves as particular kinds of scholarly subjects in the enactment of China's policies that

emphasize building WCUs, I also engage with some theoretical insights from critical policy sociology to understand the policy contexts and also its relation to the formation of specific academic subjectivities. Particularly, this study is inspired by Ball's theorizing of policy enactment, and Lingard and Rizvi's analysis of globalizing education policy (Ball; 1994; Ball et al, 2012; Lingard and Rizvi, 2010). As a critical response to the traditional policy analysis, the field of critical policy sociology aims at "exposing power and rhetoric, facilitating empowerment and emancipation, and connecting their research to practice and activism" (Diem et al, 2014, p.1085). These insights are closely related to Foucault's notions on power, knowledge, subject and governmentality. As Orsini and Smith (2006) wrote, critical policy study "is not an ideological straitjacket", but "an orientation to policy analysis inspired by the Lasswellian tradition<sup>3</sup> and by a desire to speak truth to power" (p. 1).

"Policy sociology", as Ozga (1987) first named it, did not become an important subdiscipline of the field of education until the 1980s, when policy making and politics was relatively underdeveloped as a research focus among sociologists of education (Burgess, 1986). Before the 1980s, the dominant/traditional educational policy research relies "first and foremost upon functionalist, rational, and scientific models" and "has tended to operate within a traditionalistic (i.e. positivist) paradigm" (Diem et al, 2014, p. 1068). Policy studies guided by the traditional theoretical framework were mostly "managerialist, technicist and uncritical in approach" (Taylor, 1997, p. 23).

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<sup>3</sup> Considered as the founder of the field of policy sciences, Harold Lasswell envisioned a policy science orientation which was characterized by "a multidisciplinary approach" with "a problem-oriented focus that was contextual in nature" and "an explicitly normative orientation" (Fischer, 2003, p. 3). The policy orientation as proposed by Lasswell is an effort to tackle the "policy complexities that accompanied the rise of big government and corporate capitalism" (Fischer, 2003, p. 3)

The works under the label of critical policy studies are mostly “rooted in the social science tradition, historically informed and drawing on qualitative and illuminative techniques” (Ozga, 1987, p. 144). Another leading feature of the scholars under this label, as Burgess and Murcott (2014) identifies, are their concerns regarding equity issues within the education system. Their critical orientation distinguished themselves from those who were working under the banner of sociology but were more aligned with management and administration studies that employed the management theories which valued business ideologies, one prevailing discourse at that time. Prunty (1985) nicely captured the missions of critical policy studies:

The personal values and political commitment of a critical policy analyst would be anchored in the vision of a moral order in which justice, equality, and individual are accompanied by the avarice of a few. The critical analyst would endorse political, social and economic arrangements where persons are never treated as a means to an end, but treated as ends in their own right. (p. 136)

The following paragraphs will discuss how this study is inspired and informed by the theorizing of policy enactment (Ball, 1990, 1994, 1995, 2001, Ball et al, 2012, Ball, 2013) and Rizvi and Lingard’s (2010) analysis of the impact of globalization on education policy.

***The theorizing of policy enactment.*** In many ways, Ball’s works are greatly influenced by Foucault’s analytical framework of knowledge, power and discourse. As one of the most prominent scholars in the field of educational policy research, he provides an insight into understanding policy, social class and how they interrelate through utilizing sociological concepts, theory and methods. Ball (2005) advises that conducting policy research should not be viewed only as an attempt to find answers to research questions on a policy issue or social

problem; rather it should be taken as “interpretational forays into the dynamic complexities of high modern society” (Ball, 2006, p. 1). His research orientation, as he shared in an interview in 2011, is fundamentally about “social justice and social equality and in particular the way in which small processes, everyday mundane practices work to disadvantage, damage, undermine, exclude, marginalize particular social groups” (Ball, 2011). This orientation also provides a perfect match for my proposed research.

Ball’s works on critical policy sociology involve a wide range of issues, such as the notion of a Policy Cycle in the 1990s, the operation of managerialism and market forces on education (Ball, 1994), the effects of policy on education (Ball, 2008), and other concerns around equity in education, such as globalization, class, gender and race. Ball creatively employs both structural and poststructuralist theories and analyses, which he believes “are necessary for ‘bearing witness’ and for an adequate critical understanding of educational realities” (Apple, 2013, p. 206). The following paragraphs will focus on his understanding of policy as both “text” and “discourse”, the conceptual base for his theorizing of policy enactment, followed by a further explanation of the theorizing of policy enactment and how it is useful for this study.

Just as G. E. Moore believes, definitions play a key role in understanding philosophical disagreements and issues, and many disagreements actually result from people’s insufficient knowledge of the concept (Pugh, 2010). For a very long time, the term “policy” has been perceived in different ways and used to describe different things, and the understandings of its purposes and functions have therefore differed. What is policy? Over this question, there have been long debates. Literary deconstructionists view it as text, emphasizing the “meaning-making in the hands of the readers rather than writers”; whereas social deconstructionists view policy as discourse, since “society is more than an accumulation of private, subjective meanings”, which

are “bound to historical conditions” (Bacchi, 2000, pp. 46-47). The center of their debate is “the extent to which the state determines the policy making process and as a consequence the room available for other actors” (Lall, 2007). Reflecting upon “the possibilities of combining the two approaches” (p. 47), Ball (1994) argues that policy is both text and discourse. He wrote,

somewhat under the influence of literary theory, we can see policy as representations which are encoded in complex ways (via struggles, compromises, authoritative public interpretations and reinterpretations) and decoded in complex ways (via actors’ interpretations and meaning in relation to their history, experiences, skills, resources and context)...This conception is not simply one which privileges the significance of readings of policy by its subjects...policy authors do make concerted efforts to assert such control by the means at their disposal, to achieve a “correct” reading. (Ball, 1994, p. 16)

Ball (1994) argues that texts are “the product of compromises at various stages”, influenced by multiple agendas, ensuring only “certain influences and agendas are recognized as legitimate” and “certain voices are heard at any point in time” (p. 16). He also suggests that when “the problems faced by the state change over time”, policies, representations and key interpreters all change - it has an “interpretational and representational history”, and “neither does it enter a social or institutional vacuum” (p. 17). Policies are “textual interventions into practice” (p. 18), and they enter “existing patterns of inequality, e.g. the structure of local markets, local class relations”. Therefore, no matter how proactive the readers are, “their readings and reactions are not constructed in circumstance of their own making” (p. 18). Policy texts “enter rather than simply change power relations” (p. 18).

Ball's notions of policy as text emphasize the significant impact of the state on policy making, interpretation and enactment. Meanwhile, Ball employs Foucault's notions of power, knowledge and discourse, and suggests that policy "ensembles, collections of related policies, exercise power through a production of 'truth' and 'knowledge', as discourses" (Ball, 1994, p. 21). Policies are "texts and 'things' (legislation and national strategies)", but also "discursive processes that are complexly configured, contextually mediated and institutionally rendered" (Ball et al., 2012, p. 3). Ball wrote,

The state is here the product of discourse, a point in the diagram of power... 'The state can only operate on the basis of other, already existing power relations' (Rabinow, 1986: 64), like racism and like patriarchy. I am not arguing that the state is irrelevant, or that it should not play a key role in policy analysis. But serious attention needs to be given to the play of state power within 'disaggregated, diverse and specific (or local) sites' (Allan, 1990) and to the ways in which particular fields of knowledge are sustained and challenged. (Ball, 1994, p. 22)

Ball's analysis of policy as discourse demonstrates the complexity and interplay of multiple discourses, and the discursive production of "knowledge" and identity within the policy enactment process. By doing so, Ball also wants to indicate that policies "from above are not the only constraints and influences upon institutional practice" (p. 24), but also to "provide a mechanism for linking and tracing the discursive origins and possibilities of policy, as well as the intentions embedded in, responses to and effects of policy" (Ball, 1994, p. 26).

Ball described the history of contemporary education policy as "a set of relations among games of truth and practices of power" (Ball, 2013, p. 45), and wrote,

in thinking about what our history consists of, it is not the school or the state on which we should focus our attention, but rather on the technologies that make up the school as an institution, that constitutes its functioning and effects, and the norm and methods of the state. (Ball, 2013, pp. 45- 46)

In their recent book, Ball, Maguire and Braun (2012) further elaborate the interrelationship between the textual and discursive effects of policy, and how they operate together in the “jumbled, messy, contested creative and mundane social interactions” that “somewhat link texts to practice” (p. 2). They argue that policy cannot be taken as a “closed preserve of the formal government apparatus of policy making” (Ozga, 2000, p. 42; also cited in Ball et al, 2012, p. 2). It is not a problem to be resolved, and therefore cannot be implemented. Rather, policy has to be enacted as it is a process, “as diversely and repeatedly contested and/or subject to different interpretations as it is enacted (rather than implemented) in original and creative ways within institutions and classrooms”, but “in ways that are limited by the possibilities of discourse” (pp. 2-3).

Ball et al. (2012) thereby propose a theorizing of policy enactment which identifies three “constituent facets of policy work and the policy process”, namely, “the material, the interpretive and the discursive” (p. 15). They argue that all of these three facets are indispensable to “capture, understand and represent” policy enactment (p. 15). Though the material policy texts are “normally written to be authoritative and persuasive and are accretive and intertextual”, Ball and his colleagues believe that “texts may be subject to a variety of interpretations, depending on interpreters’ own experiences, identities and subjectivities” (Hall, 1997; also cited in Ball et al., 2012, p. 15), and also depending on whether the texts offer limited possibilities for interpretation

or not. The material, cultural and political contexts, as well as the habitus of each individual make policy enactment a complex process of the negotiation of different voices and interests.

This framing of policy enactment developed by Ball et al. (2012), is not to produce ingredients or recipes for how education institutions such as schools do policy (they believe this is a mission impossible as policy is far beyond a linear process that can be modeled), but to provide some insight into policy enactment. In a Foucaudian sense, the policy enactment process is always a work in progress, which can be continuously negotiated and modified.

Related to my study, in the case of China's pursuit of WCUs, though different universities and individuals may interpret and respond to this national policy agenda differently based on the same policy texts, their responses are still confined by the national policy documents. Policy texts are the result of negotiation of various discourses available to policy makers, which reflect the existing power relations and certain contingencies. When the policy texts enter into existing power relations and are interpreted, recoded, reinterpreted, translated and practiced, they produce new discourses and subjectivities.

Ball and his colleagues' theorizing of policy enactment is relevant and significant in that it allows for an in-depth analysis of the policy context of the discursive production of knowledge and subjectivity, and allows me to raise questions such as: 1) What are the existing power relations or patterns of inequality on which these policy documents entered into? In other words, what are the political/historical/cultural/global contexts in which the Chinese government developed policies regarding the quest for world-class universities? 2) How are such policies imposing on the social imaginaries of faculty members and how they come to understand themselves as particular sorts of academic subjects? 3) What are the intentional and unintentional consequences of this policy agenda on the formation of professional cultures in a university? 4)



Are there any possibilities to interrupt the discursive production of certain kinds of knowledge and subjects? The theorizing of policy enactment together with Ball's "detailed critical understanding of the ideological and economic dynamics of neoliberalism(s) globally and locally" (Apple, 2013, p. 5) greatly inspired my research design and data analysis.

*Understanding globalization as an empirical fact, an ideology and a social imaginary.*

The impacts of the neoliberal globalization on shaping higher education policy and the professional culture are tremendous. In the debates over what globalization is and what its origins and consequences are, Held and McGrew (2005) summarize that there is a minimum of three different positions: globalists who view globalization as a "real and significant historical development that has fundamentally altered all aspects of our lives", sceptics who view globalization as a "primarily ideological social construction that has limited explanatory value", and global enthusiasts who believe globalization involves "a significant reconfiguration of the organizing principles of social life and world order" (also cited in Rizvi and Lingard, 2010, p. 23). Responding to this debate, Rizvi and Lingard (2010) propose that globalization can be understood in at least three different ways:

as an empirical fact that describes the profound shifts that are currently taking place in the world; as an ideology that masks various expressions of power and a range of political interests; and as a social imaginary that expresses the sense people have of their own identity and how it relates to the rest of the world, and how it implicitly shapes their aspirations and expectations. (p. 24)

A social imaginary, as Rizvi and Lingard (2010) interpret, refers to "a way of thinking shared in a society by ordinary people, the common understandings that make everyday practices possible, giving them sense and legitimacy" (p. 34). The neoliberal ideology, as one but the dominant

discourse that interprets globalization, is embedded within a social imaginary. Neoliberalism, as Henry (2012) defines, is “unbridled free-market fundamentalism”:

(Neoliberalism) employs modes of governance, discipline and regulation that are totalizing in their insistence that all aspects of social life be determined, shaped and weighted through market-driven measures. Neoliberalism is not merely an economic doctrine that prioritizes buying and selling, makes the supermarket and mall the temples of public life and defines the obligations of citizenship in strictly consumerist terms. It is also a mode of pedagogy and set of social arrangements that uses education to win consent, produce consumer-based notions of agency and militarize reason in the service of war, profits, power and violence while simultaneously instrumentalizing all forms of knowledge. (Henry, 2012)

Rizvi and Lingard (2010) adopt Foucault’s notion of bio-power to describe how the neoliberal social imaginary of globalization has guided and shaped people’s conduct, and they also adopt Easton’s notion of policy as an “authoritative allocation of value” to point out how governments use policy to “forge people’s subjectivities in terms of a dominant social imaginary” (p. 36) .

Rizvi and Lingard (2010) suggest that globalization has induced an “unmistakable global trend towards a convergence in thinking about educational values” (p. 72). This neoliberal values orientation is “manifested clearly in privatization policies and in policies that assume the validity of market mechanisms to solve the various problems and crises facing governments” (p. 72). Other social values such as equality and democracy have been re-articulated and subordinated to dominant economic concerns. The consequence of this shift of values, as Rizvi and Lingard identify, has “widened inequalities not only across nations, but also within the same community”,

and has brought disastrous consequences to those whose “economic prospects have declined and whose cultural traditions have become eroded” (p. 92).

Rizvi and Lingard (2010) suggest that neoliberal globalization has also induced a globally converging discourse which emphasizes that education policies should shape curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation in the way to enhance economic development and system efficiency. Standardized testing, for example, has become a more favorable evaluation method embraced by many governments around the world. Globalization has also transformed “state sovereignty into a shard exercise of power” (p. 137), with a large number of “intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations existing above the nation” imposing policy effects inside nations and national education systems (p. 136). This neoliberal discourse in education seeks to create the new “self-capitalizing” individual (p. 138), one “who has to continually invest in his or her own education, professional development and lifelong learning so as to actively and productively participate in the globalized economy and labor market” (p. 138) .

With all the problems consequent to the neoliberal market-driven forces, Rizvi and Lingard (2010) propose a new competing social imaginary that will “emphasize cosmopolitan learning that does not ‘ontologize’ market logic and the self-capitalizing individual, but seeks to work with a different moral sense of people’s ‘situatedness in the world’, in ways that are both critical and reflexive”, and will “recognize the social and cultural nature of human behaviors and being, as well as concern for the collective common good within an environmentally sustainable politics”, and the need to think locally, nationally and globally (p. 201). They argue that this new social imaginary is “necessary to frame education policy”, which “needs to be globalized and deparochialized in new ways” (p. 202).

Rizvi and Lingard's perspectives of globalization and its impact on education policy have both theoretical and methodological implications for this research. They provide an illuminating account of the operation of neoliberalism on many aspects associated with education policy enactment. Similar to Foucault and Ball, Rizvi and Lingard also recognize the power relations that dwell in both the existing education structure and the new policy, and the complex policy enactment process in which conflicting values are negotiated. Such theoretical frameworks inform my thinking about my own research: 1) How does neoliberalism influence the production of both policies and academic subjects through the enactment of China's education policy of building world-class elite universities? And 2) How do these policies operate "in an uneven and unequal geopolitical space", "creating conditions that extend global inequalities" (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. xii)? I am also inspired to explore the possibility of the construction of the "new social imaginary" that they propose, which I believe is an indispensable part of my study.

**Locality versus globality: insights from globalization studies.** As noted by many, the contemporary processes of globalization have brought about tremendous changes across the globe. The flows of people, ideas, technology and capital are constantly challenging and restructuring the traditional ways that any form of locality exists and operates. The local thus is inextricably linked to the global. Regardless of whether it is a remote community or a nation-state, it is performing itself in a particular way in the "global net" – constantly being influenced and reshaped by the global sphere while simultaneously redefining the global contexts. Just as Rizvi (2008) suggests, "no community is entirely unaffected by the global processes" even though sometimes people might not be aware of the influences (p. 19).

When situating the constitution of the faculty members' subjectivities in the interconnected and tensioned local/global net, this study cannot avoid addressing questions such

as: 1) How is the study of subject formation in a local university related to the contemporary globalization processes? 2) Through what avenues does globalization exert its influences on the constitution of the individual academic subject? And, 3) What particular analytical and interpretational frameworks can be drawn upon to address the new research challenges associated with the contemporary processes of globalization? I therefore also engage with several studies on globalization to facilitate my data collection and interpretation related to these questions (Bhabha, 1994; Fanon, 1968, 1984; Rizvi, 2008, 2009, 2014; Rizvi & Lingard, 2006; Burawoy, 2000).

In their collective work on postcolonialism and education, through reviewing and discussing the most influential works on postcolonial theories, politics and practices, Rizvi, Lingard and Lavia (2006) propose a “more liberatory rather than conciliatory postcolonialism” to “integrate postcolonialism with an understanding of contemporary globalization” (p. 249). Postcolonialism, as Rizvi et al. (2006) point out, has significant relevance to the study of globalization, as it “makes visible the history and legacy of European colonialism”, and allows us to understand how “it continues to shape most of our contemporary discourses and institutions – politically, culturally and economically” (p. 250).

Rizvi, Lingard and Lavia (2006) discuss the postcolonialism inspired by Frantz Fanon (1968, 1984), which identifies the lingering dominance and surveillance of colonial discourses over the colonized, even after the latter gain independence. Fanon believes that independence and liberation are two different things, as a nation often “fails to achieve freedom because its aspirations are primarily those of the colonized bourgeoisie, who simply replace the colonial rule with their own form of dominance, surveillance and coercion over the vast majority of the people,

often using the same vocabulary of power” (Rizvi et al., 2006, p. 251). Consequently, the “native” is usually portrayed and created as “inferior and colonialism’s devalued other” (p. 252).

Rizvi et al. (2006) continue to discuss the perspectives of Homi Bhabha. Bhabha refuses to “view colonial power in some absolute sense, always guaranteed to produce the intended effects in the colonial subjects” (Rizvi et al., 2006, p. 253). Instead, Bhabha argues that postcoloniality always involves “the ‘liminal’ negotiation of cultural identity across differences of race, class, gender and cultural traditions” (Rizvi et al., 2006, p. 254). Bhabha develops the term “hybridity” to describe the ways in which colonised peoples resist the power of the coloniser, and he suggests that cultural identity is negotiated through “the continual interface and exchange of cultural difference” (Rizvi et al., 2006, p. 254). It is the “ambivalence at the source of traditional discourses on authority” that enables “a form of subversion” which “turns the discursive conditions of dominance into the grounds of intervention” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 45; Also cited in Rizvi et al., 2006, p. 253).

Rizvi et al. (2006) agree that the term of hybridity is a “useful antidote to cultural essentialism”, but is insufficient in itself to “provide the answers to the difficult questions of how hybridity takes place, the form it takes in a particular context, the consequences it has for particular cultural groups, and when and how particular hybrid formations are progressive or regressive” (p. 254). For example, they argued,

While it is true that the contemporary global condition is underlined by much variability, multivocality and the processes of fuzziness, cut-and-mix and criss-cross and cross-overs suggested by the idea of hybridity, it is also the case that the processes of cultural hybridization are never neutral, but involve a politics in which issues of economic and cultural power are central. (Rizvi et al., 2006, p. 254)

Based on this insight, Rizvi et al. (2006) propose to locate postcolonial analysis “in its contemporary material conditions characterized by the global movements of capital, people and ideas that no longer follow the familiar one-way colonial path from center to periphery, but involve more complicated flows and networks of power” (Rizvi et al., 2006, p. 254). As globalization has given rise to new forms of power networks, they believe it imperative to “re-think narratives of colonization and anti-colonization” (p. 255). They suggest that postcolonial histories “have amply demonstrated the persistence of global inequalities” and have largely represented the values of the west (p. 257). The so-called global culture created in the contemporary processes of globalization appears to be natural and tends to conceal the fact that the global circulation of knowledge and ideas is unsymmetrical and unequal, but is in fact the continued production of “colonial structures of inequality” (p. 257).

This understanding of globalization is further elaborated in Rizvi’s (2009) article “Mobile Minds”, when Rizvi (2009) talks about how he thinks of globalization today in terms of giving rise to contemporary forms of colonialization, since colonial histories, as Rizvi (2009) argues, have significantly “affected the patterns of global flows” of “capital, people and ideas” at the contemporary time (p. 204). He suggests that globalization has to be understood in historical terms, and the history “shapes the way in which its people are engaging with the issues of globalization” (Rizvi, p. 111). Mobility, as one leading feature of the contemporary globalization, is “reshaping the world” but “different people and communities experience it differently” (p. 106). Globalization of research “involves the reconstitution of the definitions of significance, quality, relevance, and so on in the context of an increasing mobile, multicultural and globally networked world” (p. 114). Moreover, locality also needs to be understood in relation to the rest of world, not only in its own historical terms, because all localities “are produced as a result of

both global and historical interrelations” (p. 101). The questions of relationality, positionality and reflexivity are therefore crucial in understanding “how the Other is constructed and represented” (Rizvi, p. 113).

Rizvi and other’s engagement with postcolonialism in their studies of globalization are particularly inspiring and relevant to my proposed study. The study of the subjectivities of the faculty members at a local Chinese university is thus placed in the intersections of policy, specific Chinese discourses, its specific semi-colonial experience and the contemporary globalization processes. In addition to recognizing how the local historical, cultural, political, economic discourses exert influence on the constructions of the localized policies and particular sorts of subjects, this study also examines how the education policies and academic subjects have been “increasingly shaped by the global forces and pressures (Rizvi, 2009, p. 113). Examining how neoliberalism is negotiated within a specific local context allows for a better understanding of the construction of locality – how policies emphasizing building WCUs in China have been localized and how the local academic culture and subjects have been constructed.

Another theoretical inspiration that guides this study is Burawoy’s (2000) theorizing of global ethnography, which discusses how globalization opened up the theoretical and methodological possibilities. He and his colleagues develop their own distinct method of “grounded globalization”, through observing how people within a specific location negotiate, challenge, and reproduce the complex global sphere in which they reside. Burawoy (2000) discusses how global and local are interconnected and interdependent in the contemporary era of globalization, which makes ethnography and the traditional case method and the techniques of fieldwork no longer sufficient to examine the ongoing complex social processes associated with



this phenomenon. He reviews a number of existing influential theories and identifies the urgency to develop new ones to address the research challenges raised by the new social change. For example, he identifies two limitations of Bourdieu's analysis of reproduction: first, Bourdieu's focus on domination is not sufficient to address "the functions of conflict, the peace in the feud, and the ritual of rebellion" (p. 21); second, Bourdieu's focus on reflexivity which demands that researchers are accountable to the "natives" is not sufficient to understand today's relationship between the researcher and the subject, since there is no longer any "clear demarcation between us and them" and the "political and economic orders that upheld such divisions have fallen" (p. 19).

Facing the research challenges posed by globalization, Burawoy (2000) raises the question: "how to extend the extended case method to the globe"? - What might be counted as a "historically grounded, theoretically driven, macro ethnography" (p. 24)? To address this question, based on the existing ethnographic studies, Burawoy (2000) first pulls together the concept of an "extended case method with a sensitivity to questions of power and reflexivity" (p. 26) and identifies four dimensions of the extended case study: 1) the extension of the observer into the world of the participant: The researchers immerse themselves in the research field rather than conducting research at university, but the relations of dominance may distort "the mutuality of exchange" of information (p. 27), 2) extensions of observations over time and space: The researchers spend extended periods of time to examine the lived experience of the subjects, and recognize the significant role of the space, the situation; the overemphasis on role of the situation, however, may silence the voices of other agents, 3) extending out from micro processes to macro forces: Some ethnographers view the micro as an expression of the macro, but for Burawoy, the micro is shaped by its relation to the macro, and the macro is being represented by "external

forces”. Burawoy, therefore, points out the power of objectification, which constitutes the extralocal as forces, but fails to recognize that “forces are only the historically contingent outcome of processes” (p. 27); 4) the extension of theory: Burawoy suggests that the ethnographic or extended case study research may risk the power of normalization when the researcher attempts to discipline the study so that it conforms to the theoretical framework through which the study is approached”, and “we must expose our theories to continual critique from those they presume to understand, we must search for anomalies that challenge our theories” (p. 28). He suggests that “what makes the field ‘interesting’ is its violation of some expectation, and an expectation is nothing other than some theory waiting to be explicated” (p. 28).

To sum up, the ubiquity of domination, silencing, objectification, and normalization are four major shortcomings of the extended case method, which,

seeks to highlight those limitations not by ignoring them but by centering them by entering into a dialogue with those we study, by encouraging different voices to challenge our emergent accounts of process, by recognizing there can be no one-way determination between processes and forces, and by developing theory through a process of dialogue with other theorists as well as with the world we encounter as ethnographers. We are engaged in a reflexive science in which the limitations of method become the critique of society. (Burawoy, 2000, p. 28)

In the edited book, Burawoy and his colleagues focused on the fourth dimension – to elaborate and refine the existing theory. They take the “globe” as the common context for all their studies to contribute to an understanding of globalization. Their global ethnography or extended case study entails three strategies: understanding global forces, global connections and global imaginaries. They explore, not only the ways of operation of the global forces, but also the

origins of global forces, and reveal the tensions and negotiations between the local and the global. In their exploration of the social processes of the global forces, they also identify the global connections which diminish the geographical boundaries and bring new challenges and opportunities. Finally, they touch on the analysis of social imaginaries, which produce and disseminate “different images of globalization”, and have thereby been adopted by the “corporations, governments, parties, unions, and so forth” to justify “their self-interested action as driven by global pressures” (Burawoy, 2000, p. 31). The global ethnography or extended case study, therefore, also involves exploring and explaining the production process of these global imaginations, and how the local and global imaginations fight for voices.

Burawoy’s perspective on ethnographic research and globalization are another important source of theoretical inspiration for my study. Similar to all the other theories discussed previously, Burawoy’s perspectives are also about power relations, governmentality, dominance and resistance, but he provides a very clear elaboration of how to connect the operation of globalization to the methodological execution of the research, and in so doing encourages some deep reflections on the ethical and theoretical concerns of conducting research in an era of intensified globalization. Guided by Burawoy’s notions on global ethnography, I am inspired to explore: 1) How global forces have entered into and operated in the Chinese higher education system? 2) What are the tensions and negotiations between the local and the global forces in China’s pursuit of WCUs? 3) What global connections have diminished the geographical boundaries and bring new challenges and opportunities to China’s higher education system? And, 4) what social imaginaries have been adopted by the Chinese national and local governments, as well as institutions, to justify their pursuit of WCUs as driven by global pressures?

**Summary.** In this section, I discussed a number of interrelated and complementary critical social theories. Through engaging with a Foucauldian analytic framework, the critical policy theories and studies on globalizations, I attempted to situate my examination of the faculty member's subjectivities in relation to policy enactment within a historical and global context. My theoretical framework allows me to: 1) understand globalization in its historical terms, and how it operates as a hegemonic force that is fueled by neoliberal influences; 2) understand how globalization is reshaping education and the formation of subjects; and, 3) situate the process of subjectification in the intersections of numerous interrelated yet sometimes conflicting discourses. This theoretical framework provides me with a critical lens to examine the multi-layered and multifaceted power relations that have discursively constructed both the faculty members' subjectivities and China's policies that emphasize building WCUs. My critical engagement with this discursive construction, furthermore, provides me with an opportunity to identify and construct possible alternative discourses rooted in social justice, and an opportunity to refine the existing theories.

## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

### **Introduction**

This chapter is intended to provide a general review of existing studies on China's quest for WCUs, which generally focused on the following areas: a) the political, economic and sociocultural contexts of the policies emphasizing building of WCUs in China, usually taking the form of policy analysis, b) the institutional initiatives and experiences, in other words, policy implementation studies, and c) the emerging problems and critical reflections on this national education agenda, either in form of policy analysis or empirical study. These three categories of studies sometimes overlap with one another, and also overlap with literature examining the impact of China's quest for WCUs on faculty members. Though existing literature demonstrates both an empirical and theoretical gap in the study of the subject formation in relation to the enactment of policies that emphasize the building of WCUs in China, these studies provide the contextual background and serve as valuable resources for the examination of the subjectivity of faculty members.

### **The policy context and government initiatives.**

The historical, socio-economic and political background of China's pursuit of WCUs has been touched upon in many studies examining Chinese higher education reforms (Bie & Yi, 2014; Gu, Li & Wang, 2009; Guo et al, 2012; Guo & Ngok, 2008; Heaney, 2012; Ho, 2006; Pan, 2013; Yang, 2009; Zhang, 2012). Policy review is the major form taken in most studies of this kind. For instance, Gu, Li and Wang's (2009) book titled "Higher Education in China" provides a comprehensive introduction of higher education in China, including "its history and development, its magnitude and structure, its operational system and management, its processer

of enrollment and employment” (p. xi). Similarly, Yang’s (2009) book presents a thorough review of the major national policies and events related to the development and reforms of Chinese higher education since 1978. From another perspective, Zhang’s (2012) book comprises of two parts: reviewing and reflecting on China’s higher education developmental path since 1949, and conducting a case study that explores how a particular university in China responds to and survives the national higher educational reforms. As identified in these three studies, there are several developmental milestones in China’s pursuit of WCUs:

1) In the late 1970s, the post-Mao Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping launched the economic reform that aimed at transforming China in two decades “from a closed backwater to an open centre of capitalist dynamism with sustained growth rate unparalleled in human history” (Harvey, 2007. p.1). With the economic reforms and the Open Door Policy, Deng began to identify science, technology, intellectual resources and the enhancement of the education level of the whole nation, as being key to China’s economic development. Education was therefore officially reconceptualised as a way of stimulating national economic and social development. From 1977 to 1999, Chinese higher education system experienced the transformation from Elite Education to Mass Education. This was also the period when China’s education agenda of building WCUs fermented. After the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), which had paralyzed China politically and significantly affected the country’s economy, culture, ideology and education, the Chinese government faced significant challenges in restructuring higher education. In 1977, the Unified National College Entrance Examination was officially resumed. Zhang (2012) indicates that this was the first step towards reconstructing China’s higher education system. Though the government was determined to develop the education system, an inconvenient truth was that the severe scarcity of capital and other resources made it impossible for the government to establish

a higher education system to accommodate the large population. Under enormous economic pressure, on the Symposium on Science and Education Work in 1977, Deng Xiaoping suggested, Education still has to ‘walk on two legs’. In terms of higher education, one leg is to establish universities and colleges, and another leg is to establish part-time and vocational colleges. Efforts should first be concentrated on developing a number of key colleges and universities. (Zhang, 2012, p. 75)

Zhang, therefore, highlights how this policy resulted in the springing up of a large number of higher education institutions in different forms, but the scarcity of resources and the government’s focus on key universities seriously restricted the higher education expansion.

2) To further enlarge the scale of higher education system and encourage private capital investment in higher education, in 1983 the State Council issued a policy document titled “The Ministry of Education and the State Planning Commission’s Report on the Acceleration of the Development of Higher Education”. This policy encouraged a variety of social forces to operate education enterprises. This policy was written into the Constitution of the People's Republic of China to officially legalize and encourage the involvement of different social forces in higher education (Zhang, 2012).

3) In 1985 “The CPC (Communist Party of China) Central Committee’s Decision on the Reform of the Education System” was issued, which was a milestone in the history of China’s higher education. This document touched upon a series of important issues such as “the reforms of admission and recruitment system”, “the reform of the college graduates’ employment system”, and “greater institutional autonomy” (Gu et al., 2009, p. 13). In this document, the separation of university administration from the political power was emphasized. As Lao (2003) points out, “(The government) was able to realize that the institutional autonomy was the core

issue of HE reform, and that enhancing the institutional autonomy was the direction of the HE reform – this was the greatest improvement of and contribution to the HE reform in China” (Lao, 2003, p. 72; Also cited in Zhang, 2012, p. 78). A three-tier higher education management system was introduced, which identified a shared administrative responsibility of HE among “the central ministry, the provincial government and the regional city” (Gu et al., p. 13). All these policies prepared the Chinese higher education system to transform from “planned” to “market-driven” (Zhang, 2012, p. 79). During the 1980s, the institutional autonomy, however, developed slowly as it was limited by the “inbred practices and resistance from the existing institutional system”; multiple pressures the Chinese HE institutions experienced from both inside and outside of the institutions resulted in “an insufficient driving force of the development of HE in China” - the “planned” characteristic of the system has profoundly restricted the restructuring of HE (Zhang, 2012, p. 81).

4) The 1990s witnessed China’s further transformation from a planned economy to a market economy. After having achieved the higher education enrolment expansion, the “Outlines of Education Reform and Development” was issued in 1993, which emphasized the “quality oriented” development of higher education, and a “greater institutional autonomy” which can be responsive to the “societal needs” (Gu et al., 2009, p. 14).

5) In 1995, the “Project 211” was launched with a commitment to support an estimate of 100 national key universities to reach the level of world-class by the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This project entailed three major tasks: the development of the overall institutional capacity, key discipline development, and the enhancement of the public service system of higher education (Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China, 2010, n.d.). Until 2008, a total of 112 higher education institutions (about 6 percent of total number of the higher education institutions in



China, which is approximately 1700) had been selected into the project based on their overall academic competitiveness (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2010, n.d.; Yang, 2009, p. 178). These selected universities, according to Yang (2009),

take on the responsibility of training four-fifths of doctoral students, two-thirds of graduate students, half of international students and one-third of undergraduates. They offer 85% of the state's key subjects, hold 96% of the state's key laboratories, and utilize 70% of scientific research funding. (p. 178)

6) To provide further support to the elite universities, on May 4, 1998, in his well-known address on the ceremony to celebrate Peking University's 100th anniversary, Jiang Zemin, then Secretary General of the Communist Party of China (CPC), proposed that "China needs to build a group of leading universities with world class characteristics in order to realize the modernization of the country" (Gu et al., 2009, p. 14). Followed by Jiang's address, the "Action Plan for Education Revitalization for the 21st Century" was issued and Project 985 ("98" refers to the year 1998, and "5" refers to the month of May) was officially launched which was aimed at establishing a number of research universities and key research centers of excellence (Yang, 2009). Until 2004, thirty-nine universities have been selected, with nine of them being considered as the "Chinese Ivy league" and were designed to develop into "world-class" universities, and the rest being expected to become "world-known" universities (pp. 172-173).

Project 211 and Project 985 have had immense impact on the development of China's higher education. There has been a remarkable enhancement in the overall capacities of the high-level Chinese universities consequent to these two projects. According to Yang (2009), until 2009, among the universities being selected into Project 211, there had been a seven-fold increase in their research funding, seven-fold increase in their SCI (Science Citation Index) paper

publication, five-fold increase in the number of faculty members with doctoral degrees, and four-fold increase in the value of the university facilities (p. 176). For the selected universities, both Project 211 and Project 985 have tremendously fostered their building of “first-class academic disciplines”, improved their campus infrastructure development, increased their innovative capacity, and enhanced their overall teaching and research capacities (Yang, pp. 176-178). Consequent to the two projects, the influence of China’s higher education has been greatly improved.

In another policy analysis, Bie and Yi (2014) have explored the context of China’s higher education development and policy response in the past 30 years. Their study starts with reviewing the situation faced by Chinese higher education such as the demographic changes, economic development and higher education massification in the past few decades. Bie and Yi (2014) find that the higher education system in contemporary China has developed “a capacity to absorb more than 30% of the age group to undertake undergraduate studies”, while this enrollment rate was less than 10% at the end of twentieth century (p. 1501). Meanwhile, the college age population has been decreasing since 2009 due to China’s family planning policy. The changes in population structure require the Chinese higher education system to address the needs of the emerging non-traditional population for colleges and universities. Bie and Yi have also discussed the changes in the economic conditions. They argue that the philosophy of pragmatism has always been a prevailing discourse in modern Chinese higher education history. Either in the planned economy period or in the market economy time, it has always been a high priority for higher education policies to respond to the demands of the national economy. Bie and Yi (2014) continue to discuss a number of reforms initiated by the Chinese government to address the new socio-economic situation, such as reforming the National College Entrance

Examination system, improving the quality of education, constructing a modern university system, promoting marketization and internationalization, and strengthening the quality guarantee system. They then point out a number of conflicts in the policy making process, namely, the conflicts between education scale and quality, between the values of utilitarian and non-utilitarian, centralization and decentralization, and localization and internationalization.

Similar policy analysis studies include Wang and Cheng's (2014) book chapter on the effects of the Project 985, the "centralized, outcome-oriented funding programme" which has been consistently invested by the Chinese government since 1998 even during the financial crisis of 2008 (p. 112). Their study finds that with the support of the Project 985, the selected universities have significantly strengthened their international competitiveness but are still far behind to catch up with their international counterparts. The study also suggests a number of major problems within the policy implementation, such as the corruption related to the funding distribution, and the enlarging gap between the selected key universities and the less prestigious ones.

Another related body of literature has examined the strategies taken by the Chinese government to support the building of world-class universities, such as strengthening the quality assurance system, attracting and retaining talents in China and beyond so as to enhance teaching and research capacity, and promote the internationalization of Chinese higher education. Fang's (2010) policy review compares the similarities and differences between the LTQA (Learning and Teaching Quality Assurance) systems in Chinese and British undergraduate education. Through reviewing policies related to LTQA system in both countries, Fang suggests that there are remarkable differences between the Chinese and British LTQA systems in terms of their different "initiative, organization, focus, methods and functions of LTQA in undergraduate

education” (p. 19). According to Fang, the Chinese LTQA system is initiated and supervised by the government, not as autonomous as its British counterpart. Also, the evaluation method of the Chinese LTQA system is summative rather than formative, the evaluation focuses on teaching rather than learning, and the evaluators do not include external examiners or student representatives. Fang (2010) suggests that the academics among the inspecting panel are very limited since the majority of the examiners are the senior administrator of Chinese universities. As a result, “universities often felt unsatisfied with the evaluation feedback and recommendations given by the evaluation panel for the reason that they lacked concrete recommendations convincing to the universities due to experts’ limited expertise in the specific fields of the universities” (pp. 30-31). Moreover, unlike what has been practiced in the British system, the final reports of Chinese LTQA are only open to leaders and government inspectors, but not to staff, students or other stakeholders. As a result, British LTQA system has a significant impact on universities’ teaching and learning, while the impact of LTQA for Chinese universities is very limited. Fang therefore concludes that the British LTQA system has offered valuable experience for China to learn from.

In another empirical study, Wang (2014) examines the QA (Quality Assurance) system in HE in China and its impact on university governance and academic performance. It starts with an introduction of the history of the QA system and higher education governance change in China, followed by a discussion of “how QA affects accountability and autonomy from the perspective of the faculty” (p. 253). The empirical data was collected through interviewing twelve academics and four administrators, and collecting twenty-nine questionnaires from staff members from nine higher education institutions in Beijing in 2008. In 2012, five follow-up interviews were conducted to investigate the policy update and the impact of changes. This study finds that there

are both appreciation and criticism from the participants about the QA system and strategies. On the one hand, QA system exerts positive influence on research quality and accountability. On the other hand, however, the participants complained about the “tedious bureaucratic procedures and excessive documentation” involved in the evaluation process. Wang (2014) also finds that though the development of QA was expected to improve the students’ learning experience, students’ opinions were not included in the extensive list of evaluation indicators. The participants’ responses suggested that the QA system was not employed for the improvement of learning but simply a “strategy to monitor use of funding, to control faculty performance and to supervise university development” (p. 260). This paper concludes by highlighting the importance of involving faculty and students in the current QA system to enhance the quality of HE.

As Salmi (2011) identifies, a high concentration of talent is one important component in a WCU. Chinese government therefore has taken different initiatives to foster a strong academic force. One important step has been to attract international talents to work in China, especially to entice these overseas trained highly educated Chinese citizens to return to China. During the past two decades, Chinese government has been trying to cope with the problem of “brain drain”. Since 1981 Chinese government has been encouraging students to study abroad in various forms. As reported on the official website of the Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China (2011b), an estimated 1,905,400 Chinese have left the country to study overseas between 1978 and 2010, but only 632,200 returned after their study. The recent years, however, have witnessed an increasing percentage of returnees. According to a recent report (International Labour Organization, 2017) on China’s policies enacted by the Chinese central, provincial and prefectural governments to entice the internationally-trained highly educated talents, there were a total of 353, 500 people who returned to China after their overseas study in 2013 (p. 14).

Related to the building of WCUs, three of the most influential initiatives taken by the Chinese national government are “The Thousand Talents Plan”, “The Ten-Thousand Talents Program” and “Hundred Talents Program of the Chinese Academy of Sciences”, all aiming at attracting topnotch scholars to return and work in China. These programs have created very favorable working conditions and living benefits for the selected awardees. For example, the living benefits for the awardees selected by “The Recruitment Program for Innovative Talents (Long Term)” (one subproject of “The Thousand Talents Plan”) include:

Each awardee shall receive a one-off, start-up package of RMB 1 million yuan from the nation’s central budget; be entitled to medical care, social insurance including pensions, medical insurance and work-related injury insurance; and may purchase one residential apartment for personal use. The housing and meal allowance, removing indemnity, home-leave-subsidy, and children-education-allowance in the wage income in Chinese territory within 5 years shall be deducted before taxes in accordance with relevant laws and regulations. Employers have to offer job opportunities to spouses, and children will have guaranteed admission to schools. The income level should be decided on their previous jobs overseas through negotiation with due living allowances. (The Recruitment Program for Innovative Talents, n.d.)

The Chinese national government has also been making great efforts to promote and strengthen the internationalization of China’s higher education, through establishing transnational partnerships, internationalizing teaching and research, promoting talent exchanges between China and other countries, internationalizing the university governance and contributing to the international communities.

### **The institutional strategies**

Different from the agenda of building WCUs in most western countries, the pursuit of WCUs in China is mainly initiated and supported by the government. The individual institutions, meanwhile, also take an important role in fulfilling this inspiration.

A number of studies have touched upon how different key universities in China localized and implemented this national agenda. Wang et al.'s (2011) policy review, for example, examines how Shanghai Jiao Tong University (SJTU) responds to the national and local policies to build itself into a WCU. Wang et al. (2011) describe in detail the strategies employed by SJTU to develop itself into a WCU through reviewing related policy documents and reports.

The first and foremost strategy developed by SJTU develop is to reform its management style from traditional to strategic management. In the traditional university management system, the President is mostly “appointed by the government or is elected by the academic community and subsequently approved by authorities (p. 42-43). The pitfall of this appointment system is that the most suitable leader might not be appointed. SJTU therefore allows vice president to share the authority and responsibilities for policy implementation.

Inspired by the western management style, in December 2008 SJTU established the Academic Council which is comprised of both administrative and academic authorities with the university president serving as the council president. The establishment of this council changed the situation that “academic power is usually superseded by the administrative authority”, and therefore provided more authority for the faculty members, improved the teaching and research quality and enabled to make more informed policy decisions (Wang et al, 2011, p. 43).

SJTU also adopts “international” benchmarking to promote “faculty quality, research excellence and talent cultivation” (Wang et al., 2011, p. 43). Research quality is emphasized compared with quantity. The performances of individual department and faculty members are

evaluated based on the significance and international influence of their research projects, rather than numbers of “uninfluential” papers or funds. For example, in this evaluation system, each department and school are only allowed to list five of their projects. The emphasis on quality and originality has a particular impact on the department of sciences, and the development of fundamental sciences.

Campus development is another important component of the management reform. Through transferring the main campus from one expensive area to a comparatively remote area, and establishing a new main campus that is large enough to house all five originally separate campuses, SJTU laid a solid infrastructure base to implement its strategic plan (Wang et al., 2011). The new buildings enable a more convenient share of resources among departments and also facilitate the university-industry cooperation (Wang et al., 2011)

The last but not least strategy is to improve faculty quality through lifting the hiring standard bar, engaging with national policies to attract internationally trained talents, foster a more competitive environment in terms of both faculty employment and promotion. As a result, the overall quality of faculty is strengthened and the percentage of faculty holding a foreign PhD degrees increased from 5 percent in 2004 to 12 percent in 2008 (Wang et al, 2011, p. 47).

Wang et al. (2011) conclude that SJTU’s development has changed “from quantity oriented to quality oriented”, and “from infrastructure building to enhancement of teaching, learning and research” (p. 58).

In another case study conducted at Tsinghua University in China, Wang and Seddon (2014) discuss how Tsinghua strives to meet one of the benchmarks of becoming a WCU – internationalization. Tsinghua’s strategy comprises two major aspects: to “inject an international dimension to the home campus experience” and “to project itself and its stakeholders out in the



world” (p. 33). The institutional initiatives include “hiring distinguished scholars from overseas to teach and research at Tsinghua”, “exploring opportunities for academics to gain international experience”, “engaging in international partnerships”, “attracting more international students”, and “sending students abroad for exchange, short-term study, or internship” (p. 33-34). These strategies have greatly enhanced Tsinghua’s internationalization level, exerting positive influences on the academic work. The authors, however, also point to the problems such as the undervaluation of domestic degrees and knowledge (the preference of western degrees over domestic ones, and journal papers published in English-language journals over Chinese ones), the prevalence of the audit culture, the restricted academic autonomy, which are reshaping academics and academic workplace.

Cai’s (2012) study, from another perspective, examines the contributions of the Chinese knowledge diaspora on the domestic institution’s development into a WCU. This study reveals how overseas Chinese scholars help to link Peking University to the international scholarly community, and set a platform for institutional development and international cooperation.

Existing literature also touched upon the institutional strategies adopted by the less prestigious key universities in China, which experienced this national agenda differently. Choi (2010), for example, examined the responses and challenges of Yanbian University, which is located at Yanji, the heart of Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture, and was originally established to provide higher education to Korean ethnic groups in China. Choi’s case study focuses on how Yanbian University has been working to reach its goal within the context of Project 211. Choi’s (2010) study involves reviewing and analyzing academic publications, documents published on the Ministry of Education website, newspapers and Yanbian University

bulletin and Project 211 reports, and interviewing five senior faculty members, two high-ranking administrators and two community leaders (p. 172).

As indicated in Choi's (2010) study, Yanbian University is less well-known and supported by the government compared with the top national universities such as SJTU or Peking University. However, as a chosen Project 211 university, it has also been influenced by the national agenda of building WCUs and has therefore rearticulated its education mission: to emphasize cross-cultural and multicultural competencies in education. Through investing in the physical infrastructure, recruiting more high-quality faculty members and increasing the student enrolment, Yanbian University is working slowly but steadily towards the direction of building itself into a WCU.

Choi (2010) concludes that the market-oriented education reforms and particularly Project 211 have brought both opportunities and challenges to Yanbian University. After becoming a chosen key university supported by Project 211 government funding, Yanbian University has attracted more students to enroll. The annual average growth rate of student enrollment was 52% (49% at the undergraduate and 258% at the graduate level) between 1990 and 2005 (Choi, 2010, p. 174). The increase of graduate students in particular has enabled a more smooth transformation from a teaching to a research university. Meanwhile, the market-oriented education reforms pose challenges to this second-tier ethnic minority university. Compared with those top universities, it has experienced more difficulty in attracting talent and elite students from the local Korean ethnic communities.

Through drawing a cultural approach and based on the empirical findings of the case study of three universities, Li (2012) discusses how individual institutions localize the national agenda toward building WCUs, and describes the key features of the emerging Chinese model of

the university, such as “the core values of self-mastery and intellectual freedom”, to show “how it differs from the dominant Anglo-Saxon and American models but shares some features with the continental European and Japanese models of the university”(p.319 ). Li suggests that even though the strong governmental control and the limited public resources resulted in a “highly hierarchical, stratified, and meritocratic” Chinese higher education system with “only a few outstanding public universities at the top” (p. 331), the Chinese university remains an open and diverse and dynamic place which seeks “excellence in knowledge production and application” and is “able to serve the nation and the globe, while also aspiring to their own higher and longer-term visions” (p. 336)

The experiences of these Chinese universities that were selected into the Project 211 and/or Project 985 demonstrate the significant roles of national policy as well as the logics of the market in shaping the university policy and experiences. It is undeniable that in the past two decades, China has achieved tremendous achievements in establishing its higher education system and reshaping the global knowledge landscape. The neoliberal market-driven reforms and the privileges of certain government-chosen universities over others have also raised problems and concerns over the ongoing reforms, which will be discussed next.

### **Problems and critical reflections**

Critical concerns over the quest for WCUs have generally touched upon the following aspects.

- 1) Tensions between the heavily controlled hierarchical education system and academic freedom

Guo and Ngok (2008) identify academic freedom and university autonomy as important components to build a WCU. The Chinese higher education institutions however are heavily

controlled by national and local governments. Through analyzing the survey data collected from 268 young faculty members at Zhejiang University, Li, Li and Sun (2013) investigated young faculty's job perceptions using four variables: intrinsic motivation, job burnout, job satisfaction, and turnover. This study finds that participants have “high intrinsic motivation, relatively high professional efficacy, and low turnover”, but they show “job burnout as indicated by emotional exhaustion” and demonstrate “moderate intrinsic satisfaction and low extrinsic satisfaction” (p. 1). One particular finding of this study is that faculty members are dissatisfied with the ongoing evaluation and promotion systems mostly because of their imposed constraints on academic freedom. For example, it is the Department of Human Resources rather than the academic authorities in the university that defines which journals can be counted as good and influential ones. The absence of academic authority resulted in not only a questionable evaluation standard, but also resentment and frustration among faculty members. Consequently, the accountability and usefulness of the evaluation system itself is questioned. The lack of academic freedom is also reflected in the process of applying for government-supported funding. While the research field is narrowly defined by the government already, the applicants usually have little flexibility in choosing what they really want to research. This finding resonated with what Zhang (2013) had found in his empirical study that examines Chinese faculty members' promotion criteria.

One participant in Zhang's study said,

When you apply for (governmental funding) in China, you should not consider what you want to do; you should consider what the fund providers want you to do. This is part of a larger picture. For instance, most of the projects in 2007 have to do with building a “harmonious society” (Zhang, 2013, p. 191).

Wang (2014)'s study examines the impact of the Quality Assurance system on the accountability and autonomy from the perspective of the faculty members in China. As Wang indicates, through decades of reform, the universities in China have gradually gained more and more autonomy, such as “determining student- faculty ratios, setting degree requirements, establishing new undergraduate programs, reviewing existing undergraduate programs, eliminating existing undergraduate programs, adding or discontinuing existing academic departments or divisions, and offering full-fee-paying courses or programs”, but questions such as “priority in enrollment, the level of courses provided, and position as a teaching or research university” are still largely determined by the government (Wang, 2014, p. 260). Meanwhile, for the individual faculty members, though the university governance has transited from direct control to supervision (through using the quality assurance system), the QA system itself has been criticized by all participants due to the performance evaluation being “too frequent and overwhelming” thus disturbing “normal teaching and research” (Wang, 2014, p. 257). In this sense, academic freedom is affected.

2) Inconsistency between the stated government agenda and the actual policy enactment

Promoting transnational higher education (TNE) is one component in China's agenda of building WCUs. Hou, Montgomery and McDowell's (2014) document analysis, for example, sheds light on the current situation and features of China's practice of TNE. The findings reveal an inconsistency between the stated policy and the actual enactment of the policies. While the state government agenda aims to “support the wider public good in China”, the distribution of TNE is unbalanced, and particular academic disciplines have been favored over others (p. 300).

A number of studies that examine the quality assurance system in HE in China also suggest there is an inconsistency between the original government/institutional intention and the

actual enactment of certain policies. Through interviewing faculty members, staffs and administrators, Wang (2014) examined the impact of the QA (Quality Assurance) system in HE in China on university governance and academic performance. In Wang's study, one participant described this system to be time and energy consuming and said,

Even the evaluation is carried out on a five-year basis. Before the formal evaluation which lasts about a year, there are a one-year self-evaluation and a one-year pre-evaluation. So only two years are left for normal teaching in the five-year round. What is more, the evaluation requirements are ridiculous and inconsistent. Yesterday we were required to mark term papers in this way and today we were required to do it another way. (Wang, 2014, p. 258)

Another participant in Wang's (2014) study mentioned how the institution invested huge amounts of money and time to do things that were non-related to the academic work, but just to impress the evaluators, and therefore "caused huge waste of money and interrupted the normal teaching and research" (p. 258). As a result, the QA system has become a "strategy to monitor use of funding, to control faculty performance and to supervise university development" (p. 260), rather than a strategy to improve the teaching quality and learning experience.

Similarly, Zou et al. (2012) conducted a content analysis of 53 self-evaluation reports submitted to the national Higher Education Evaluation Center by a wide range of higher education institutions in China. As discussed previously, over the past 30 years China has established a nationwide quality guarantee system for assessing the higher education institutions. The use of self-evaluation reports prepared by each institution is considered to be one major basis for external review. Zou et al.'s content analysis finds that these reports "have a greater tendency to demonstrate their (the institutions') organizational quality to the external world than

reflecting on the internal teaching and learning quality” (p. 169). The findings suggest that use of self-evaluation reports in the ongoing national higher education quality assurance system has a potential to limit and even distort the effect of the teaching and learning quality of higher education institutions.

Inconsistency between policy and practice also emerged when certain policies were poorly enacted. For example, in his review of China’s government agenda of building WCUs, Li (2012) indicates that the selection of universities for Project 211 was transparent, but for Project 985 has been a “black box”, “with no clear or exact criteria for acceptance onto the list” (p. 324). Similarly, in their critical reflections on China’s quest for WCUs, Guo and Ngok (2008) suggest that in terms of funding distribution to the chosen universities, there is no strict or clear criteria and procedures to follow, and “in many cases, the money was distributed arbitrarily” (2008. p. 555).

### 3) Overemphasis of the utilitarian value of education

In his case study of internationalisation at South China University of Technology (SCUT), Yang (2004) examined how Chinese universities are responding to the phenomenon of academic capitalism, and how the changes associated with globalization are “modified and fashioned” by the local context (p. 473). Through document analysis and interviews with professors and senior administrators, Yang identifies a number of international programmes at SCUT, including sending staff abroad, hosting overseas scholars, hosting and attending international conferences, establishing international relations, communicating with Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan, and sending students overseas in various forms. Yang finds that it is “increasingly difficult for universities to reconcile the competing agendas” since “forces of internationalization and globalization pull in different directions” (p. 493). The findings also suggest that globalization

has changed the operations of Chinese universities, and “has begun to create a culture of competition, corporate managerialism, efficiency and accountability in China’s higher education” (p. 495). Though admitting the positive consequences of globalization on China’s universities, Yang (2004) is also concerned with the possible negative effects caused by the introduction of business or entrepreneurial practices and values into the higher education system, which may “pose threat to intellectual virtues such as honesty, intellectual courtesy, indifference to the mere fashion in ideas, and a dedication to the regulative ideal of truth (Coady, 2000)” (Yang, 2004, p. 495).

Similarly, in their policy analysis of China’s higher education context and policies, Bie and Yi (2014) indicate that the prevailing market-driven value in the current higher education system is a result of the government’s focus on economic development. Higher education therefore is expected to serve this economic agenda, rather than to produce any kind of “non-utilitarian” knowledge. This market-driven ideology is strong in shaping Chinese imaginaries regarding what higher education is for and what the university is expected to deliver.

The neoliberal mode of reforms has also fostered an “entrepreneurial” culture at the Chinese universities. Knowledge is closely linked to economy and faculty members are encouraged to cooperate with industries or other social organization to general collective or individual profit. In Zhang’s (2013) qualitative empirical study that examines the concrete promotion criteria at a prestigious university in China, faculty members’ experiences, and their perspectives of the promotion criteria, all 24 faculty members being interviewed, regardless of their disciplinary fields, are all involved in certain types of commercial activities. This is not surprising when we revisit the ranking indicators of some of the most influential WCU benchmarking, such as Times Higher Education (THE) ranking. Industry income is placed on top



of all other indicators in THE ranking, and is interpreted as a signifier of the university's "innovation" capacity (Altbach and Salmi, 2011, p. 8). Chinese universities, just like many other universities around the world, are encouraged to commercialize research and engage with industry.

Through conducting document review and interviewing 12 returnee professors at a Chinese university, Yi (2011) examines the expansion of audit culture in higher education institutions, and suggests that the audit culture in China is "not only guarded by a quantifiable scientism, but also by ideological control of communism and a Confucian *guanxixue* (studies of interpersonal relationship) and paternalism to form a new synthesized pattern of governance, and thus is a different form from neoliberal audit culture in the West" (p. 499). Yi (2011) thereby raises critical concerns over the current situations of academics in China and the consequences of the Chinese audit culture. Yi wrote,

The two forces of bureaucracy and market serve as the respective foundation for each other whilst reinforcing each other in the process of their alliance. This has eventually formed what Habermas (1984) terms the mutually colluded economic and administrative rationalization, in a one-sided process of modernization in contemporary societies. (p. 506)

As Yi (2011) suggests, the "growing intervention of economic and administrative rationalization in the lifeworld of Chinese academics" has many negative consequences among faculty members, "ranging from cynicism, suicide, formalism, various misconducts, abuses of power for personal gain, and the reduced autonomy of academics" (p. 506). And, the "integration of political power and economic capital has in particular transformed *guanxixue* from more inter-personal relations into institutional relations that largely involve governments and enterprises" (p. 506), and "has

given rise to increased corruption in business-government realms’’ (p. 506; cited from Yang, 2002, p. 465).

#### 4) Quality and equality: What about the Others

In their recently policy analysis on China’s higher education massification, Shan and Guo (2014) have discussed how the quest for WCUs in China has kept the ideology of elitism in place. They argue that massification and marketization of higher education doesn’t signal the end of elitism; rather, they have fostered another kind of elitism- the pursuit of national and educational excellence. They suggest that the old form of elitism was fostered based on “meritocratic egalitarianism, i.e., individual students, regardless of their economic backgrounds, gained their entrance to university by excelling in the National College Examination” (p. 16), but the new form of elitism has further marginalized the disadvantaged students from rural areas and lower economic backgrounds as previously found in Chan and Ngok’s (2011) study.

Through reviewing policy documents and relevant existing empirical studies, Chan and Ngok (2011) find that educational inequality in China is worsening even with the higher education massification and the quest for WCUs. For instance, though the total number and percentage of rural students in higher education institutions have increased, the rural students’ education participation pattern is worrisome: they are under-represented in prestigious universities (e.g., those chosen by Project 211, and Project 985). Their study suggests that the “structural problem of regional economic disparity” and “the severe income inequality among socio-economic groups” has been reproducing social inequality and prohibiting social mobility.

#### 5) The preference of research over teaching

The agenda of building WCUs has placed research on a much higher position than teaching. This new orientation creates new problems. As suggested in Li et al.’s (2013) empirical

study on the young faculty members' job perspectives, the faculty members have to struggle between teaching and research. Especially for those originally in the "teaching track" with a heavy teaching load, the new evaluation system means they have to struggle between taking a heavy teaching load and finding time to do research. This new "uniformed" appraisal system has led to pessimism toward reforms among some faculty members.

The overemphasis on research has resulted in the neglect of teaching among some faculty members. Through document analysis and in-depth interviews with 24 faculty members at a prestigious Chinese university, Zhang (2013), examines the sources of institutional promotion criteria, and the experiences and perspective of frontline faculty members of the existing faculty evaluation and promotions system in China. As Zhang indicates, in many universities, "teaching" is only evaluated by looking at the number of classes one teaches without considering the teaching quality, which generates a strong sense of dissatisfaction among students, especially in those research-intensive elite universities.

Yi's (2011) empirical study on the audit culture at Chinese universities supports the argument that the research pressure has also given rise to the "misconduct in research, such as plagiarism, forgery of data" (p. 503). Similarly, through interviewing 60 faculty members from 3 universities in mainland China, Lai et al. (2014) investigate the faculty members' perspectives on the employment reform and their "strategies to handle teaching and research" (p. 966). Their findings suggest that the ongoing faculty appraisal system has urged the faculty members to publish frequently and has caused "unnecessary tensions" that "distorted academic culture and harmed academic commitment" (2014, p. 976). Moreover, anxiety and lack of passion for intellectual inquiry is well documented in many studies (Li et al., 2013; Yi, 2011).

6) Preference of "western" talents and knowledge over domestic ones

Preference of “western” talents and knowledge over domestic ones is a common theme in studies examining the impact of China’s quest for WCUs in China. As discussed previously, colonialism and globalization have shaped people’s conceptions of knowledge and modernity. Western knowledge in the Chinese context is therefore conceived to be more advanced. Almost all studies that tackle policies related to the internationalization of higher education have discussed how Chinese government and universities attach importance to the “foreign” expertise. (Wang, 2014; Yi, 2011). As indicated in these studies, the government has initiated a range of favorable policies to entice the foreign-trained talents to work at Chinese universities. This has intensified the debate regarding what counts as knowledge, and created tensions between domestically and overseas trained faculty members. The overseas trained faculty members usually have much higher incomes, more international connections and therefore more chances of international cooperation. More importantly, they are more capable to publish in the international influential journals (mostly written in English). As publication is used as a key indicator for employment and promotion in the key universities, the preference of western publications sometimes created resentment and dissatisfaction toward reforms among their domestically trained colleagues.

### **Summary**

This chapter surveys the existing studies examining China’s pursuit of WCUs. Existing literature provides a thorough review and discussion of the policy contexts and governmental/institutional strategies of China’s quest for WCUs. Most of existing studies, however, view education policy as texts only in their policy analysis or empirical policy implementation studies. The continuous struggles and negations in the policy enactment process did not gain sufficient academic attention. While existing literature charts the grim reality of the

problems and tensions consequent to this policy agenda, they point to the urgent need to understand how faculty members are negotiating their subjectivities through creatively responding to this policy agenda and performing themselves. In this neo-liberal globalizing world, when the pursuit of humanity and democracy in university education is replaced by the quest for excellence, competitiveness, success and reputation, it is indeed more urgent than ever to think about the questions of power and resistance. As identity plays a significant role in the way one experiences power, it is urgent to explore the subjectivity processes in the faculty members' everyday mundane practices.

## Chapter Three: Methodology and Methods

### Introduction

The methodological choices for this study are ineluctably linked with the research purpose and epistemological and theoretical concerns related to neoliberal governance and forces of globalization, as outlined in chapter One. I therefore believe it necessary to begin this chapter by revisiting briefly my purpose for conducting this study and its theoretical concern for investigating the subjectivities of faculty members in one Chinese university context in response to the forces of globalization. As mentioned previously, the purpose of this study was to deepen the understanding of the constitution of self, more specifically, how individual faculty members were being constituted and constituting themselves in the enactment of the policies emphasizing the building of WCUs in China, and how their subjectivities simultaneously influence their teaching, research and the university academic culture as a whole.

This purpose, therefore, dictated at least two major tasks for me as a researcher. First and foremost, it was to explore the process of subjectification – the complex process in which faculty members negotiate their subjectivities and creatively interpret and translate policies into their teaching and research practice. To gain an in-depth comprehension of this process, my study therefore inevitably involved a second task: to examine the policy contexts in which the discursive construction of the self is taking place. Given this research purpose, my research methodology entailed undertaking a qualitative case study (Creswell, 2003, 2006, 2009; Stake, 1995, 2005; Thomas, 2011a, 2011b; Yin, 2006, 2009) and was informed by an engagement with the policy sociology literature that deals with policy enactment (Ball 1994, 2005; Ball et al, 2012), as well as by a reading of Foucault's work on power, subjectivity and governmentality. My engagement with specific theories of globalization as elaborated by Rizvi and Lingard (2010)

and others was also central to my framing of the research problem and to my analysis of the data. Data took the form of policy documents and interview transcriptions, and were analyzed by employing thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Patton, 2002, 2014).

### **Qualitative case study**

In this section, I will discuss how case study methodology has informed my research. To guide case study, researchers in this field have proposed different approaches, among which two influential ones are those proposed by Stake (1995), and by Robert Yin (2003, 2006, 2009). Stake (1995), draws on a constructivist paradigm (Baxter and Jack, 2008; Hyett et al, 2014), and employs an interpretivist framing of case study (Thomas, 2011a, p. 512); while Yin's (2003, 2006) approach is influenced more by his post-positivist viewpoint (Hyett et al, 2014) or a "neopositivist" paradigm as George and Bernnet (2005, p. 5) frame it (also cited in Thomas, 2011a, p. 512). Though their approaches are different in many ways, they both "seek to ensure that the topic of interest is well explored and that the essence of the phenomenon is revealed" (Baxter and Jack, 2008, p. 545).

The procedures that I followed were mainly based on the approaches proposed by Stake (1995): 1) Determining if the case study is appropriate to my research problem; 2) Identifying what the case/cases is/are; 3) Collecting data; 4) Analyzing data; and 5) Interpreting data. Though this proposed study is not a global ethnography, my data collection and analysis were also influenced by Burawoy's (2000) reflections on the extended case. As Burawoy (2000) suggests, globalization has opened up the theoretical and methodological possibilities of conducting a case study. My study, therefore, also engaged with Burawoy's proposed case study method which is "historically grounded, theoretically driven, macro ethnography" (p. 24), and

his concept of an “extended case method with a sensitivity to questions of power and reflexivity” (p. 26).

**Why qualitative case study?** Qualitative research is interpretive, naturalistic by nature and multi-paradigmatic and multi-method in focus (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). Since “paradigms tell the practitioners what is important” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 15), qualitative research becomes a site of multiple interpretive practices, and its practitioners are committed to a variety of approaches. Though qualitative studies may take different forms, most researchers under this label attempt to implement an interpretive approach to gain an in-depth understanding of human behaviours and the values that govern such behaviours. It is a “situated activity that locates the observer in the world”, “turns the world into a series of representations” and attempts to interpret the phenomena “in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, p. 3).

Creswell and Clark (2004) identified the following major principles in a qualitative research:

Qualitative research is an inquiry approach in which the inquirer: 1) explores a central phenomenon (one key concept), 2) asks participants broad, general questions, 3) collects detailed views of participants in the form of words or images, 4) analyzes and codes the data for description and themes, 5) interprets the meaning of the information drawing on personal reflections and past research, 6) and writes the final report that includes personal biases and a flexible structure... (p. 5- 6)

Related to my research, the principles quoted above allowed me to collect various types of data to develop a deeper understanding of the central phenomenon: How professors in University A are constituted and constituting themselves as particular sorts of subject in the enactment of the



policies which emphasize the making of Chinese universities as world-class and the increasing importance of competition in the global market place. My study is in the first place qualitative research by nature, since it aims to explore and understand rather than to measure, generalize or predict. It involves the extensive exploration of human behaviour and values, which is exactly the focus of a qualitative study.

Though there are numerous forms of conducting a qualitative research study, I specifically chose qualitative case study and was influenced by Burawoy's reflections on the extended case study method (Burawoy, 2000). Qualitative case study aims at optimizing understanding of a particular case. It is defined by "interest in an individual case, not by the methods of inquiry used" (Stake, 2005, p. 443). Qualitative case study involves a holistic, in-depth investigation (Feagin et al., 1991), and includes the context as a major part of the study (Stake, 1995, 2005). The purpose of case study is to "gather comprehensive, systematic, and in-depth information about each case of interest (Patton, 2002, p. 557).

I specifically chose qualitative case study over other methodological choices, because the strength of the case study method, compared with others, is "its ability to examine, in-depth, a 'case' within its 'real-life' context" (Yin, 2006, p. 111). It is not just conducting research on a single case; it "has the potential to deal with simple through complex situations" and "enables the researcher to answer 'how' and 'why' type questions, while taking into consideration how a phenomenon is influenced by the context within which it is situated" (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 556). I was also aware that case study researchers may embrace various theoretical perspectives and use different techniques. Just as Stake (2005) stated, "If case study research is more humane or in some ways transcendent, it is because the researchers are so." (p. 443). A case study can be

critical or not, largely depending on the theoretical perspectives of the researcher and the analytical strategies that s/he adopts.

In my study, I view case study as both a methodology and a type of empirical inquiry, both “a process of inquiry about the case and the product of that inquiry” (Stake, 2006, p. 444). Case study cannot be reduced to a single research method in that it offers the theoretical underpinning for understanding which method or set of methods can be applied to a specific case, though the methods may vary significantly depending on the nature of the specific case. The essence of the case study, as I see it, lies in at least the following five aspects: 1) the concentration on the case, 2) the “analytical eclecticism” (Thomas, 2011a, p. 512), 3) the importance attached to the context and the understanding of complexity, 4) the emphasis on “boundaries around places and time periods” that define cases (Hammersley & Gomm, 2000, p. 5), and 5) the emphasis on the significance of an analytical framework. These characteristics made case study the best methodological choice for this proposed research. Guided by the case study methodology, 1) I situated my selected case, “the process of the construction of the faculty members’ subjectivities in University A”, within a complex historical, cultural, social and material context, within which the policies of building WCUs are enacted. I was therefore able to examine the complexity of the context and to identify the political and cultural dynamics in policy enactment and subjectivity construction. Here, enlightened by Burawoy’s reflections on the extended case study method (Burawoy, 2000), I paid particular attention to the operation of globalization on the policy enactment and subjectivity construction. 2) Different from other methodological choices, case study is unique in the sense that it may combine the other research strategies (experimental, correlational, interpretive, ethnographic and so on), and, therefore, is viewed as a meta-method by some researchers (Johansson, 2003, p. 4). This “analytical

eclecticism” allowed me to be flexible with my choice of methods and analytical strategies. 3) Through setting boundaries around places and time period to define what the case is, the researcher emphasizes the particularity rather than generalization of a certain phenomenon. This particular feature, in my case, made my study more feasible and manageable. 4) Several scholars emphasize the significance of an analytical framework in the constitution of the case study. This feature of case study was especially helpful, as it allowed for the development of an analytical and/or theoretical frame to guide my research and also permitted a more sophisticated analysis. This will be attended to in detail in the next section. Last but not least, a qualitative case study, as Stake (2005) suggests, encourages the researcher to be “ever-reflective”, “pondering the impressions, deliberating on recollections and records” (p. 449). This further echoed my orientation and desire to continuously reflect on my own positionality as a researcher throughout the execution of the study.

**What is the case?** One formidable job for the case study researcher is to identify what the case or unit of analysis is. As Stake (2005) suggests, “Not everything is a case” (p. 444). A case has to be a bounded system (Fals Borda, 1998; also cited in Stake, 2005), with certain features both inside and outside of the system, and certain “patterned activity” (p. 444). Miles and Huberman (1994) define the case as “a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context” and the case is “your unit of analysis” (p. 25). In my study, a faculty member in a Chinese university could have been a case, but his/her role as a professor certainly “lacks the specificity, the boundedness” to be called a case (Stake, 2005, p. 444). Baxter and Jack (2008) suggest a way for the researcher to determine and delineate what the case really is in his/her case study- to ask oneself: what do I want to analyze? Is it an individual, a process, a program or the difference between two organizations? How the case is specified depends on one’s research

questions – what the researcher is really interested in analyzing. Based on this notion, I defined the case in my study as “the construction of the academic subjectivities of the individual faculty members from University A in the enactment of the policies that emphasize the building WCUs in the contemporary China”. This specification is awkwardly long, but it explains the boundaries of the study and my research interest well.

There is another way to decide what your case is. As previously discussed, one particular feature of case study is its emphasis on the significance of an analytical framework in the constitution of the case study. Thomas (2011a) elaborates this notion:

while the Korean War as a subject of study might satisfy conditions of singularity, boundedness, and complexity it would not be a case study—or at least not the kind of case study that would be of interest to social scientists- unless it could be said to be a case of something, and that “of” would constitute the study’s analytical frame. (p. 512)

That case “of”, as George and Bennett (2005) suggest, is “the universe- that is, the ‘class’ or ‘subclass’ of events – of which a single case or a group of cases to be studied are instances” (p. 69). As Wiewiorka (1992) argues, the case is “not simply an instance of a class”, since a case study must comprise two elements: a “practical, historical unity” and the “theoretical, scientific basis” (Thomas, 2011a, p. 512). The former is what Thomas called “a subject”, and the latter is “an analytical frame or object”, within which the subject is studied. The object “crystallises, thickens and develops as the study proceeds” (Thomas, 2011b, p. 14). Thomas continues to suggest that a case can become a case only if the subject meets the following criteria:

Be a good example of that analytical frame; demonstrate something interesting in terms of your analysis because of its peculiarity; Be an example of an analytical focus that arises by virtue of your personal experience. (Thomas, 2011b, p. 14)

Then what is that case “of” in my study? I believe the case in my study is a case of “the operation of the technologies of domination and technologies of the self on the construction of the subject”. Someone may also view it as a case of “the impact of the neoliberal education policies on educators’ teaching and research practices”. Indeed, that “of” may have different interpretations. Some could be identified before the collection of data, while others may “emerge as an inquiry progresses” (Thomas, 2011a, p. 514). It is the exploration of the “ofs” that makes the case study a fascinating research, and it is the way the “object” “emerges, grows and develops that is at the heart of the study” (Thomas, 2011b, p. 14). That “of” is not used for generalization or classification, but for endowing the case analysis with more theoretical and analytical depth.

I needed to further “bind the case” by considering the purpose and scope of conducting this case study. First, in terms of the purpose, Stake (2005) identifies two different types of case studies: intrinsic and instrumental. The term intrinsic is used to suggest that the researcher has a genuine interest in the case, and the intent is to better understand this particular case. “It is not undertaken primarily because the case represents other cases or because it illustrates a particular trait or problem, but because in all its particularity and ordinariness, the case itself is of interest” (p. 445). The purpose is neither theory building nor understanding “some abstract construct or generic phenomenon” (p. 444). Instrumental case study, on the other hand, is to “provide insight into an issue or to redraw a generalization” and the case is of secondary interest though “it is still looked at in depth”, but only to serve the understanding of the issue or phenomenon (p. 445). Stake also suggests that there is no “hard-and-fast line distinguishing intrinsic case study from instrumental”, but rather “a zone of combined purpose”.

Based on this classification, I would classify my case study as one within this third zone of combined purpose as Stake describes. As discussed in Chapter One, I had an intrinsic interest in understanding the process of policy enactment and subjectivity constitution process at University A, which was part of the reason for me choosing A rather other any other university in China as my research site. On the other hand, my exploration of the subjectivity constitution process of the academic community at University A was not simply for its own sake. Rather, it was to deepen the understanding of the operation of the technologies of dominance and technologies of the self on the construction of faculty members' identities in China in an age of intensified globalization and neoliberal economic reforms. It has to be emphasized here that the boundary between intrinsic and instrumental case studies can be blurry. Just as Stake (2005) suggests, "even intrinsic case study can be seen as a small step toward grand generalization", but "generalisation should not be emphasized in all research" (p. 448). This notion is also embraced by several other case study researchers such as Feagin and colleagues (1991), Simons (1980) and Thomas (2011b).

Second, the scope of the study also needed to be defined. Thomas (2011b) describes case study as "a rich picture with boundaries", and the boundary is "the direction and extent to which you want your research to go" (p. 21). Yin (2003) and Stake (1995) also suggest that placing boundaries on a case helps to ensure the scope of the case study is reasonable. A case can be bounded by time and place (Creswell, 2003), by time and activity (Stake, 1995), or by definition and context (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In my case study I limited my research scope by focusing on interviewing 15 faculty members from one key university in China. Besides, since my case study involved analyzing the policy contexts that emphasize the building of WCUs, I again delimited my study through examining only a number of relevant and influential national

and institutional policy documents. I understand that this “sorting-out” process may more or less be influenced by my personal preference and values, but it would have been more dangerous to risk being overwhelmed by the massive data with my attention being drawn away from conducting an in-depth examination of the case. I also had to bear in mind that the micro is shaped by its relation to the macro, and the macro is being represented by “external forces” (Burawoy, 2000). Placing boundaries on a case, therefore, does not mean ignoring the macro context. Examining the case involves extending out from micro processes to macro forces, which are “historically contingent outcome of processes” (Burawoy, 2000, p. 27).

I particularly chose participants from University A. Compared with other target universities chosen by the Chinese government to fulfill its aspiration of building WCUs, because University A is both typical and unique. It is typical in that it is a leading national research university under the direct jurisdiction of China’s Ministry of Education, and has been involved in China’s Project 985 and Project 211, which is similar to other top universities in China. It is unique in terms of its specific historical and cultural background, and its location, a less developed city “B” compared with the location of most other target universities. With the blurring of regional and even national boundary consequent to globalization, University A has experienced human capital outflow like many other higher education institutions in less developed regions. This typicality and particularity make University A both an ordinary and extraordinary research site.

Another important decision I had to make was: How many interviews should be included in this case study? In a qualitative case study, the number of interviews may depend on the research purpose, the specific project and the amount of time that can be allocated to the study. In some cases, interviewing with one participant is sufficient to reflect the complexity of the case

(Rezai-Rashti & Martino, 2010), but in other cases more interviews have to be conducted. Guest et al. (2006) found that twelve interviews of a homogenous group can help to reach the theoretical saturation in a qualitative study. I therefore decided to interview fifteen faculty members at University A. Fifteen interviews made this case study reasonable in scope and meanwhile ensured the richness of the data. My participant selection criteria were as follows:

- 1) Each participant has to be working at University A for at least 2 years, which allows them to familiarize themselves, at least to some extent, with the university context and the on-going policies that emphasize the building of world-class universities.
- 2) A minimum of two faculty members among the participants have to be taking an administrative position in addition to their academic role. Participants will also include both males and females. This was done to invite diversity of voices if possible.

### **Understanding the contextual dimensions**

Since my case study attempted to examine how individual faculty members from University A were being constituted and constituting themselves through the enactment of the policies emphasizing the building WCUs in the contemporary China, one indispensable part of the study was to understand the policy enactment context, as the subjectivity process had to be understood within the specific contexts of policy enactment. In their case study, Ball, Maguire and Braun (2012) identified a number of contextual dimensions of policy enactment, which I drew upon here in undertaking my analysis of the interview data:

- a) Situated context (e.g. locale, school histories and intakes)
- b) Professional cultures (e.g. values, teaching commitments and experiences, and “policy management” in schools)
- c) Material contexts (e.g. staffing, budget, buildings, technology and infrastructure)



- d) External contexts (e.g. pressures and expectations from broader policy context).(Ball, Maguire & Braun, 2012, p. 21)

These four dimensions are interrelated and have to be understood in relation to one another. These “objectifying conditions” (a, c, d) and “subjective interpretations” (b) together constitute the contexts in which faculty members negotiate their subjectivities. In this dissertation, I integrated my analysis of policy context with the analysis of policy enactment, since they are inseparable. Chapter Four focuses on the historical account of China’s pursuit of WCUs. Chapter Five explores the external contexts. Chapter Six examines the situated and material contexts. Chapter Seven deals with the policy enactment, which also involves addressing the professional culture as reflected in the faculty members’ responses to the policies. All the four policy contexts are discussed while I analyze the policy enactment and the construction of academic subjectivities. All of the four contextual dimensions are explored through drawing upon the interview data, the critical policy theories, and the relevant national economic policies and national/institutional educational policies.

### **Conducting interviews**

Between May 2016 and December 2016, I conducted interviews with fifteen full-time faculty members at University A. As reflected in Table One, among all the participants, four are full professors, seven are associate professors and four are lecturers. Seven participants are from the Social Sciences and Humanities departments, and eight are from Natural Sciences and Engineering departments. Four of them also have administrative roles. Eight are males and seven are females. Though this study has no intention to generalize the overall perspectives of the faculty members, I believe this scale of the study will ensure the richness of data. Table One provides a glimpse of the general background of the participants:

**Table One: Information of the participants**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Years of Working at University A</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Department</b>
<b>Ban</b>	5-10	Male	Associate Professor	Natural Sciences and Engineering
<b>Belle</b>	11-15	Female	Lecturer	Social Sciences and Humanities
<b>Dai</b>	11-15	Male	Lecturer	Natural Sciences and Engineering
<b>Eileen</b>	10-15	Female	Associate Professor	Social Sciences and Humanities
<b>Fei</b>	15-20	Male	Professor/administrator	Natural Sciences and Engineering
<b>Helen</b>	5-10	Female	Associate Professor	Natural Sciences and Engineering
<b>Heng</b>	10-15	Male	Associate Professor	Natural Sciences and Engineering
<b>Hu</b>	20-25	Male	Associate professor/administrator	Social Sciences and Humanities
<b>Jing</b>	25-30	Male	Professor	Social Sciences and Humanities
<b>Ling</b>	5-10	Female	Lecturer	Natural Sciences and Engineering
<b>Peter</b>	10-15	Male	Associate Professor/administrator	Social Sciences and Humanities
<b>Shan</b>	11-15	Male	Professor/administrator	Natural Sciences and Engineering
<b>Shi</b>	5-10	Female	Associate professor	Social Sciences and Humanities
<b>Xun</b>	11-15	Female	Lecturer	Social Sciences and Humanities
<b>Ying</b>	15-20	Female	Professor	Natural Sciences and Engineering

A consent form was sent to each participant to provide them with sufficient written information about this study before they agreed to participate in this study and an interview was scheduled. At the beginning of each interview, the participant was given the options to either verbally consent to participate in this study, or, to sign the consent form. Pseudonyms, at the participants' choice, were used in all interviews to ensure anonymity. I employed open-ended, semi-structured interviews to collect the in-depth, descriptive data, since "thick, rich description

provides the foundation for qualitative analysis and reporting” (Patton, 2002, p. 437). All the interviews were loosely structured so that the participants could talk freely about their experience and feelings. Each interview took 60 to 90 minutes. Follow-up interviews with two participants were conducted, each of them lasting less than 10 minutes. All the interviews were conducted through voice or video interviewing instruments, and were audio recorded at the permission of the participants. Since all the interviews were conducted in participants’ first language, Chinese, I translated all transcripts into English for analysis.

Research ethics was one major concern during the interviews, not only because better research ethics leads to better research findings, but also because the lack of research ethics may lead to possible negative consequences such as “psychological harm, unfulfilled expectations, deception, unexpected or erroneous representations and different interpretations” (De Wet, 2010, p. 302). To conduct ethical research, as Patton and Cochran (2002) suggested, researchers may start out considering the four principles that Tom Beauchamp and Jim Childress (1983) proposed: Autonomy (respect the rights of the individual), beneficence (doing good), non-maleficence (not doing harm) and justice (particularly equity). During the interviews, particular attention was paid to create a relaxing and comfortable environment for the participants to share their perspectives and experiences. At the beginning of each interview, I emphasized to each participant that they could refuse to answer any of the questions, or to withdraw from the project at any point during the interview. On rare occasions, a number of participants felt uncomfortable being recorded for certain questions, but still wanted to share with me their perspectives just for my information. At that point, I stopped recording and only resumed recording with the permission of the participants. What has been presented in this dissertation does not include any of the information that the participants shared with me but preferred not to be recorded.

## Data analysis

The interview data were analyzed through using a thematic approach (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Patton, 2002), which is defined by Braun and Clarke (2006) as “a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within Data” (p. 6). Or, as Patton (2002) explains, it refers to “any qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies and meaning” (Patton, p. 453). As a foundational method for qualitative analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006), thematic analysis is “essentially independent of theory and epistemology”, and can therefore “be applied across a range of theoretical and epistemological approaches” (p. 5). This particular flexibility and usefulness makes thematic analysis an ideal approach which can “potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex account of data” (p. 5).

Research methods are chosen to serve the research purpose but not vice versa. I choose thematic analysis over others as I did not want the data analysis to be confined by a particular theoretical or epistemological position tied to the method itself. However, this did not mean that I detached my methodological choice from my theoretical framework. On the contrary, my way of using the thematic approach to analysis was informed and guided by the theories I drew upon. As Reicher and Taylor (2005, p. 549) pointed out, the underlying assumptions of a research method needs to be “congruent with the way one conceptualises the subject matter” (p. 549; Also cited in Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 27). The research methods, just like theories, have to be used vigorously.

Before presenting how thematic analysis in this study was devised and employed, it is necessary to revisit Braun and Clarke’s 6-phase guide for conducting thematic analysis:

1. **Familiarizing yourself with your data:** Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and rereading data, noting down initial ideas.
2. **Generating initial codes:** Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. **Searching for themes:** Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme
4. **Reviewing themes:** Checking in the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic map of the analysis.
5. **Defining and naming themes:** Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells; generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. **Producing the report:** The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis. (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 35)

Guided by this seemingly straightforward outline, my data analysis constituted the following steps:

Step one: Defining what may count as a theme, and how to construct themes in this study. As Braun and Clarke (2006) defined, a theme “captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set” (p. 10). I identified themes based on a constructionist paradigm given my theoretical framework, though I would not label myself as a constructionist. Accordingly, the

themes that I identified were not semantic (“within the explicit or surface meaning”) but more latent (going “beyond the semantic content of the data, and starts to identify or examine the underlying ideas, assumptions, and conceptualisations – and ideologies”) (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 13), and involved identifying specific discourses at play as well.

Another important decision to make is whether this thematic analysis is an inductive or deductive (theoretical) one, or, a combination. Inductive analysis is more data-driven, which allows the “meaningful dimensions to emerge from the patterns found” in the study (Patton, 2014, p. 64), or in Strauss and Corbin’s (1998) words, allows the “theory to emerge from the data” (p. 12). In this respect, a deductive analysis is used to “test whether data are consistent with prior assumptions, theories, or hypotheses identified or constructed by an investigator” (Thomas, 2006, p. 238). In this sense, the thematic analysis of in my study was both deductive and inductive. It was deductive in the sense that there were particular theories and assumptions identified before conducting the research. For example, based on the theoretical framework and literature review, I assumed that the neoliberal discourse was exerting a tremendous impact on the faculty members’ subjectivities. The data collected from the documents and interview further proved and deepened the understanding of Foucault’s notions of power, truth, subject and governance, and other critical theoretical perspectives on globalization as discussed previously. However, this study did not merely involve verifying a particular theory, as it was concerned to explore the process of the construction of the self in a specific geographical location and under particular political, economic and cultural conditions. The data analysis therefore, was also inductive at the same time.

Step two: Familiarizing myself with the data collected. After interviews were conducted, I transcribed each interview and translated the transcriptions into English. I first read the

interview data (my data corpus) carefully, wrote down initial ideas and also made connections. From time to time, I referred to the government and institutional policy documents to obtain a more comprehensive or deeper understanding of certain issues that emerge in the interviews. Meanwhile, if I read some policy documents and found significant and relevant issues that had to be further examined through interviews, I went back to conduct the follow-up interviews.

Step three: Generating initial codes. This involved recognizing relevant and important patterns that may lead to a potential theme. I coded as many patterns as possible with the expectation that seemingly less prominent patterns could potentially become interesting ones. I was aware that coding is usually determined by whether the analysis is inductive or deductive (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Since mine is both, I coded both those patterns that verified or expanded the understanding of certain theories, and those that had the potential to provide new insights. I carefully went through and made best use of the entire data corpus before putting my selected data under each coded category. These categories are named as “data related to the policy contexts”, “data related to the policy interpretation and translation”, and “data related to the faculty members’ perspectives and subjectivities”. Meanwhile, I retained the accounts that seemed inconsistent with the “mainstream stories”. Just as Braun and Clarke (2006) suggested, “a satisfactory thematic ‘map’ that you will eventually produce - an overall conceptualisation of the data patterns, and relationships between them - does not have to smooth out or ignore the tensions and inconsistencies within and across data items” (p. 19).

Step four: Searching for themes. Based on the patterns recognized in step three, I came up with potential themes. This is the moment when I started to relate the patterns to my theoretical framework and manage to present the meanings of the patterns in a way that reflects my analytic strategies. Each theme was supported by all pertinent patterns identified and data collected. One

pattern was used to support more than one theme. As Braun and Clarke (2006) suggested, no data should be eliminated from the data set at this point, since the entire data corpus needs to be revisited with the objective of refining potential themes.

Step five: Reviewing themes. This is when I revisited the entire data set that was coded in Step Three, and ensured that all the collated extracts that I put under each theme could form a coherent pattern. If any incoherence was identified, I either refined the themes or relocated the incoherent extracts. This process also involved discarding some extracts that did not fit in any themes. Once this was done, I reread the entire data set again to ensure the themes “candidate thematic map accurately reflects the meanings evident in the data set as a whole” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 21). I kept recoding the data and refining the themes until no more substantial themes can be created. Again, I am aware of the limitations of my personal analytic skills and judgement call, which can be regarded as another limitation of this study.

Step six: Defining and naming themes. This is a continuation of Step Five, and I further defined and refined the themes until certain satisfaction was achieved: there was not much overlap between themes, and each theme was comprehensive enough to capture one aspect of the entire story line presented in the data set, but also concise enough so as not to be too complex and diverse. It is important to ensure each theme is clearly named and defined. In some cases, I had to come up with sub-themes with a comparatively larger and more complex theme so as to give the theme a clearer and better structure.

Step Seven: Writing. Once all themes were clearly defined and arranged in a way that clearly demonstrated the overall conceptualization of the data patterns, and relationships between the patterns, I started to put them in writing. Under each theme, I provided sufficient evidence, convincing and representative data extracts that captured the soul of the theme. I considered



which theme to present first in writing and which to come later, and tried to present the data in the form that could best serve the research purpose and reflect my theoretical and analytic framework. To achieve this, I frequently revisited the theories that I claimed to use and the data collected, and was prepared to even redefine certain themes even at this point. I am aware that writing itself is a process of confirming and consolidating the researchers' ideas. It is a process of production of knowledge and also the production of self. Through writing, I am creating certain new discourses and simultaneously creating a new self through the performance of writing. Foucault (1997b) said the role of writing is "a test of truth" (p. 235), and is a "deliberate, self-conscious attempt to explain and express oneself to an audience within which one exists and from whom one seeks confirmation (see Peters, 2000)" (Ball, 2013, p. 152). I was aware that I might find the finished piece to be quite different from what I had expected at the beginning of research. As Foucault (1988a) claims, if a researcher can predict what s/he is going to find, s/he would not have the courage to start the exploration in the first place.

### **Summary**

This chapter outlined my methodological framework. I started by demonstrating why case study and policy enactment theory were chosen and adopted in this study, followed by a detailed description of the specific methods of data collection and analysis. I also explicated my approach to thematic analysis. Though most of my methodological choices appear to be epistemologically "neutral", I demonstrated how they would best serve my research purpose and fitted nicely within my critical theoretical stance and analytical framework. This chapter not only serves as a justification and description of my research methodology and methods, but also represents my engagement with theory, my critical reflections and ethical concerns.

## **Chapter Four: The Quest for World-Class Universities in China – A Historical and Cultural Account**

### **Introduction**

This chapter provides a historical and cultural account of China's pursuit of world-class universities through looking at the origin of higher education in China and examining a number of essential discourses in the Chinese society which are closely related to China's aspiration of building WCUs. This chapter is intentionally placed before the data analysis chapters since it also serves as part of the examination of the contextual dimensions of my analysis of the policy enactment.

Through presenting empirical data “from cultural psychology, cross-cultural psychology and cultural neuroscience”, in his recent article titled “How culture shapes mind, neurobiology and behaviour”, Kolstad (2015) discussed the significant impact of culture and sociocultural experience on shaping human being's “psychological functions, mind and consciousness” (p. 256). As he points out, while “the brain is not structurally determined” (p. 269), human consciousness cannot be regarded as something “tactic” (p. 270). Rather, the function and structure of the brain are continuously being shaped by the cultural characteristics and language in particular. Appadurai (1996), from a sociological perspective, also suggests that culture plays a salient role in understanding many social phenomena in the contemporary globalized world. Similarly, Giroux (1997) points to the importance of historicizing empirical observations, and suggests that the failure of “comprehending the world holistically as a network of interconnections” will “create a form of tunnel vision in which only a small segment of social reality is open to examination” and leave “unquestioned those economic, political, and social structures that shape our daily lives” (p. 13).

To understand China's quest for WCUs, it is therefore necessary to first examine its historical roots of higher education and its prevailing cultural discourses both as a result of its cultural experience and as a force of cultural reconstruction. I thereby open the discussion on the relevance of China's historical and cultural traditions of higher education to its pursuit of WCUs and the construction of the faculty member's subjectivities.

### **The origin of higher learning (*da xue*) in China**

Though China did not have its first modern university until 1895, its *da xue* (higher learning) system had been established since ancient time. There are controversies among scholars regarding the origin of higher learning. Tu (2014), draws upon the legends from Confucian and Taoist classics and other scholarly studies, suggesting that the earliest higher education institute was *chengjun*, which can be traced back to the times of Five Emperors (around 2550 B.C.). Gu, Li and Wang (2009), on the other hand, suggest that the *da xue* system originated from *youxue*, "a multifunctional place where education was only a part of its many activities" in the Shang Dynasty (roughly 1600 B.C. – 1046 B.C.) (p. 1). Lowe and Yasuhara (2016) state that even though Chinese higher learning may have originated even earlier, there is a well-documented origin back to the Zhou Dynasty (1046 B.C.– 256 B.C.). Regardless of the controversies, it is agreed that the earliest higher learning in China was run by the government and was mostly accessible to the privileged class (Tu, 2014, p. 14; Gu et al., 2009, p. 1).

In the Western Zhou Dynasty (1046 B.C. – 771 B.C.), the government ran two levels of schools: the national schools (*guoxue*) and the local schools (*xiangxue*). The national school, including higher education and elementary education, were for the children of the noble/royal slave owners, and the local schools were for the children of the common slave owners (Wang et al., p. 394). Due to the frequent warfare during the early period of Western Zhou, the school

education was mostly focused on military training. When the Empire was stabilized later, the school education started to focus on literature and art. The higher education institutions primarily taught the Six Arts (*liu yi*): propriety, music, archery, riding, writing and arithmetic (Gu, 2014).

Gu (2014) explained,

Propriety was a subject on political ethics, including the ethical codes and rites of the slavery society. Music was a general title for all artistic pursuits like music, poetry, and dancing. Archery and riding were military training subjects, with the former teaching shooting skills, and the latter teaching the operation of horse carts. All students first started with the foundational subjects of writing and arithmetic and then progressed to the more advanced content of propriety, music, archery, and riding. Among these, propriety was the core subject. (p. 99)

Gu (2014) suggests that the contents of education in ancient China focused on “the strategies to manage people”, and the teaching contents in the Western Zhou dynasty reflected “the needs of this class society: worshiping military affairs and respecting rites of the slavery kingdoms” (p. 76).

In the Eastern Zhou Dynasty (770 B.C. – 255 B.C.), with an accelerating collapse of royal authority of the King of Zhou and the constant warfare among the vassal states, the lord kings in the vassal states all started their own state schools, which were no longer exclusive to upper-class families but also admitted talented children from lower class so as to enhance the strength of the individual vassal state. Meanwhile, private schools also came into being. As one of the most influential educators during this period, Confucius (551 B.C. – 479 B.C.) set up private schools and promoted civilian education so that people from lower class could gain access to *da xue*. To Confucius, the admission requirement for higher learning is not one’s social

status, but one's commitment to learning (*zhi yu xue*). One of his major views about education is “*you jiao wu lei*”, which means that there should be education for everyone without social class discrimination. This concept of inclusiveness has largely influenced the private schools established in the rest of China's feudal history.

What were discussed above were the origins of two basic types of higher learning in ancient China: the government-sponsored and private institutions. During the long feudal period (221 B.C. – 1911 A.D.), higher learning in China had taken various forms and had served different political, economic and cultural agendas. In addition to the private academe operated by Confucius, the most influential higher learning institutions also included the *taixue* (institution of supreme learning, a government-owned higher education institution) and the *shuyuan* (Academy or scholarly society, a type of private education institution), both originating in the Han Dynasty (206 B.C. – 220 A.D.) and eventually declining and collapsing in the late Qing Dynasty (1644 – 1911) (Gu et al., 2009).

The government-sponsored higher learning institutions were mainly established to serve the need of the government: to help the ruling class to select potential government officials and to strengthen the Emperor's central power through prescribing the curriculum contents and examination (Zhou, 2001). These institutions originally mostly admitted students from privileged classes, but over the long feudal period the percentage of the students from the families of the lower classes (basically including scholars, farmers, craftsmen/artisans and traders/merchants). The descendants of scholars and farmers were first allowed for admission. It was not until the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644) that the descendants of merchants and traders were included. People from other lower classes, such as those who worked as “artisans and craftsmen, slaves or prostitutes”, were never allowed to attend state-owned schools (Zhou, 2001, p. 155). Women

were also excluded from the public education system with only very limited exceptions. The private higher learning institutions were comparatively more flexible in terms of student family background, the gender of the student and the learning contents. In such institutions, some students may also aim at pursuing an official rank, but others may simply aim at “self-cultivation” (Zhou, 2001, p. 235).

A glance at China’s higher learning history demonstrates that higher learning in China is historically intricately connected to social hierarchy system and politics. This point will be further elaborated in the next section when I discuss the impact of Confucianism on Chinese education and culture.

### **Higher learning (*Da xue*) and Confucianism**

In Chinese, “*da*” literally means “great” and “*xue*” means “learning”. Literally, *da xue* means *Great Learning*, which is the title of one of “Four Books”<sup>4</sup> in Confucianism. The book *Great Learning* constitutes two parts: the main Text which described the thoughts of Confucius followed by ten commentary chapters which was generally believed to be written by one of Confucius' disciples, Zengzi<sup>5</sup> and tracked the “basic concepts introduced in the Text and presenting a portrait of the practical path to Sagehood” (The *Great Learning*, p. 1). The English translation of main Text of *Great Learning* is as follows:

What the Great Learning teaches, is to illustrate illustrious virtue; to renovate the people; and to rest in the highest excellence.

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<sup>4</sup> Four Books are Chinese classic texts illustrating the core value and belief system in Confucianism.

<sup>5</sup> Some Chinese scholars argue that the commentary chapters were written by some Confucian scholars in the Han Dynasty.

The point where to rest being known, the object of pursuit is then determined; and, that being determined, a calm unperturbedness may be attained to. To that calmness there will succeed a tranquil repose. In that repose there may be careful deliberation, and that deliberation will be followed by the attainment of the desired end.

Things have their root and their branches. Affairs have their end and their beginning. To know what is first and what is last will lead near to what is taught in the Great Learning.

The ancients who wished to illustrate illustrious virtue throughout the world, first ordered well their own States. Wishing to order well their States, they first regulated their families.

Wishing to regulate their families, they first cultivated their persons. Wishing to cultivate their persons, they first rectified their hearts. Wishing to rectify their hearts, they first sought to be sincere in their thoughts. Wishing to be sincere in their thoughts, they first extended to the utmost of their knowledge. Such extension of knowledge lay in the investigation of things.

Things being investigated, knowledge became complete. Their knowledge being complete, their thoughts were sincere. Their thoughts being sincere, their hearts were then rectified. Their hearts being rectified, their persons were cultivated. Their persons being cultivated, their families were regulated. Their families being regulated, their States were rightly governed. Their States being rightly governed, the entire world was at peace.

From the Son of Heaven down to the mass of the people, all must consider the cultivation of the person the root of everything besides. It cannot be, when the root is neglected, that what should spring from it will be well ordered. It never has been the case

that what was of great importance has been slightly cared for, and, at the same time, that what was of slight importance has been greatly cared for. (Confucius, 2013)

As indicated in the Text, investigation of things (learning), self-cultivation, management of family, government of the state and the achievement of world peace are linked. *Da xue* was considered to be the very first and essential step towards achieving ultimate peace in the world.

Based on his study of Chinese classics, Tu (2014) argues that “*da xue*” in the Chinese context does not equate to “university” or “university education” in the western sense. Rather, it should be understood as “life-long education” for a person starting age fifteen (this number comes from one piece written by Confucian, titled “At fifteen, I had my mind bent on learning”) - a process of spiritual enlightenment which is gradually acquired through continuous learning. *Da xue* therefore entails the meanings of both “fostering great virtue” and “engaging in great scholarship” (Yang, 2014, p. IV). In this sense, Tu (2014) suggests that the Chinese traditional pursuit of *da xue* is similar to what modern universities intend to achieve today, both in China and beyond. *Great Learning*, as one of the most influential pieces in the Confucian Classics, has enormous influence on the educational, political and philosophical thinking in both ancient and contemporary China. Education has been highly valued in China since ancient times as it is perceived to be one important step towards self-cultivation, which can be reflected from many popular sayings and poems as follows:

*yu bu zhuo bu cheng qi, ren bu xue bu zhi yi* (A jade stone is useless before it is processed; a man is good-for-nothing until he is educated).

*bu du shi shu, you mu wu zhu* (An uncultivated person is as blind as a bat).

*fu you shi shu qi zi hua* (One who is filled with knowledge always behaves in elegance).



*san ri bu du shu, yan yu wu wei* (After three days without reading, talk becomes flavorless).

*yi ri du shu yi ri gong, yi ri bu du shi ri kong* (A day of reading is a day of gain; a day without reading is ten days of loss).

*xue ran hou zhi bu zu* (To learn is to know one's ignorance).

Teachers, meanwhile, were supposed to “propagate the doctrine, impart professional knowledge, and resolve doubts” (*chuan dao, shou ye, jie huo*), and were highly respected in the Confucian culture, which is reflected in the following sayings:

*yi ri wei shi, zhong sheng wei fu* (A teacher of one day is a father of a lifetime).

*wei xue mo zhong yu zun shi*. (The most important thing of learning is to respect the teacher).

Speaking of *Da Xue*, it is inevitable to talk about Confucius, one of the greatest educators and scholars in ancient China. It is recorded that Confucius had approximately three thousand students, with seventy-two of them mastering the “six arts” (Zhou, 2001, p. 237). As a great scholar and educator, Confucius taught a wide range of fields, including “poetry, history, ceremony and music” (Lin, 1994, p. 135). His educational, philosophical and political thoughts have profound impact on China's education and culture. Some of his most influential teaching philosophies include: to “learn from others”, to “be self-motivating”, to “deliver and teach according to the needs of the students”, “learn from others”, to “be the role model”, and, to “teach humanistic values” (Low, 2010, pp.682-685). Confucius' influence, however, is not limited to the field of education. As a political figure, he was even more influential because of his establishment of the models of social interaction.

Confucius dedicated most of his life to travelling through all the vassal kingdoms in order to promote his social political vision. He hoped to revive the traditional values of the times of Emperors Yao and Shun and Yu, since he was living in the time when “the power of the Chou Emperors had declined, the forms of worship and social intercourse (‘ritual and music) had degenerated, and learning and scholarship had fallen into decay” (Lin, 1994, p. 127). The ideal society he envisioned, as Gardener (2014) depicts, is the one with “good government, proper social relations, and respectful treatment of one’s fellow human beings – all expressed through correct ritual performance” (p. 1). Tang (1995) suggests that Confucianism is basically a philosophy about “human relations”, with ethics – “the moral principles a person who is usually surrounded by various personal relations” being the emphasis. The five basic relationships in this ethical system are “sovereign and subject, father and son, husband and wife, elder and younger brother, and friend and friend” ((p. 275). Within this ethical system, it is expected that there is affiliation between the king and the subject, affection between fathers and sons, distinction between husband and wife, order between seniors and juniors and trust between friends. The subject, son or wife is expected to obey the king, father or husband respectively. Meanwhile, the king, father or husband is expected to take care of and be the role model of his subject, son or wife. Confucian morality, as Yao (2000) suggested, “revolves around family relationships, but is not “confined to the family” (p. 32-33). Yao continued,

It takes family virtues as the cornerstone of social order and world peace. Its logic is that the family is the basic unit of the human community and that harmonious family relationships will inevitably lead to a harmonious society and a peaceful state. (p. 33)

Here we see how Confucius’ perspective of *da xue* is closely related to his political stance. For him, regardless of whether it is “self-cultivating through learning”, or “maintaining family

virtue”, all these individual efforts are made for the purpose of establishing a harmonious society and a peaceful state. Unfortunately, though his original intention of promoting the “correct ritual performance” may simply aim to revive the traditional values, the “social hierarchy” part of the ethical system he envisioned had been emphasized by the emperors of later generations and had become a strong instrument for the elite class to rationalize their ruling status. In fact, Confucianism, as the dominant ideology and discourse that was adopted by the Chinese emperors since the Han Dynasty (206 B.C. – 220 A.D.), has played a significant role in shaping and disciplining people’s conceptions in terms of education, ethics, values and conducts. As Tang (1995) suggests, Confucianism, together with Taoism and Buddhism, are usually assumed by some Chinese and western scholars as the three most influential religions in China. Confucianism, however, is actually “a philosophy and value system rather than a religion” (Tang, 1995, p. 269), though it “plays a religious role in Chinese culture and society” (p. 270). As “the beginning and center of the Chinese culture and value system”, Confucianism is “almost synonymous with traditional Chinese civilization” (Tang, 1995, p. 270).

It is worth noting that the Confucianism today may not represent the original thoughts of Confucius, since the earliest copies of Confucius’ works available today are the ones passed down from the Han Dynasty. Over the long history, it has been continuously developed, enriched and extended by the scholars under the label of Confucianism, such as Mengzi, Xunzi, Dong Zhongshu, Zhu Xi, Lu Jiuyuan and Wang Shouren (Yao, 2000). In addition, as a dominant political ideology adopted by most of the feudal emperors in China, it had been continuously modified and reinterpreted based on the needs of the emperors. During the East Zhou Dynasty when Confucius lived, many philosophical schools of thoughts emerged, which was called “the Contention of a Hundred Schools of Thought” (*bai jia zheng ming*). The reason why

Confucianism was finally chosen by the Han emperors over other schools of thoughts was because that some doctrines proposed in Confucianism best served the purpose of the emperors' need to consolidate their monarchy.

Over the long feudal history, Confucian values and beliefs have become deep-rooted, such as the respect of and obedience to authorities and government officials, the filial obedience to the elder, the value of family honor, patriarchy and so on. The ideology of social hierarchy as reflected in Confucianism was reinforced by the feudal governments through making laws and policies, stipulating school curricula, and the mostly importantly, through the Imperial Examination.

### **Imperial Examination in China**

As an important educational legacy from ancient China, the Imperial Examination (also known as Civil Service Examination system) emerged in Han Dynasty (206 B.C. – 220 A.D.). From the mid-Tang Dynasty (618 A.D. – 907 A.D.) onwards, this national examination became the major path for the king to select candidates to serve as central and local governments officials until 1905 when it was officially abolished (Ren & Xue, 2003). Before the adoption of the Imperial Examination, government officials were mostly selected through recommendation, usually by the elite class. The emergence of the Imperial Examination provided people from lower class with possibility of social mobility. This examination, however, focused on testing Confucian texts and ancient Chinese literature. All alternative thinking and contents were therefore excluded from both the examination and the educational institutions run by the state (*guanxue*) (Yao, 2000). Especially in Ming (1368–1644) and Qing Dynasty (1644–1912), the Imperial Examination was criticized for its constraints to the “examinees’ creativity and independent thoughts” through “the narrow scope of the subjects and tedious writing rules”

(Wang, 2013, p. 8). The Imperial Examination system had thereby become an instrument to create ideologies and a process of governance – the students produced themselves as particular sorts of subjects through learning the prescribed materials and attending the examination. Meanwhile, for people from the lower social class families, to pass the imperial examination thus became the only ladder toward social mobility and personal and professional success. Education was therefore intrinsically linked to family honor, social recognition, power, higher social status and material benefits. This value is reflected in many proverbs, popular sayings and poems as follows:

*wan ban jie xia pin, wei you du shu gao* (The worth of other pursuits is small, the study of books excels them all).

*shi nian han chuang wu ren wen, yi ju cheng ming tian xia zhi* (Ten years of oblivion in school may bring you fame overnight).

Since it provided students from poor families with the possibility to gain fame and social status “overnight”, the Imperial Examination itself had become a strong discourse during most dynasties in feudal China, and “the higher learning institutions gradually became largely exam-oriented” (Zhou, 2001, p. 160). In fact, Confucian classics were the most important component in both the public and private higher education for most of the feudal period. The impact of the “exam-oriented education” is long-lasting. Even today, some Chinese people still compare the National College Entrance Examination with the Imperial Examination in the feudal time, naming the student who scores the highest in the National College Entrance Examination “*Zhuang Yuan*”, the term that was once used in feudal time to refer to the best scholar excelling in the Imperial Examination.

The Imperial Examination also fosters the conception that one needs to be assiduous and perseverant in learning, since the competition to excel in the Imperial Examination was extremely fierce. To “work hard to excel” has therefore been perceived as both a virtue and an obligation for students. The poems and proverbs that encourage diligence are plenty, such as:

*ni shui xing zhou, bu jin ze tui* (Learning is like rowing against the current: not to advance means to drop back).

*xue ru deng shan* (Studying is like climbing a mountain).

*shu shan you lu qin wei jing, xue hai wu ya ku zuo zhou* (Diligence is the vehicle on the paths of Mountains of Books; endurance is the vessel on the courses of the Seas of Learning).

Another important impact exerted by the Imperial Examination is that it links higher education closely to the imperial bureaucracy. Even until the present, this ideology has played an important role in shaping the Chinese imaginaries in terms of the roles and responsibilities of higher education and academics. As Li (2012) suggests, higher education systems in China are part of a “modern state apparatus”, with “professors as civil servants, and autonomy protected by the concept of legal homogeneity, rather than legal personhood or the university’s ownership of property” (p. 323). Meanwhile, Chinese culture, as suggested by Ren, Liang and Zheng (2011), is strong in “collectivism and nationalism” (p. 28), which was produced and strengthened gradually over the long feudal history. This is partly because even though China boasts a large territory and population, more than ninety percent of population are of the Han ethnic identity, which allows the traditional Confucian ideology, such as nationalism, to dominate among the majority group for a very long time. It is worth noting that in ancient China, the emperor was the representative of the nation, so nationalism to some extent was interpreted as “loyalty to the

emperor and royal family”. The Chinese intellectuals in the feudal times were therefore expected to be committed to national development through serving the emperor. The emperor thus strengthened his power through a hierarchy system that was built upon a strong ideological system.

### **China’s semi-colonial history and the emergence of the modern university**

China’s quest for WCUs is also inevitably linked to its semi-feudal semi-colonial experience between 1839 and 1945. The century-long subservience to external powers, also known as the Century of Humiliation, has evoked fears and hopes among Chinese (Scott, 2008). As discussed earlier, when the Imperial Examination in ancient China focused on literature and Confucian classics only, one tremendous consequence was that the study in other areas were overly neglected. Meanwhile, as a self-contained nation with a large territory and population, the late Qing government pursued a national policy of isolation. Under such economic, cultural and political context, China lagged behind compared with developed countries mostly in Europe and the North America. The modern higher education institutions in China emerged in the late Qing Dynasty, as a result of both “the introduction of western systems of higher education and the impact of other social reforms” (Gu, Li & Wang, 2009, p. 4). The invasion of external powers and the loss of territory, national independence and dignity resulted in a drastic transformation in China’s higher education system: from focusing on the study of literature and Confucian classics to an inclusion of western knowledge (*xi xue*), such as “foreign languages, natural sciences and practical technologies” (Gu et al., 2009, p. 5). The modern college (*yang wu xue tang*) and modern university (*da xue tang*) are two major types of modern higher education institutions at that time; the former is aimed at training the “modern workforce” and the latter is very similar to the western-style university as we know today (Gu et al., 2009, p. 4). Between 1862 and 1898,

among 44 modern colleges 22 were military colleges, which demonstrated the government's desire to develop "technology-centered" military forces to protect the state sovereignty (Gu et al., 2009, p. 5). The pragmatic emphasis on the technology of higher education, however, had resulted in some serious problems. Ding (2001) wrote,

By the late 1910s, however, many problems became evident, including an overmechanistic approach to education, a tendency to emphasize social good and inhibit the development of individuality, and the neglect of scientific research into education. These problems stimulated people to turn away from the utilitarian considerations that had shaped modern education up till then and adopt an approach that reflected a deep inner search for a modern Chinese identity. (p. 163)

In the Republic period of China (1911-1949), Chinese modern higher education continued to develop. Higher education became one important terrain for the patriotic reformists to develop the nation through reshaping the higher education system. The reformists, however, didn't "totally negate tradition nor advocate a wholesale Westernization", rather, "they considered traditional and contemporary ideas from both China and the West, evaluating their successes and failures and seeking a path to national development based on both theory and practice" (Ding, 2001, p. 163). Some reformists such as Cai Yuanpei, the former president of Peking University, set the pursuit of democracy and sciences as a major theme in reforming the Chinese higher education system. More importantly, he identified that the key to develop Chinese higher education was not just to copy the western models of university, but rather, was to focus on scholarly research. The reformists' avocations and efforts resulted in the origin of graduate education in China, and a large number of research organizations within the modern Chinese universities (Ding, 2001).



A revisit to China's semi-feudal, semi-colonial history provides a historical lens to understand the quest for WCUs in China. First, the century-long foreign oppression and warfare have fostered in Chinese a strong desire to develop and to gain international respect and recognition. The quest for education development has therefore involved a cultural dimension, and is closely linked to patriotism, as identified by some scholars (Zheng, 1999). In fact, the discourse of Patriotism has been perceived as China's official discourse of nationalism. The national government has employed this discourse at different historical stages "to strengthen its political legitimacy" (Zheng, 1999, p. 90), to maintain "political stability" (p. 92), and to achieve "national unification" (p. 94). In China's pursuit of WCUs, as we will discuss in the later chapters, this nationalist discourse also plays an important role in legitimating the education policies and shaping the faculty members' subjectivities.

Second, the colonial discourse has exerted great influence on the construction of Chinese people's conception of modernity and development. The western knowledge has therefore been closely related to "advancement" and "modernization". In a sense, the colonial discourse works hand in hand with the discourse of the contemporary globalization in creating the social imaginaries of Chinese people.

Finally, the historical account of China's modern higher education development also allows us to reflect on the issue of cultural hybridity or the "global cultural complexity" as suggested by Kraidy (2002, p. 331). Related to the purpose of the study, it means to reflect on the complicated process in which the Chinese education policies are negotiated within multiple national and international discourses, and thereby to seek the possibility of creating a critical account of the pursuit of WCUs in China.

## **Summary**

To sum up, Confucianism and China's Imperial Examination have a profound impact on China's education and society at the contemporary time. The historical legacies of higher learning have generated a number of key elements closely related to China's pursuit of WCUs today, such as the value of education, the encouragement of diligence and excellence, collectivism and the sense of responsibility to the nation. The semi-colonial history, on the other hand, has made patriotism a strong national discourse in Chinese culture. Meanwhile, the Chinese perspectives of nationalism and modernization are negotiated at the national level in complicity or conflict with the traditional Chinese culture. In this spirit, these discussions of the Chinese national discourses are not restricted to this chapter but continue to emerge as the background to each section, situating the specific issues in China's pursuit of WCUs. In the next four chapters, I will discuss how these multiple cultural discourses are negotiated within the global neoliberal value-system, and operate in the shaping the education policies and the subjectivities of faculty members.

## **Chapter Five: Data Analysis Part One – Situating Policy Within the External Contexts**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to situate the policies that emphasize the building of WCUs in China within the external context. While Chapter Four provided a historical account of this education endeavor, this chapter focuses on a number of external forces or sociocultural realities in the contemporary Chinese society that have played a significant role in shaping the policies and the faculty members' subjectivities. These forces or realities, which are identified as important themes through my analysis of the interview data, capture "something important" about participants' responses in relation to my examination of the policy enactment and faculty members' subjectivities (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.10). In addition, they can also be viewed as the "external contexts" of the policy enactment, representing the "aspects such as pressures and expectations generated by wider local and national policy framework" (Ball, Maguire and Braun, 2012, p. 36). These forces create prevailing discourses at each single stage of policy enactment: they shape the policy orientations, influence the negotiation among different interest groups, and affect the interpretation and translation of policies. To the participants, these external forces have played a salient role in influencing their teaching and research, and shaping their understanding of their subject positions as faculty members.

I draw upon the Foucauldian analytical framework, Burawoy's notions of global ethnography and other relevant critical perspectives to discuss the operation of these sociocultural realities, namely, neoliberal globalization, the historically rooted examination culture and the emerging "discourse of success" fueled by neoliberalism in contemporary Chinese society. Through examining these external contexts of policy enactment, I attempt to

understand the channels and forms through which these external contexts have affected the higher education, and the connections or conflicts among them. I would also like to examine how globalization has blurred the geographical boundaries and brought new challenges and opportunities to China's higher education system. I attempt to understand what social imaginaries have been adopted by the Chinese national and local governments, as well as institutions, to justify their pursuit of WCUs as driven by global pressures. Through investigating these issues, I try to understand the impact of the external forces on the policy enactment and the subjectivities of the faculty members.

### **Globalization**

Undoubtedly, globalization is one of the most powerful driving forces behind China's pursuit of WCUs. As Rizvi and Lingard (2010) write, "the neoliberal imaginary of globalization has led to a new way of thinking about how schools, technical colleges, universities and educational systems should be governed" (p. 117). Globalization has included "the interests of a whole range of policy actors, both national and international" into the policy process, and has resulted in a shift from "government to governance" (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010, p. 117). The higher education policies, as reflected from the interview data, have been tremendously affected by globalization. Meanwhile, the interview data demonstrate that the construction and transformation of faculty members' ideologies and subjectivities are also "mediated by local histories, cultures and politics" (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010, p. 117).

The participants generally view globalization from a technical perspective and relate it more to technological advancement and international communications. It is therefore not surprising that all participants agree that globalization has played an overall positive role in China's higher education. The forces of globalization, as identified by the participants, have very

positive impact on their academic work. First, globalization is perceived to have enhanced the communication among different regions, and to have provided abundant opportunities for both students and faculty members at University A to go overseas and learn from other countries. Second, the university itself has become increasingly internationalized in terms of teaching, research and management. Third, more learning and teaching resources are available as a consequence of the technological development. Fourth, the talents imported from overseas become a driving force and simulation for domestic faculty members.

Enlightened by Burawoy's (2000) notions on global ethnography, I was inspired to look for the channels through which the participants' positive imaginaries of globalization have been constructed. Undoubtedly, the participants' positive understandings of globalization are inseparable from their personal experiences, especially the benefits that they have obtained as faculty members at a high-ranking university in China. With the economic growth of the nation, and the government's generous investment in higher education, especially in the selected high-ranking universities, several participants believed that "the faculty members are now provided with the best opportunities to develop" (Ban, Associate Professor in Natural Sciences and Engineering). Ban stated,

I think the whole university, the professors, the students and their life styles are all undergoing tremendous change, very different from the past....Twenty years ago, the government had really limited budget to invest in our teaching and research work....Now as a young faculty member, I think as long as you work hard and have the capacity, it is much easier for you to achieve what you want than it was twenty or thirty years ago. (Ban)

Most participants linked globalization with opportunities and the development of the whole society. These positive imaginaries of globalization are created in both Chinese and international

mass media. From government official policy documents to the commercial advertisements, “globalization” has been portrayed as something of “international standard”, and that offers fair competition and opportunities, while the other side of globalization has been largely ignored.

Just as Burawoy (2000) wrote,

The information society divides powerless places from placeless power – the decaying shipyard from commodity markets, the welfare client from universal discourse of legitimate need... The world is polarized between those within the flows of critical resources and those excluded, between the network society and the marginalized populations. (p. 2)

Responding to the impact of globalization, one participant stated,

I think this (globalization) has huge impact on me. First, my field of research involves an international dimension. I had many opportunities to go abroad to communicate with foreign scholars.... Students are drastically different from those ten years ago. I am now teaching freshmen. At the beginning of the semester I asked them to introduce themselves through a presentation. One student’s slides were all about his photos taken all around the world. He said, “I really enjoy travelling, and I have been to more than 30 countries in the world.” Of course, his English is apparently better than his classmates. They (today’s students) are totally different. Their lives have greatly changed. (Eileen, Associate Professor in Social Sciences and Humanities)

There was a clear tone of appreciation in Eileen’s comments on this student. She mentioned that there were a couple of students with extensive international travelling experience in each of her classes (with around 50 students). It seems that the “international experience” itself has been perceived as a fine quality in a student, even though this quality in a teenager may mostly mean

that his family background makes this experience affordable. This reminds us of Bourdieu's assertion that no judgement of taste is innocent, as the tastes "function as markers of class" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 2). No matter it is the international travel experience or the international fashion brands, they are in nature alike in terms of their close connection with the symbolic judgment system, which has been constructed through the legitimation of the taste of the elite classes and which has now been wide-spread and reinforced through the discourse of globalization.

Eileen disagreed with the thought that "only very rich people can travel to more than 30 countries", and she suggested that this had already been a very "common" practice among Chinese middle-class families like hers. She stated,

I am barely a middle-class in this city where I live. Of course, I might be better-off than some parents from rural areas or migrant workers in the city. In fact, they might be richer than I am as they may earn a lot of money through hard work. When I renovated my apartment, I found those workers earned much more than I do. However, they might not be willing to invest the money in travelling abroad with their children. (Eileen, Associate Professor in Social Sciences and Humanities)

Undoubtedly, the living conditions of Chinese people have greatly improved over the past 30 years, and what Eileen claims may be true in that a lot more Chinese people can afford to travel abroad every year. The issue here is that while globalization has offered seemingly countless opportunities to people who have access to the abundant resources, others have experienced it in a totally different way. When being asked whether or not she has observed a decrease in number of rural students at University A, Eileen stated,

Nowadays there are fewer and fewer university students from rural areas. With the urbanization process, the rural population has decreased, so it is normal that the percentage of rural students decreases, right? I remember that back to my college years, about one third of the students were from rural areas, now the percentage is less than one tenth. (Eileen, Associate Professor in Social Sciences and Humanities)

Though the decrease of rural students at University A may seem a natural result of China's urbanization process to Eileen, existing literature suggests differently. In their study examining the dropout students of rural China, Shi et al. (2015) collect data from "eight large-scale survey studies covering 24,931 rural secondary students across four provinces" and conduct "extensive interviews with 52 students from these same study sites" (p. 1048). They find a cumulative dropout rate "as high as 63 per cent" "across all windows of secondary education" (p. 1048). Based on their findings, the high dropout rate is "significantly correlated with low academic performance, high opportunity cost, low socio-economic status and poor mental health" (p. 1048). Similarly, in another study examining the access to higher education for rural-poor students, Yang (2010) finds that the access to higher education is closely related to "an academic and social preparedness, institutional funding arrangements, the admissions policy, and the socioeconomic background" (p. 193). Guo et al. (2013) also wrote,

Wang (2011) maintains that globalisation has allowed urban regions to gain significantly more than their rural counterparts, resulting in huge regional gaps. Such gaps are reflected in both economic and educational aspects (e.g., educational attainment, academic achievement). Rural populations only get an average of 7.25 years of schools, while the city residents receive about 10.25 years of education. Universities accept only 1% of rural students, as compared to 14% of urban students. (Guo et al., 2013, p. 251)



On top of the low rural college admission rate, what is more worrisome is an emerging discourse maintaining that “education is useless” among rural people. Through collecting survey data from 789 farmers at a small village in Sichuan Province, Li and Wu (2015, July 8th) find that thirty-four percent of participants think it is useless to receive education. What may seem astonishing is that their study finds a positive correlation between the education level and the identification with the statement that education is useless, which means, those receiving comparatively more education have a higher tendency to think that education is useless. Li and Wu identify several major factors leading to this mentality. First, before the massification of higher education and the introduction of the market into the higher education system in the 1990s, rural people tended to consider obtaining higher education as one important way to secure an employment opportunity in the city (university graduates were assigned jobs by the government) and therefore to achieve social mobility. Since the end of 1990s, the market mechanism has become the major means of regulating university graduates’ employment. Because of the lack of the social network and necessary cultural capital needed for seeking employment, many rural graduates had to go to the secondary labor market or to return to their home town unemployed. This phenomenon has gradually constructed the conception that education is useless among some rural people. Second, with the increasing role of market and the decreasing government control of household registration, obtaining higher education is no longer the only way for rural people to be eligible to work and live in cities, and education has no longer been the only means of obtaining an urban residency. Third, the forces of globalization and marketization have further stimulated the regional and even international migration of people. With more and more rural people leaving for the cities, rural China has experienced a large decrease in the number of schools due to the outflow of rural population to urban areas, which further worsened the educational conditions for

those who have no alternative but to remain in the villages. For children from the lower class of rural China, as Li and Wu point out, the chance for social mobility is slim.

While globalization has indeed brought numerous opportunities for development to those who have access to them, it has also widened the gap between the rich and poor, not necessarily between the rural and urban residents, though “the urban-rural gap contributes more to the general disparity in China than regional inequality” (Wu & He, 2016, p. 5). This aspect of globalization, however, was absent in most participants’ imaginaries of globalization. The participants’ responses tended to focus on the benefits associated with globalization and the economic reforms in China. Some participants even suggested there was no longer much difference between rural and urban residents with the process of urbanization and the overall enhancement of the economic conditions of the country:

There isn’t much difference between rural and urban students today. With the economic development, the urban-rural difference is no longer that obvious. In fact, many rural families are able to provide their children with food and clothes, which are basically of no difference from those that urban students have, unlike things in the old days, when rural people were really poor. Moreover, there is only one child in most families, and the parents are willing to invest in the children’s education. And the rural conditions are getting much better, with various benefits provided by the government. Since many rural people leave their home villages to start their own small businesses, they are affluent. When you look at the students in my class, you really cannot tell who are from cities and who are from rural areas. There is no difference between what they wear or do. Maybe the students from richer families can afford to wear the brand products and the rural students do not? But they (what the rural students wear) look good, too...the rural

students today are also very outgoing. I was also from rural China, and back in my undergraduate years I was quite shy and was not as outgoing as the rural students today.

(Helen, Associate Professor in Natural Sciences and Engineering)

Helen's understanding of "difference" mostly rested on the students' clothing and behaviors, rather than the cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) associated with families of different social backgrounds, not to mention that the rural students in her class might not represent the large population of rural youth, given the fact that these students already have access to higher education at a top-ranking university. It is interesting to note that though Helen first denied the difference between rural and urban students, in her later responses she unconsciously mentioned the differences in cultural capital between rural and urban residents:

I think information has a huge impact on shaping one's mind. Children today have access to all kinds of information through internet. Maybe they have become smarter when being exposed to abundant information resources? For example, my son and my nephew are of the same age, but they have totally different interests and hobbies. It is understandable since my son has been living with me in the city and my nephew has been living in the village. (Helen)

The inconsistency in Helen's perceptions of the urban/rural difference further confirms the gap in terms of educational experiences between different social groups under the conditions of globalization. Apparently, globalization has enabled some people to benefit immensely from information technology, the flow of trade or the international experiences, but there are "Others" who have been isolated or disconnected from the globalization processes, or even become a certain kind of victims of such processes. While the rural students today may not look like the stereotyped rural students in the old days, the gap between the rural and urban students still exists.

The participants' responses suggest that their notions of globalization have been largely shaped in a way that favors a "discourse of development", one that celebrates the information technology, appreciates the international opportunities and thinks highly of people who possess these opportunities and channels. Burawoy (2000) regards "forces" as "only the historically contingent outcome of processes" (p. 27). He suggests that "there can be no one-way determination between processes and forces" (Burawoy, 2000, p. 28). The participants' perceptions of globalization are therefore also continuously being shaped and shaping the contexts in which they have been fostered.

Related to the building of WCUs in China, globalization has been viewed by most participants as an impetus that motivates people to improve themselves, or help them to reach "international standard":

The first thing about globalization is that there is a free flow of information. Through getting access to various kinds of stimulus, you are motivated to move forward. (Helen, Associate Professor in Natural Sciences and Engineering)

Globalization definitely has very positive impact on China's education. Now both the national and local governments are talking about "to be in line with the international standard". It takes time for sure, but as faculty members we have been continuously learning from the developed world about the scope and contents of their academic work, and even in terms of management and operations. To be in line with the international standard is a big opportunity for us. Every university has made great progress, though still insufficient. We need to continue working on it. (Ban, Associate Professor in Natural Sciences and Engineering)

In general, globalization has positive impact on China's higher education. The national government and the Ministry of Education both attach great importance to this. The university is doing the same – striving to improve its level of internationalization.... As faculty members, we are trying to develop some international communications, or to offer some bilingual courses. Yes we are working hard on this....No matter it is a university or an enterprise, you need to develop, and you need to achieve the international standard, which is the demand of development. The whole country is developing, and all trades are developing – it will be a natural trend that the international standard will be gradually approached. (Shan, Professor in Natural Sciences and Engineering)

“International standard” is a catch phrase in most interviews. The achievement of this end is perceived to be a rational choice or an obligation for universities and beyond. As Rizvi and Lingard (2010) have observed, globalization has resulted in “an unmistakable global trend towards a convergence in thinking about education value”, which is now the “neoliberal values orientation” (p. 72). With the increasing forces of globalization, “national policymakers now feel obliged to recraft education policies in relation to what they interpret as the emerging imperatives of globalization, aligning them loosely to the values negotiated at the national or local levels” (p.72). In the case China's pursuit of WCUs, when the strong national discourse of economic development is fueled by the established neoliberal discourse at the international level, to raise the standard bar or to be in line with the international standard has become a seemingly natural choice. There is also a sense of patriotism and collectivism in the participants' responses as they seem to immediately take the development of the country and of higher education as their individual responsibility. As discussed previously, the semi-feudal semi-colonial history of China has made patriotism a strong component of Chinese culture, and the legitimacy of the

globalization discourse in China is therefore intricately interlined to China's historical conditions. The policy language such as development, modernization, or world-class, not only carries an economic denotation, but contains the capability to awaken a national and historical sensation.

One participant, Dai, also noticed this risk of convergence of value caused by globalization:

Globalization also means convergence. For example, some really nice things may gradually disappear just because its market share is too little. Here I am talking about culture. In terms of a specific technology, there used to be many academic streams of thought in the past, but now there are fewer and fewer. As a result, it becomes increasingly difficult for you to change the dominant stream of thought since most people have been educated under this mainstream ideology. The resistance to change would be high. Consequently, even if you have some new and good ideas, they may be rejected directly. (Dai, Lecturer in Natural Sciences and Engineering)

This kind of convergence as described by Dai has the power to highlight the importance of certain knowledge, while overshadowing or rearticulating the others. When the legitimacy of the neoliberal value system is discursively constructed through multiple national and international discourses, the pursuit of excellence, competitiveness and efficiency becomes an innocent and neutral choice for governments across the world. Within this value system, the faculty members are constituted and constituting themselves through their ethical "practices of freedom" (Foucault, 1997, p. 284). "Ethics as the conscious practice of freedom", as Foucault (1997) explained, "has revolved around this fundamental imperative: 'Take care of yourself'" (p. 285). In other words, "concerns with the self and care of the self were required for right conduct and proper practice of freedom" (p. 285). Foucault (1997) wrote,

Care of the self is, of course, knowledge [connaissance] of the self – this is the Socratic-Platonic aspect – but also knowledge of a number of rules of acceptable conduct or of principles that are both truths and prescriptions. To take care of the self is to equip oneself with these truths: this is where ethics is linked to the game of truth. (p. 285)

For the participants, the “rules of acceptable conduct or of principles” are the neoliberal values embedded in these education policies. These rules function “without any intervention on” the participants’ part. In Foucault’s words, “you have become the logos, or the logos has become you” (Foucault, 1997, p. 286).

While most participants agree that globalization has offered Chinese students opportunities to go abroad, some of them also express their concerns over the problem of the international brain drain. When the market mechanism works as a way to allocate human capital, international human migration has become an unmistakable trend. Since University A is located in a less developed province, the outflow of faculty members, and the difficulty in attracting top-notch scholars have added resistance for University A to pursue its world-class status.

One participant talked about the impact of globalization on creating certain social imaginaries:

Globalization definitely has exerted a huge impact on reshaping people’s values and worldviews. Then it all depends on individuals’ judgement to make right decisions. I think young people may tend to make mistakes, but not us adults. We are more rational. For example, a lot of university students may think that it would be a very comfortable and relaxing experience to go to the United States to study for a degree. Those who disseminate this kind of beautified ideas are usually the agents (college-placement companies) or the mass media. In fact, to study abroad is painstaking. You may have to

overcome the difficulties caused by language or culture. (Peter, Associate Professor in Social Sciences and Humanities)

While information technology may have enabled millions of people to get to know the other side of the world, it also creates social imaginaries that glorify “Western life styles” at the expense of devaluing others. The construction of these social imaginaries may come from the impact of the hegemony of the dominant culture, or may purely be driven by political or commercial interest.

Related to teaching, some participants expressed their concerns over the challenges brought about by globalization:

Nowadays there are many ways to obtain learning resources from the internet. I think this is something that university educators and even high school and elementary school teachers will have to face in the future. Which direction will school education go? This is one of the questions that confuse me the most these days. I think this is something to consider for both Chinese and foreign educators. (Heng, Associate Professor in Natural Sciences and Engineering)

Dai talked about how to adjust teaching to accommodate the changes in students:

One phenomenon is that the students are not able to focus their attention as long as they were in the past. Not only students, all adults are more or less the same. A recent study suggests that people can concentrate for 12 seconds in the last century, and now the number has dropped to 8 seconds.... As a result, you need to adjust your teaching methods to accommodate the students. You may want to categorize your teaching materials, and subgroup them even further. You may also need to adopt other methods to attract the students' attention. In short, some details of your teaching need to be modified,



because the students have changed. They have shorter attention span, and they learn different things. You may find their high school textbooks are so different from the ones that we used to have back in our high school years. The students have changed, and we have to get used to it. (Dai, Lecturer in Natural Sciences and Engineering)

Apparently, the information flow and technological development have also influenced the way faculty members think and handle their academic work.

To sum up, though globalization has greatly facilitated the faculty members' academic work, the participants' responses have revealed a strong neoliberal value-laden discourse embedded in neoliberal globalization. Within this neoliberal value system, the pursuit of WCUs, excellence and efficiency have become an imperative goal to approach. Meanwhile, at the national level, the neoliberal discourse is legitimated during its negotiation with China's historical conditions and cultural specificity.

While participants' responses may suggest that their subjectivities have been profoundly influenced by the neoliberal value system, some of the participants have also expressed their resistance against or reflections over the policies and globalization. It is this resistance that gives us the hope to achieve what Friedman names as the "right balance of policies" (Friedman, 1999, p.444). As Friedman (1999) wrote,

A politics of sustainable globalization, though, needs more than just the correct picture of what is happening in the world. It also needs the right balance of policies (p.444)...Democratizing globalization – it's not only the most effective way to make it sustainable, it's the most self-interested and moral policy that any government can pursue. (p. 451)

### **China's examination culture**

As discussed in Chapter Four, China's examination culture can be traced back over one thousand years. Undoubtedly, the examination systems in different historical periods have played a significant role in selecting the talents and promoting social mobility. In a vast country with a large population but limited resources, it is understandable that examination has been chosen by governments at different times as a dominant mechanism to distribute resources of various kinds. The National College Entrance Examination, in particular, has a tremendous impact on shaping the ways of teaching and learning at different academic levels. As Liu (2013) stated,

The unified national entrance exam possesses the merit of being authoritative, scientific, and highly efficient. However, it also suffers from several limitations: it is restrictive, prevents colleges and universities from displaying their unique characteristics, adds weight to the intensity with which students prepare for the exam, and influences the overall development of elementary and high school children. (p. 11)

During the interviews, the "Chinese examination culture" has emerged frequently. This section will focus on the discussion of the impact of examination on the enactment of policies that emphasize the building of WCUs.

One consequence of this examination system, as identified by the participants, is that the university students tend to prefer the teacher-centered teaching model rather than the student-centered model. This has created extra difficulty in the enactment of some policies. One participant, Belle, is teaching a number of the "experimental classes" as part of the University's efforts to enhance students' learning experience through employing some "western" teaching concepts and pedagogies, such as the student-centered teaching approaches. She shared her feelings about how her students responded to this new attempt. She stated,

You may think that students in the experimental classes may love to participate, and to engage actively with the class materials and activities? Not really. They are reluctant to participate, or to express what they think. At least in class, they are not willing to express their ideas in public. So basically, the teacher has to lead the class most of the time. I once conducted a survey and asked them, “What do you prefer, teacher-centered or student-centered teaching”? Over sixty percent of them prefer teacher-centered. They tend to think the teacher can explain things more clearly. Besides, they don’t like to cooperate with others. They think that (to ask students to do presentations or to use other student-centered teaching methods) is a waste of time, which prevents them from learning more efficiently. Indeed, we have to face plenty of challenges when implementing these kinds of reforms. (Belle, Lecturer in Social Sciences and Humanities)

Belle continued to talk about how the university students’ learning mode was a continuation of their learning mode in the elementary and high schools, and she stated,

I think China’s education is pretty utilitarian. It is like “I learn it just for the final marks, and I do the test papers over and over again just to get the full mark”. This is what I have been taught in elementary and high schools. This kind of education isn’t aim at fostering critical thinking. Consequently, it would be extremely difficult if you try to develop these kids’ thinking capacity when they already enter the college, considering how they have been educated all these years .... They often ask me, “what is useful, and what is useless”. Sometimes I was astonished, and asked them, “What can be called useful? Is it useful only if it is tested in the exams?” Some of their perspectives are pretty frustrating....But sometimes I feel this is understandable as they have been under tremendous pressure to

learn the courses required by their majors, so they may have limited time and energy to spend on my course. (Belle, Lecturer in Social Sciences and Humanities)

Xun, another participant, shared similar teaching experiences. She talked about the challenges she met when trying to encourage her students to raise questions in class. Though this pedagogy was welcomed by the majority of her students, there were still a large percentage of students who preferred to be provided with answers by the teachers, since they perceived it to be a “waste of time” for the teachers not to “inform” directly.

When sharing his observations of the classes at one university in the United States, one participant shared his insights on the differences between the Chinese and American professors. He stated,

There is not much difference in terms of their attitudes towards teaching, research or students. However, their teaching styles differ a lot. Professors in the United States prefer discussion, and Chinese professors prefer instruction. These are two different teaching cultures. The foreign (American) education culture emphasizes dialogue, and the cultivation of the critical thinking. Chinese universities nowadays are also gradually adding such elements into our own teaching culture. However, if our current teaching style is replaced completely with the dialogue-style, or student-presentation-style, the professor will be considered as irresponsible. Under the current faculty evaluation system, you won't pass the evaluation. In addition, the American professors attach great importance to the students' participation and the originality of their works. They are quite strict with these aspects. In China, professors are comparatively less strict. (Peter, Associate Professor in Social Sciences and Humanities)

Undoubtedly, behind the well-accepted teacher-centered teaching models, there are also cultural and pedagogical reasons, which are beyond the examination system itself, but it is also undeniable that the impact of the examination culture as a dominant discourse is profound. The examination culture, as the participants identify, have subtly shaped a learning culture that values efficiency and utilitarianism, while lacking the emphasis on nourishing students' creativity and critical thinking. In fact, back to two decades ago, with an increasing amount of international educational resources being introduced to China, interest has emerged in K-12 schools regarding the adoption of the inquiry-based education reform in Chinese junior high and senior high schools. Through interviewing and directing questionnaires to "220 Chinese science teachers, science teacher educators and researchers" from "13 cities and provinces", Zhang et al. (2005) examined the obstacles that prevent the implementation of inquiry-based education reform (p. 477). They identified four major challenges for educators: a) the National College Entrance Exam which is not in line with "goals of inquiry-based teaching", b) a lack of corresponding "change in the curriculum, curriculum materials, relevant resources, and teacher professional development" to accommodate the inquiry-based teaching, c) large class sizes, and d) unbalanced distribution of resources in urban and rural schools (p. 477). The examination system is undoubtedly the strongest influence that shapes the education culture in China.

One participant expressed his concerns with the impact of exam culture on language education:

Some criteria of assessment given by the Ministry of Education are so inflexible. For example, undergraduate students in our departments are required to pass "X Exam". The exam-oriented mentality has largely influenced professors' teaching. Many professors' teaching, therefore, to a large degree is to prepare students to pass the exams. Other goals

such as “nourishing students’ humanistic quality” and “developing their ability to analyze and solve problems” fail to go beyond mere slogans, and are extremely difficult to realize in reality. The teaching at our department (a language department) remains at the level of language teaching, but not the teaching of humanities. It is not treated as an academic discipline at a university, but rather, a language training class. Nowadays, if you are looking for a language training class, you really don’t have to rely on a university. There are plenty of training institutions which are doing a far better job than us in terms of language training and passing exams. University teaching should focus on the development of humanistic quality, which we also talk about all the time but are unable to implement at all. (Jing, Professor in Social Sciences and Humanities)

Jing is deeply concerned about the altered roles of a university at the contemporary time, which he thinks are “too instrumental”. He frequently mentions the terms such as “humanistic quality” and “critical thinking”, which he thinks are missing in the current arts and humanities programs at University A. He thinks that the fundamental responsibility of the educators in the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences departments is not to teach specific knowledge or skills, but to enhance the humanistic quality of the students. As Rizvi and Lingard (2010) point out, within the global neoliberal value system, some values of education are “glossed over” while “others are highlighted” (p. 75) in international and national education policies. The preference of “economy-related” knowledge, skills or capacities has played an important role in shaping what counts as “worthy knowledge” and as well as the subjectivities of both university students and faculty members. Faculty members, however, are both policy receivers and actors. As educators and researchers, some faculty members such as Jing, attempt to initiate change through promoting the “humanistic quality” of students in language class. He stated,

We cannot change the broad context, so we can only start from small things, such as what you say and do in class, and how you communicate with students after class. Try everything that you can do. However, the impact of this large context on students is really huge. As the saying goes, “The little fish cannot eat the big fish”. Nevertheless, you need to do it, and you must. For example, the education of liberal arts is closely related to the study of literature. I think writing is very important. Encourage students to combine reading and writing activities, to bring out the best nourishing elements from books and put them in writing. In this way, students are able to refine their emotions and thoughts, gradually. Through learning a language, they can find the beauty of life, the happiness in life, the positive nutrition and so on. Just one step at a time. (Jing, Professor in Social Sciences and Humanities)

Jing shares what he is doing at his class to foster in students the “humanistic quality”, which, according to him, has been largely ignored in the current social sciences education, as this quality isn’t recognized by many as “worthy knowledge”. The professors’ teaching contents and teaching strategies are both influenced by this utilitarian mentality, which has hindered both students’ learning and professors’ teaching. Several participants, however, believe that there is no better alternative to the current National College Entrance Exam, the process of which is comparatively more “transparent” and “efficient”. Some participants also talk about the fierce competition that the university graduates experience on the job-hunting market, which is why university students invest a lot of time in various exams in order to obtain certain certificates, since these certificates have become part of the evaluation criteria for the employers to determine the competitiveness of the applicant. It seems that there is a contradictory relationship between the exam-oriented emphasis and China’s pursuit of WCUs: on the one hand, this mentality is in

line with the university ranking, but on the other hand it hinders the enactment of certain policies that aim at achieving this goal, for example, creating an environment that encourages “academic freedom, critical thinking, innovation, and creativity” (Salmi & Albatch, 2011). The exam-related lack of flexibility or autonomy is reflected in many aspects. One participant argued,

Our education system is comparatively inflexible. Students in some foreign universities have to do some research before they can complete their assignments, but in our department, the students’ assignments are generally specified, and their answers are more or less the same. (Linda, Lecturer in Natural Sciences and Engineering)

More importantly, the emphasis on exams has subtly changed the subjectivities of the faculty members. Under this macro context that emphasize scores, skills and certificates, faculty members therefore tend to position themselves as trainers rather than educators and researchers. The language of “competiveness”, “efficiency” and “equity”, in the form of exams and assessments, has established the “normal” roles of a university and regulated the teaching contents and pedagogies. These are what Foucault frames as “technologies” of government – using policies to rationalize what the desired education outcomes are. These activities of “ruling”, as Miller and Rose (1990) name it, are,

the actual mechanisms through which authorities of various sorts have sought to shape, normalize and instrumentalize the conduct, thought, decisions and aspirations of others in order to achieve the objectives they consider desirable. (p. 9)

Though the participants’ subjectivities are heavily shaped by the policies, we see their contestations and negotiations with policies through their concerns over the negative impact of the standardized testing. The space of negotiation, however, is limited.



## **The emerging “discourse of success” fueled by neoliberalism in the contemporary Chinese society**

In the past 30 years, especially in the last decade, the Chinese society has experienced tremendous changes, which are subtly influencing the higher education system as well. Fei shared his perspectives:

For higher education in China, the problem is not only about the faculty performance evaluation system. I think one bigger problem is the modern culture, or, the mentality of the modern society, or, to put it another way, the shift in the moral and philosophical worldviews and values held by the entire society, especially by young people. This shift has exerted a huge impact on teaching. Ten or Twenty years ago, back to my college years, we took notes when the professor was teaching. We were really attentive and would write down whatever the professor wrote on the blackboard.... Now the students seldom take notes.... Very few people have strong self-discipline. I think that may explain why even though China now has more people with university education, the percentage of excellent ones is lower than that in the old days. Back to 20 years ago, the average overall quality of university graduates were much better.... These students, usually born in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, cannot understand what it means to work hard or to live a simple life. The environment in which they grow up doesn't provide them with experiences or trainings in this regard. They take for granted what they have now. (Fei, Professor in Natural Sciences and Engineering)

In the above excerpt, Fei expresses his concern over the “mentality of the modern society” – the “shift in the moral and philosophical worldviews and values held by the entire society, especially by young people”. He constantly compares “them” (today’s university students) with “us” (the

university students in the 1990s). He describes “us” as hardworking and motivated learners, while “them” as less-motivated, lacking in self-discipline, relying on the smart products, pursuing material enjoyment. He continued to comment on how the mentalities of the students reflect the ideologies of the contemporary society. He stated,

I think the mainstream ideologies of the entire society, especially the starting point of China’s focus on economic construction, have made people, especially young people...have you ever seen what the media reports? Maybe similar things happen in other countries, too... young people show off their wealth. Some young people work as the video anchors, and all they have to do is to sing songs or to talk in front of the camera, and they make a huge profit every day. What are the young people looking for nowadays? Enjoying life. Influenced by the undesirable social trends, their values and beliefs have changed. They are like, “it is fine as long as I have money”. For students, they no longer hold the belief that “I should acquire the knowledge so as to serve the society”. Their senses of social responsibility and mission have been much weakened. So now there is a lack of spirit of taking responsibilities, which I think is the root of the problem. The professors may be the same professors, but the students, a lot of them, have changed.... The fickle society and fickle ideologies are the roots of problems among the university students, resulting in the unsatisfactory quality of graduates. (Fei, Professor in Natural Sciences and Engineering)

Fei attributes students’ unsatisfactory academic performance to their undesirable values and beliefs, which he thinks are to a large degree shaped by the dominant market-oriented ideology. Fei thinks the weakened “sense of social responsibilities and mission” (Fei) results in the less-motivated learners. The differences between “them” and “us”, as Fei identifies, basically

demonstrate a society in transition. The shift in university students' ideologies has to be understood from a historical and sociocultural perspective. First, China's transition to the "socialist economy" has undoubtedly made the remarkable achievements that have amazed the world but scholarly studies also point to some social consequences to the Comprehensive Economic Reform (CER), such as economic inequality, the soaring housing price in large cities, and environmental degradation (Hou, 2011). Pattnayak (2012) identifies a correlation between the economic inequality and the sense of insecurity among people of the United States. In the case of China, the enlarged income disparity, accompanied with the uneven regional distribution of various resources may also foster in people a sense of insecurity and a desire to pursue wealth and to move from less developed regions to prosperous areas. Under this strong impact of the neoliberal market-driven forces, it is therefore understandable why some university students have become "utilitarian" as the participants describe. The differences between "them" and "us" are in effect a reflection of the different sociocultural conditions in which two generations have grown up. It is worth mentioning that China started to launch the mass expansion of higher education in 1999, when the total student enrollment in various higher education institutions was 1,548,554. There was an increase of 464,927 (approximately 43 percent) compared with the enrolment in 1998, and the enrolment growth rate was 42% in 2000, 21% in 2001, 19% in 2002, 19% in 2003 and 17% in 2004 (Zhang, 2012, p. 112). By the end of 2005, the total higher education student enrolment reached 4,177,825, almost quadrupling the enrolment in 1998. The huge upsurge of student enrolment meant not only more educational opportunities offered to the college-age youth, but also a much higher employment pressure for the graduates, and a devaluation of the university degrees. Moreover, it posed challenges for the higher education institutions to cope with the sudden increase of the student numbers with limited material and human resources. The

faculty members had to face increased teaching obligations though that also meant an increased income. As Zhang (2012) suggests, “When there is conflict between the faculty members’ research and teaching activities, the market-oriented teaching activities will undoubtedly influence the academic research”, and “the cultural system of the university is usually negatively affected by the market system” (p. 141).

Before the mass expansion of higher education in 1999, especially before 1997 when the universities started to increase the tuition fees significantly at a national level, the Chinese government had a tight control of the enrolment number of the university students to ensure the “teaching and training quality” and also to undertake the corresponding responsibility to guarantee the graduates’ employment (Zhang, 2012, p. 106). That explains why Fei thinks the university students in the 1990s appeared to be more dedicated learners with a much stronger sense of social responsibility, as the concept of market had not overwhelmingly penetrated the higher education system back in the 1990s, and the dominant official policy discourse was to encourage university students to go wherever the country needs most, especially before 1994 when university graduates were assigned jobs by the government and institutions. Today’s university students, however, grow up in a totally different socioeconomic environment, and have been heavily influenced by both the benefits and negative impact of the market-economy. Moreover, they are living in an era of intensified globalization, which further fuels their market-oriented values and desires.

Shi stated,

It is quite normal that everyone wants to live a better life. The only thing is that the internet and information technology have enabled people to know that rich people are not just the neighbors that they know – there are much richer people who live a way better

life elsewhere. Especially for students, it is very likely that they would have this dream that one day they will do something or live a specific kind of life through their hard work. It is not necessarily a bad thing. This kind of mentality will have impact on both students and professors. It all depends on how to look at such thing as “making money and becoming rich” ... Everyone wants to live a comfortable life, which is good. But if you overemphasize the pursuit of wealth, it is definitely not appropriate. (Shi, Associate Professor in Social Sciences and Humanities)

Shi points to the impact of internet and information technology on the construction of people’s social imaginaries. The advancement of technology on the one hand makes plenty of learning resources available to people in less developed regions, but on the other hand, makes the material gap more visible between the rich and the poor. It therefore easily fosters discontent, desires and dreams among people, especially among young university students. In Burawoy’s (2000) analysis of the impact of globalization on ethnography, he talks about what Thomas and Znaniecki have proposed as “four underlying ‘wishes’ governing human adaptation – desire for new experience, desire for recognition, desire for mastery, and desire for security” (p.9). In a similar fashion, these global forces that propel human emigration may explain how the flow of information in the globalizing era may create people’s imaginaries. These desires may serve as a driving force to stimulate them to work hard, but may also carry them astray. Hu, another participant, also commented on people’s desire for wealth and success in the contemporary society:

The social value orientation has undergone some changes. A case in point is the proposal of the concept – “the study of success”. Now in the domestic bookstores, books on the so-called “the study of success” are among the best sellers. Many people are talking about

success, including Ma Yun (known professionally as Jack Ma, a Chinese business magnate who is the founder and executive chairman of Alibaba Group, a family of Internet-based businesses). His success is nothing more than the fact that he earns the most money. So, to my understanding, “the study of success” is about the knowledge of making you a rich person. Does being rich mean being successful? The concept itself has been criticized by many scholars. However, ordinary people and students have been brainwashed to such a degree that they may think, “I am successful as long as I am rich”. To determine whether you are successful or not, they don’t look at how many contributions you have made to the social development or to the future of human beings; rather, they just look at how much wealth you have. This is so wrong, but it is so difficult to change. And, this wrong conception, as one of the prevailing mainstream ideologies, has been accepted by many young people. (Hu, Associate Professor in Social Sciences and Humanities)

Hu continued to talk about how the government’s policy that encouraged mass innovation and entrepreneurship had been misinterpreted as pursuing so-called “success”:

Meanwhile, the government also initiated some policies that encourage “mass entrepreneurship and innovation”, which was first put forward by Premier Li Keqiang. I don’t think the concept of “mass entrepreneurship and innovation” was to echo “the study of success”. Instead, it was put forward to cope with some problems consequent to China’s economic reforms. As you know, it has been 30 years since China first started the “opening-up” policy, and the social development has reached a slow or even stagnant stage. The government therefore encourages mass innovation and entrepreneurship so as to stimulate domestic demand. It is a good thing by itself. However, when this policy is

being advertised in the higher education institutions, university students more or less mix up “mass entrepreneurship” with “the study of success”. They think more of entrepreneurship than innovation. For them, to be entrepreneurial therefore means to earn more money, and if they earn a lot of money they become successful. (Hu, Associate Professor in Social Sciences and Humanities)

Hu’s comments well illustrate how a specific policy could be misinterpreted under the influence of a strong dominant social discourse. The strong discourse of neoliberalism has the power to easily reinterpret the policy because it was not constructed within a short time frame. Rather, it has been gradually shaped and normalized during the past three decades, along with China’s promotion of marketization and engagement with the global economy. Just as Wang (2004) writes,

For neoliberalism, in truth, relies upon the strength of transnational and national policies and economies, and it depends upon a theory and discourse of economic formalism to establish its own hegemonic discourse. As such, its extrapolitical and antistate character is utterly dependent upon its inherent links to the state.... using the existence of state interference in the economy to prove – as some have done – that there is no neoliberal hegemony in China is really beside the point, as the hegemonic position of neoliberalism in China was established precisely from within a domestic process during which the state’s crisis of legitimacy was overcome through economic reform itself. (p. 8)

The impact of “transnational and national policies and economies” is profound and long-lasting. For some policies, even when the policies themselves have ceased to take effect literally, the social effects will still be lingering. Once the policies and the corresponding values embedded within them have been widely accepted, it will take a very long time and extraordinary efforts to

deconstruct the values that have been built upon the material system and shaped by the policies. A glimpse at the income distribution policies in China since 1978 can shed light on this issue. The researcher thinks it is pertinent to briefly introduce this part of policy here because the formation of neoliberalism in China is closely related to its distribution policies.

Zhao (2010) categorized the transformation of China's income distribution into four stages. The first stage was between 1949 and 1958 when the income distribution system gradually formed. The second stage was between 1958 and 1978, when the income distribution was generally based on excessive egalitarianism, or *Da Guo Fan* (eating from one big pot)<sup>6</sup>. This kind of distribution was made in accordance with the planned economy system during that period. The third stage was between 1978 and 2005, when the market mode of distribution took shape. In 1978 at the 3rd Plenary Session of the 11th Central Committee of CPC, Deng Xiaoping proposed a new policy of "allowing a group of people to get rich first", which marked a "starting point of the structural transformation" (Li, p. 27). In his key note speech, Deng said,

In economic policy, I think we should allow some regions and enterprises and some workers and peasants to earn more and enjoy more benefits sooner than others, in accordance with their hard work and greater contributions to society. (Deng, 1983, p. 142; Also cited in Li, 2010, p. 27)

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<sup>6</sup> *Da Guo Fan* (eating from one big pot) *Da Guo Fan* is a mainly disparaging term used to refer to excessive egalitarianism. Everyone eating from the same big pot means that everyone is treated equally regardless of their work or contribution to society. Economic reformers blamed the *Da Guo Fan* system for rewarding the work-shy and being a major factor in the serious material shortages that plagued China in the 1960s and 1970s. State enterprises were funded by the government no matter how inefficient they were, and employees were paid more or less the same wages no matter how well or how poorly they performed. Reformers blamed egalitarianism for discouraging effort, initiative and creativity, and thereby slowing down economic development in China. (New Words, 2008, October 23).



The income distribution principle had thus become realized “allowing some regions and some people to get rich first so that they could help other regions and other people to get rich later and eventually achieve the common prosperity of the whole society”. In 1993, at the 3rd Session of the 14th Central Committee of the CPC, the party leader proposed another development guideline named “giving priority to efficiency with due consideration to fairness”, specifically targeting the drawbacks brought about by the ideology of excessive egalitarianism. This guideline was further improved in the reports of the 15th and 16th Congress of CPC in 1997 and 2002 (Zhao, 2010). While the guideline of “giving priority to efficiency with due consideration to fairness” has greatly promoted the economic development, it has enlarged the income gap among rural and rural, rural and urban residents, and especially, between rural and urban residents (Hu, 2017, Zhao, 2010). To cope with the issue of income disparity, since 2005, China’s income distribution system has entered into the fourth stage: the construction of a “scientific, reasonable, equal and equitable income distribution system” (Zhao, 2010, p. 33). At the 5<sup>th</sup> Session of the 16<sup>th</sup> Central Committee of the CPC, the party leader proposed that distribution should “pay more emphasis on social equality” (p. 33) and balance fairness and efficiency.

Even though “giving priority to efficiency” is no longer encouraged in the official government discourse and the government has meanwhile made considerable efforts to enhance the “social security system” and “compensation” system (Li, 2010, p. 68), the tremendous impact of the slogan and its neoliberal implications still operate in shaping the society and people’s subjectivities. Meanwhile, different interest groups may interpret the terms “efficiency” and “fairness” in the way that most facilitates their own interest. Besides, the government’s redistribution and compensation programs also have the danger of causing the “recognition”

issues as raised by Nancy Fraser (1997). Just as Rizvi and Lingard (2010) point out, “social justice is an essentially contested notion, and the search for its realization arises from the meeting of a particular kind of authority with political aspiration and activism located in particular historical circumstances” (p. 157). While the distribution policies at every stage of its history have made positive impact on the development of the country’s economy, and some scholars also argue that the policies are not the only reason that enlarged income gap (Zhao, 2010), it is undeniable that the hegemony of Chinese neoliberalism has been discursively constructed during the 30 years of economic reform and social transformation. In the realm of higher education, the same set of neoliberal ideology has also been at play in shaping the university development orientation and the distribution of resources. Under this tremendous wave of social ideology, it is thus understandable why specific policies could be misinterpreted.

To sum up, the education policy never stands outside of its historical, sociocultural, political and global contexts. As Foucault (1980c) wrote, “The individual, with his identity and characteristics, is the product of a relation of power exercised over bodies, multiplicities, movements, desires, forces” (p. 74). While people’s social imaginaries and subjectivities have been discursively shaped in the prevailing social discourses, they are at the same time continuously transforming the discourses through performing themselves as particular subjects. Just as Springer (2012) writes, “the neoliberalism is neither a ‘top-down’ nor ‘bottom-up’ phenomena, but rather a circuitous process of socio-spatial transformation” (p. 133).

## **Summary**

This chapter situates the policies of building WCUs in China within the external contexts. As reflected from the interview data, three prevailing contextual factors have been identified as the leading factors that shape China’s policies that emphasize the building of WCUs, namely,

neoliberal globalization, the historically rooted examination culture and an emerging “discourse of success” fueled by neoliberalism. Through examining these external contexts of policy enactment, I have discussed how neoliberalism has been nuanced in the Chinese context, and has operated together with the specific national sociocultural factors, in the form of a commitment to build world-class universities. The analysis of these contextual dimensions will further facilitate my analysis of the policy enactment and construction of academic subjects in the following chapters.

## **Chapter Six: Data Analysis Part Two – Situating Policy Enactment Within the Situated and Material Contexts**

### **Introduction**

This chapter aims at understanding the complexity of policy enactment through examining University A's situated and material contexts. Policies "are intimately shaped and influenced by school-specific factors which act as constraints, pressures and enablers of policy enactments" (Ball et al., 2012, p. 19). In the case of China's pursuit of WCUs, the national policy agenda could be nuanced differently at different universities as a result of the individual university's specific geographical location, local history, composition of students, staffs and faculty members, and material conditions. To understand the complex processes of policy enactment and faculty members' subjectivity, it is therefore essential to examine these situated and material contextual dimensions of University A.

The "situated and material contexts" are part of what Ball et al. (2012) proposed as the four contexts of policy enactment, namely, "situated context", "professional cultures", "material contexts", and "external contexts". Chapter Five already tackled the "external" dimension of context, and I will leave the discussion of the "professional culture" to Chapter Eight. In this chapter, my analysis of the interview data will be conducted through drawing upon corresponding critical theories, existing literature, and relevant government policies. I thereby attempt to incorporate these dimensions into my analysis of the policy of building WCUs in China, and try to examine how "policy creates context, but context also precedes policy" (Ball, Maguire and Braun, 2012, p. 19). More importantly, I want to explore the prevailing discourses within which the participants enter into the "games of truth" (Gauthier 1988, p 3), and how the

dominant value system has been discursively constructed and subtly shaping the participants' academic work and subjectivities.

### **University A: A brief introduction**

University A, located in City B, a comparatively less developed city in China, is a key comprehensive university under the direct jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China. It is one of the largest universities in the nation, in terms of the size of the campuses, the diversity of the disciplines, the scale of the undergraduate and graduate programs, and number of the students and faculty members. University A is one of the 117 institutions of higher education supported by the national "Project 211", and one of the 39 universities supported by the national "Project 985". As discussed in previous chapters, both government-funded projects are part of the national campaign of establishing the WCUs in China. As a research-intensive university, University A is regarded as one of the top Chinese higher institutions that have high-quality faculties, with a number of nationally recognized and renowned outstanding researchers and professors. It is also home to a number of state key labs and research centers in both the Natural Sciences and Engineering as well as Humanities and Social Sciences disciplines.

As one of the high ranking universities in which the Chinese government has heavily invested, University A has been striving to fulfill the national agenda of building WCUs in the past twenty years. It has developed various institutional strategies to increase its academic competitiveness and national/international reputation. In addition to establishing high-level undergraduate and graduate programs, it has extensive exchanges and cooperation with domestic and foreign universities, establishing research centers in many countries and regions. It has also established quite a number of joint labs and research organizations with many first-class higher

education institutions internationally. The University Science and Technology Park has also been established to promote innovation and transfer the scientific findings to commercial products.

### **Situated contexts**

Situated contexts refer to “those aspects of context that are historically and locationally linked” to the university, such as a university’s “setting, its history and intake” (Ball, Maguire and Braun, 2012, p. 21). In China, a university’s source of students is closely related to the university’s overall competitiveness and its location. The more prestigious universities usually get students with higher scores in the National College Entrance Examination, and universities in a comparatively more developed province usually set higher cut-off scores (admission line) than those ranked similarly but located in a less developed area. For example, according to the ARWU (Academic Ranking of World Universities), in 2016 Lanzhou University (located in Gansu, a less developed province) was ranked 51th in the Great China area, and Shanghai University was ranked 90th (Ranking of Top Universities in Greater China – 2016, 2017). The admission lines of Lanzhou University, in almost all provinces, however, are lower than those of Shanghai University (The admission line of Lanzhou University in all provinces in 2016, 2016, July 22; The admission line of Shanghai University in all provinces in 2016, 2016, July 18). It is worth noting that due to uneven regional economic development, the resource distribution in the higher education sector is also uneven. Besides, each university usually sets a fixed admission quota for each province, allocating a higher number of students coming from its home province<sup>7</sup>. As a result, it is comparatively easier for students coming from provinces with better educational

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<sup>7</sup> Under China’s current National College Entrance Exam system, only students with a local *hukou* (house registration) are allowed to take the exam in the local province. For students who are currently living out of their own provinces, they need to go back to their home provinces to take the exam.

resources to be admitted to more competitive universities. Similarly, universities in less developed provinces usually have more difficulty in recruiting the most academically competitive students and top-notch professors, which further hinders their pursuit of the world-class status. Meanwhile, since the majority of students of a university come from its home province, the local culture and location-related value-system may also play an important role in shaping a university's culture. In short, the location of a university is not only closely related to its student and faculty compositions, but also largely affects the aspirations of the students, the academic cultures of the university and the policy enactment. These four dimensions of the contexts are so inter-connected and overlap that they best demonstrate how and why policies can be interpreted differently within different geographical backgrounds.

During the interviews, sometimes the concept of “location” was expressed explicitly, but sometimes it was alluded to – it was described through participants’ defining of “others”. The terms such as “geographical location” or “local culture” frequently emerged when the participants discussed the differences between University A and what they defined as WCUs. Apparently, the location of University A is one significant factor that has made the university’s pursuit of world-class status more complicated.

As Eileen, one of the participants in this study stated, “This city is definitely not a first-tier...not even a second-tier city in China”, and she continued,

These policies (of building WCUs) are important for sure, but this goal is out of reach (for our university). I’ve been abroad and I know the difference. Of course, the differences among domestic universities are drastic, too. Let’s put it this way: there is no big difference between the “super-class” domestic universities and top foreign universities, especially in the Natural Sciences and Engineering disciplines. I know some

professors from those disciplines...they are all very confident while visiting abroad, since what we (Chinese universities) are doing is no worse than theirs (what foreign universities do), if not better. So, when we (Chinese scholars) are coming over (to the foreign universities), sometimes even in those well-known university labs they (foreign universities) will invite them (Chinese visiting scholars) to give presentations or lectures.... So, our domestic super class universities are very academically competitive. But, the difference between domestic super-class universities and average universities are huge. I think it doesn't make any sense for the average universities to pursue world-class status. (Eileen, Associate Professor in Social Sciences and Humanities)

Eileen used the term “super” to highlight the immense difference between these three or four universities and the rest of universities in China. There are two more issues to be noted in Eileen's comments above. First, there is a clear sense of pride when she used “we” to refer to those faculty members from Chinese super-class universities' in the Natural Sciences and Engineering disciplines, despite the fact that she herself is from a Humanities department at a non-superclass university. This strong identification of Chineseness is also seen in the several other interviews. Second, the “difference” as suggested by Eileen is not merely along domestic-international lines, but more in terms of being developed-underdeveloped of the university itself, regardless whether it is located in China or in other countries. For her, the borders that divide the world-class and the average universities are no longer just the national borders as one may assume in the past, as there are now “three or four super-class universities in China that are world-class for sure” (Eileen). On the one hand, Eileen is very proud of these Chinese super-class universities, but on the other hand, she feels the gap between the super-class and average first-class Chinese universities is unbridgeable. She stated,



If the hardware (infrastructure) differences (between the super-class universities and ours) can still be made up, the software (the teaching and research capacity) cannot, at least for a very long while....There are three or four super-class universities in China. I've been to some of them. Their research concepts, faculties, students, management, teaching... there are differences in every single aspect. I think University A cannot be considered as a world-class university, but those super-class Chinese universities can. (In those super-class universities) You can find those retired professors, in their 70s or 80s, still work till late night in their offices every day. You can find PhD students who sleep in their temporary beds in the labs. They have plenty of conferences to attend, and they can invite the most world-renowned professors to give lectures. Their students have the chance to talk with these remarkable people and can even apply to study at their universities abroad. Chances like these are plenty. Only this kind of university can be called as a super-class university in China, which has no difference from those world-class universities elsewhere. (Eileen, Associate Professor in Social Sciences and Humanities)

Eileen's imaginaries of the "super-class" Chinese university embodies her understandings of a "world-class" university – one with a high concentration of academic talent, a high level of internationalization, abundant teaching and research resources, and above all, an encouraging and inspiring learning and research environment with passionate, knowledgeable faculty members and dedicated students. There is a tone of passion in her description of the "super-class" universities, which further affirms her identification with her imaginary of the WCUs.

Meanwhile, even though Eileen is not from one of these super-class universities, there is a strong sense of pride and confidence in her description of these universities, as she also identifies herself as Chinese. The disciplinary effects are at play here. As Foucault (1980b) reminds us,

“Each society has its régime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true” (p. 131). On the one hand, Eileen’s conceptions of the WCU are closely in line with the Confucian norms of “good students” and “good scholars” who are dedicated to learning. On the other hand, her responses convey a strong sense of nationalism, which is intricately linked to China’s semi-colonial history. This specific historical experience has enabled the official policy language, such as “development”, “modernization” or “world-class” to easily acquire legitimacy in the contemporary Chinese society. Other key features of a WCU as Eileen identifies include the high quality of the faculty members and the abundance in learning resources and opportunities – those are the materialized embodiment of the differences among the “super-class”, the “key” and the average universities. Unfortunately, with the market mechanism as the major national and international means of allocating human and material resources, the hierarchy in the higher education system will only be strengthened if no further policy interventions are taken. The geographical location plays an important role in directing the human capital and material flows, as the developed areas usually offer much brighter life and career prospects than the underdeveloped ones. These prospects always lure people with different financial and educational backgrounds to migrate to the “prosperous places” to pursue their dreams.

Eileen continued to talk about how students’ aspirations may differ at super-class universities, average key/top universities or the non-key universities. She considered that the ranking of a university was usually positively related to the students’ self-expectations regarding their future study and employment. It seems that the hierarchy of the higher education system has also resulted in a hierarchy of university students’ aspirations and their subjectivities. The students are “in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power”, and are

“the vehicles of power, not its points of application” (Foucault, 1980b, p. 98). The culture of the university, as Eileen identifies, is a major factor that leads to these differences. She stated,

If most people around you are able to get the entrance scholarships from the top universities abroad, you may feel you should and could make it, too. However, if you are already the one who aims for the highest in relation to those people in your immediate context, it is very likely that you won't have that kind of aspiration. Great people get together to do great things. (Eileen, Associate Professor in Social Sciences and Humanities)

From Eileen's perspective, University A is far from being “great”. Its status might be described as “worse off than some but better off than many”. It has a comparatively better student academic performance than most of the universities in China, but the ranking of the student performance of University A is behind the ranking of the university itself, which means comparatively lower-ranked universities in more developed cities usually get more academically-competitive students. The geographical location is one of the major drawbacks that have hindered the development of the university and its pursuit of world-class status. Ying reported,

To be honest, there are serious outflows of both faculty members and students. Though ours is a very good university, and we have academically competitive students at the undergraduate level, our own graduates seldom continue to do their master's or PhD at our university. It was better last year: ten out of sixty or seventy new graduate students in our departments were our own graduates. In the past, there were only three or four (of our own graduates who continue their graduate study at our university). There are several reasons. First, location. Many kids (students) from the prosperous provinces had no idea what it was like to stay in a city like ours. After staying here they felt their hometowns

were better, so they chose to go back after graduation. Another reason is that though our university is one of the top ranked ones, our discipline is not. The students didn't know this before they came here, and later they became disappointed. Besides, "people struggle upwards". Our university is good, but there are better ones out there.... Different regions develop at different paces, and thus offer different opportunities.... There are fewer job opportunities here, and the economy is not good. The average income is not as high as that in big cities, such as Beijing or Shanghai, where people enjoy better salaries, benefits and other opportunities. A lot of my former colleagues left for Beijing just for their kids. Since once they get a Beijing *hukou*<sup>8</sup>, their kids may be admitted to Peking University or Tsinghua University with a score of 500 in the National College Entrance Exam, but they may need to score 680 or 690 if they take the exam in our province<sup>9</sup>. (Ying, Professor in Natural Sciences and Engineering)

Ying's responses have touched on a critical issue – the uneven regional distribution of highly skilled talent in China, and the outflow of talent from underdeveloped regions to developed regions. The interprovincial migration of human capital in China is neither a new phenomenon

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<sup>8</sup> *Hukou* (household registration) System was officially promulgated by the Chinese government in 1958 to regulate the migration of people between urban and rural areas. There are two types of household registration: the agricultural (rural) and non-agricultural (urban) *hukou*. People who live outside their registered permanent *hukou* residence are not eligible to the healthcare, education, and some other social services unless they transfer their *hukou* to the new area. The Chinese government has been gradually reforming the *hukou* system since the mid of 1990, to meet the need of the market economy and social development. (Young, 2013)

<sup>9</sup> Ying's assumption of the different cut-off scores in different provinces was based on the college entrance examination system before 2002. Since 1985, with the permission of the Ministry of Education, Shanghai has started to use its own examination papers. Since 2002, this practice has been extended to a number of other provinces, including Beijing. With the independent examination organized in a number of provinces, the cut-off scores between certain provinces may no longer be comparable, even though Shanghai and Beijing are still considered as the "most educationally privileged metropolises". (Ross & Wang, p. 215; Yang, 2014, p. 602)

nor a new academic topic. As Suzuki and Suzuki (2016) indicate, with the economic reform and opening-up policies in 1978, especially the unbalanced regional development “between the coastal and inland provinces”, the interprovincial migration of people started to increase in the 1980s and 1990s. Liang and White (1995) describe “the improved agricultural efficiency”, “the generated surplus labor” and the relaxation of the migration as impetus that have induced the interprovincial migration (p. 321). Xu and Liu (2017) also identify the market mechanism, intertwined with the state intervention (e.g. the *hukou* system), as influential forces of the migrations in China. In particular, they suggest that the “localisation of the *hukou* regulation” and “the commodification of *hukou*” have led to “an increased concentration of highly skilled migrants” in the most developed regions (Xu & Liu, 2017, p. 15). That is to say, even though the central government no longer controls the intake of permanent migrants of each city, the local governments takes over this role of regulation, and “set their own admission criteria and take the granting of *hukou* as a means of attracting desirable migrants and generating revenues” (p. 15). As Salmi (2009) suggests, “a high proportion of carefully selected graduate students” is one key feature of a world-class university. In the case of University A, however, the participants suggest that many top undergraduate or masters’ students left for better universities to continue their study. “Brain drain” is a topic that emerged in all interviews, since the discussion of building the world-class university inevitably leads to the discussion of the capacities of faculties and students. Almost all participants point to the importance of the university’s location, in addition to its ranking, in terms of its ability to attract and keep academic talent. One participant claimed,

You cannot change its (the university’s) location, its economic development environment and the local people’s mode of thinking. Places such as Beijing or Shanghai are like...Shanghai is China’s Shanghai, and it also a global city. It is the first stop when

foreigners visit China. Universities in Beijing or Shanghai are able to invite foreign experts to give lectures on a daily basis. They are able to provide high salaries to attract PhDs from the States to work there. They don't have any problems to do things like that, do they? Their talent exchange, their openness, their visions of internationalization all result from the funding that they are provided, their location and their idea of running the university. They love opening up, don't they? However, at a place like ours, how could PhDs from foreign countries come to our university? How is it possible that they know this place? When they think of China, what occurs to them might be Beijing or Shanghai, might be the Great Wall of China, but how many people in the world know about Mount X (a mountain located in the Province where University A is) (Peter, Associate Professor in Social Sciences and Humanities)

Similarly, when talking about bringing in academic talent from foreign countries, one participant reported,

Not many (overseas academic talents come to our university). In the past two years, our departments brought in two or three. Now the university is striving really hard to promote this (recruiting faculty members from abroad). Very favorite conditions are offered to the returnees or foreign experts. Every year, the University will have a quota, but the capacity is never filled. Due to geographical reasons not many talents come here. Another reason might be that the universities in the Southern China may offer even better conditions. As a result, for most of the talents we brought in, either it was because this is their hometown, or their families live close to this city, or they may have other connections with the university or the city. (Helen, Associate Professor in Natural Sciences and Engineering)

All participants think it is natural for students or faculty members to leave for more prosperous places with better opportunities. In addition, the intensified globalization and speedy development of communication technology have made more options available to faculty members and thus made faculty mobility much easier than a decade ago. “The small temple cannot keep the great monk”, Eileen says. According to the participants, the outflow of academic talent at University A takes various forms, not necessarily moving from University A to a better ranked university. The fact is that some graduates or faculties would prefer to go to a less well-known university in a more developed place (s), or to go to a less well-known university in this same city because of a better salary or benefits (Fei). This finding echoes what Li (2010) has discussed in his study examining the transformation in social stratification after 30 years of reform and social changes in China. Li (2010) finds that the “economic stratification” has replaced the “political stratification” since 1978 when the policy of “allowing a group of people to get rich first” has become a dominant official discourse (p. 27).

Since attracting world-class talent has become a key component towards building WCUs, Chinese universities are now making great efforts to attract domestic and overseas academic talents by using various competitive strategies. China Daily recently reports that East China University of Political Science and Law in Shanghai has offered an annual income of 1 million yuan (approximately US\$150, 727) to the targeted top-notch scholars. In addition, each recruited scholar will receive a housing allowance of up to 8 million yuan (approximately US\$1,205,818), “research funds of 500, 000 yuan (approximately US\$75,363)”, and “a working allowance of up to 1 million yuan (approximately US\$150, 727)” (Zhao, 2017, May 1). According to the participants, the universities in the more prosperous and affluent provinces are usually able to offer more favorable conditions to attract scholars. It is reported that the a total of 125 faculty

members have left the Northwest Agriculture and Forestry University between 2000 and 2003, including its only Changjiang Scholar<sup>10</sup> at that time. Similarly, a total of 197 faculty members left Xinjiang Medical University between 2004 and 2014 (Chai & Jin, 2017, March 22). On a recent conference titled “Promoting the Revitalization of the Higher Education in the Middle and West China”, the Chinese Minister of Education, Chen Baosheng, appealed the universities in the developed provinces for stopping digging talents from the Middle, West and Northeast China, and he said, “What you (the universities in the developed provinces) recruit are talents, but are also their (the universities in the less developed provinces) lifeline” (Chai & Jin, 2017, March 22).

“People vote with their feet” (Eileen), and they go wherever they feel best fits their needs and represents their values. Inter-regional migration, appearing to be a very personal choice which reflects people’s individual values and experience, is actually mediated by power. The domestically validated market mechanism fueled by the global neoliberal value system is definitely one important factor at play here. Foucault defines an experience as “the correlation between field of knowledge, types of normativity, and forms of subjectivity in a particular culture” (Foucault, 1985, p. 4). Through making the “voluntary and intentional” choice of migration, the faculty members “not only set themselves rules of conduct, but also seek to transform themselves, to change themselves into their singular being and to make their life into an oeuvre” (Foucault, 1985, p. 10), and they are “urged to constitute themselves as subjects of moral conduct” (p. 29).

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<sup>10</sup> Changjiang (Yangtze River) Scholar: the highest academic award issued to an individual in higher education by the Ministry of Education.



One participant said, “It (to leave for universities with a better ranking or income) is not only about money, it is about recognition” (Peter, Associate Professor in Social Sciences and Humanities). The word “recognition” entails two aspects of meanings. First, with the establishment of the validity of market mechanism in distributing resources have legitimated the individual pursuit of wealth as a “moral conduct”. People with the proven ability to become wealthy are socially considered as “successful”. In this neoliberal discourse, these faculty members are constituted and constituting themselves as academic subjects in a way that they are accepted by the society as morally correct. Second, in a society deeply influenced by Confucianism, the pursuit and maintenance of the family and individual honor (dignity) is socially considered as “moral conduct”. A “successful” person is expected to bring fame and honor to the family or the social group that the person belongs to. Migration from a less-developed area to a prosperous area, or making a higher income, is therefore also a demonstration of “ability”, which not only brings to the person economic benefits but also a cultural and psychological satisfaction.

In summary, location is more than a geographic term, but is socially and historically constructed. Behind each geographic name, we see the enormous impact of the state policy, the sociocultural realities and the global context which operate together to (re)distribute the human capitals and to shape the academics’ inspirations. When people tend to associate “Beijing” or “Shanghai” with “prosperity”, “opportunity” or “advancement”, they simultaneously relate the less developed cities with “poverty” and “backwardness”.

Maldistribution is closely intertwined with the misrecognition issues as raised by Fraser (1995), driving people to leave for the more prosperous areas. The unbalanced development among different regions and universities may have the risk of intensifying the hierarchy within

the higher education system, prevent the social mobility of people, and simultaneously result in “misrecognition” issues (Fraser, 1995). The material differences and the consequent differences reflected in their social status or education may further reduce these disadvantaged institutions, departments, or groups of people as inferior or incapable. These misrecognitions will further prevent certain groups from improving their socioeconomic status, and hence, further enlarge the material gap.

As suggested by Rizvi (2005), the international migration of highly skilled workers may produce the effects of diaspora networks that facilitate the flows of technology, culture and capital between the sending and receiving countries. The inter-regional migration of the academics, however, mainly produces a brain drain effect in the underdeveloped areas and further aggravates the inequitable distribution of educational resources, which has made it especially difficult for universities in these regions to pursue the status of world-class universities.

### **Material contexts**

In this section, I will discuss briefly the material contexts – the physical aspects of the university, such as “buildings and budget, but also to levels of staffing, information, technologies and infrastructure”, which can have significant effect on policy enactment (Ball et al., 2012, p. 29). Especially in the case of building WCUs, “abundant resources” enable a university to have “a rich learning environment” and “to conduct advanced research” (Salmi, 2009, p. 7). Material condition is absolutely one of the key factors at play in a WCU. A close examination of the material contexts of University A will therefore facilitate my analysis and discussion of the policy enactment and the faculty members’ subjectivities formation.

In general, as one of the selected universities supported by China's Project 211 and Project 985, the material conditions of University A have been greatly improved in the past twenty years, which was reflected in all interviews. For the participants, their discussions over the material conditions of the university mainly focused on the following four aspects: the physical or "hard" infrastructure and the corresponding support services, the income and research grants, the career development opportunities, and other material realities that may affect their teaching and research.

First, as reported by the participants, in terms of physical infrastructure, or the physical construction of the campuses, such as laboratories, classrooms, offices, libraries and other facilities, the conditions have definitely been improved. The support services however remain unsatisfactory. When compared with the international or domestic world-class universities that they know, University A is still considered to be "backward" in many aspects.

Belle, for example, stated,

The facilities at our university are comparatively poor. It seems that it was not until this year that our classrooms started to have those smartboards, you know those interactive whiteboard? And, it was not until recent years that we started to have projectors in our regular classrooms. Four years ago, there were only blackboards in almost all small classrooms, and only large lecture rooms were equipped with computers and projectors. If we had to use the equipment, we went to the multimedia integrated audio visual classroom. Having these facilities in our own classrooms is like a brand new start for our teaching, and we no longer need to write laboriously. I think we are still really backward in this respect...the multimedia rooms are very poorly managed as well, which really affects our teaching quality and result. (Belle, Lecturer in Social Sciences and Humanities)

For some participants from specific disciplines, they have to deal with large class sizes. For example, Heng mentions that there are over 100 students in his undergraduate class, and this number used to be 200 in the past. Belle also mentions that the average student capacity of her classes is around 80. The enhanced teaching conditions, therefore, have made a big difference in facilitating their teaching. It is worth noting that the discussion of the physical infrastructure inevitably leads to the discussion of other material realities that are at play in the university development and policy enactment. For example, Belle talks about the large class size, which is an inconvenient reality faced by many Chinese universities. Even with the application of multimedia and other teaching facilities, some participants still view the large class size as one barrier that prevents them from achieving satisfactory teaching results. Large class size usually results in insufficient interactions between lecturers and students, and among students. It is a challenge for lecturers to create accommodating teaching pedagogies in class or to handle the large amount of assignments after class. As Bhardwa, (2017, May 31) suggested, “a lower student-to-staff ratio can help students to cultivate closer relationships with their lecturers, have quicker access to essay feedback, and get involved in more interactive seminars and discussions”.

In fact, faculty/student or staff/student ratio has been taken as an important criterion in several WCU ranking systems. To tackle the problem of the large class size, participants mentioned that a new university policy was going to be carried out in the very near future – the class size in some departments would be reduced to a more manageable level. Though this potential reform is theoretically beneficial to the lecturers and students, some participants have their practical concerns:

It (the reduced class size) is definitely a good thing for the university, especially for those disciplines such as foreign languages or mathematics. But I think there is also a very

practical issue. As far as I know, in some departments, there are barely sufficient faculty members to teach even the large-size class. Some senior professors are about to retire, some female faculty members may need to take parental leaves, and some others may be visiting abroad...apparently if the class size is reduced, more instructors will be needed. I assume there will be difficulties for this plan to be implemented. (Heng, Associate Professor in Natural Sciences and Engineering)

In our department, the class size will be reduced to 100 students in the near future. Yes, the class size still looks large, but it will be way better than it is now. Some of my colleagues used to teach a class with 300 students. And, sometimes, the microphone didn't work very well. The interaction between the instructor and students was really poor...you can only see the students sitting in the first few rows. But it would be unrealistic to reduce the class size even further...there are too many students and much fewer faculty members. (Ling, Lecturer in Natural Sciences and Engineering)

Similarly, several participants mentioned that the reduction in class size would double their teaching time and therefore even reduce her passion in teaching. Here we see the complexity of policy enactment: the reforms taken place in the classroom are usually linked to other administrative and financial discussion and negotiations outside of the classroom. Material realities of this kind also pose challenges to the enactment of the policies that aim at building WCUs.

Another participant, Eileen, also talked about the infrastructure when comparing University A with a university she once visited overseas:

Differences are in almost every single aspect. Let's talk about soft infrastructure (e.g.: teaching and research capacities and technical support) and hard infrastructure (e.g.:

buildings and other material resources). In terms of hard infrastructure, for example, let's say, Wi-Fi. Our university campus also has Wi-Fi, but the signal is really weak. When you are walking outside of the campus buildings, there is no signal. When you walk inside, there is, but extremely weak. In those good foreign universities, such as the one I visited, there is free Wi-Fi everywhere on campus, and even visitors can have access without needing any password. However, at University A, this is impossible...you have to login with a username and a password. One very important thing for me is to conduct literature survey for my research, but it is very difficult to do this here...we cannot access google, nor many other foreign websites (because of the Internet censorship). It is good that our library bought the access to many foreign databases, very comprehensive ones. But you can access those databases only through the campus network, which is very slow. My personal experience is that the research materials that I have to spend a day to find here could have been found within an hour in the university that I visited abroad. So the differences are huge. (Eileen, Associate Professor in Social Sciences and Humanities)

Eileen might be slightly exaggerating when she used "huge" to describe the "hard infrastructure" differences between University A and the overseas prestigious universities, but what is reflected in her responses is that an improvement in University A's support services is much desired. Other participants also raised similar issues, such as the unsatisfactory services provided by the library or technical support staff. These support services are important to the faculty members as they are closely related to their teaching and research work.

Though they may have these kinds of frustrations, the participants all admit that the material conditions have greatly improved over the past years. The enhancement of material conditions is also a reflection of the financial support from the local and central governments.

For Project 211, between 1996 and 2010, the Chinese central government invested approximately RMB 18.8 billion (approximately US\$2.86 billion) to fund the 116 selected domestic universities (Zhao, 2017, p. 85). For Project 985, during phase I (1999-2001) and phase II (2004-2007), the central government invested another RMB 32.9 billion (approximately US\$5.29 billion) to support the 39 selected universities (Chen, 2016, p. 17; Ying, 2011, p. 19). Between 2009 and 2013, as Zeng and Li (2014) suggest, the universities selected by Project 211 and Project 985 took seventy percent of the total government research funding, even though the selected universities only count for 14.3% of the total universities in China. Xu and Ye (2017) write,

In 2013, Tsinghua University had a total budget of 3.031 billion RMB for scientific research, with government funding comprising 2.775 billion of that, accounting for about 91.5 percent. By contrast, China Southwest Petroleum University obtained 460 million RMB, which was the highest among regular universities (i.e., non-Project 211), including 120 million RMB of government funding, which account for 26.1 percent (Liu, 2015).

This means that Tsinghua University received 23 times the funding that China Southwest Petroleum University did. (p. 162)

As a university funded by both Project 211 and Project 985, University A has gained extra financial support and development opportunities, compared with those that were not selected to participate in these two projects. In Ying's (2011) study that examines the effects of Project 985, the author suggests that Project 985 provided the selected universities with "a variety of immense tangible and intangible benefits, whereas schools not selected have in many ways lost a fair opportunity to compete" (p. 19). In fact, even among all the selected universities, the funding is distributed based on the university's ranking and overall competitiveness. Within the same

university, again, the educational resources have been distributed unevenly among different departments, with the intention of developing key disciplines. This uneven distribution is especially true for University A, which has a wide range of departments with very different teaching and research capacities, composition of faculty members and material resources and funding provided by the university and the national, provincial or municipal governments. Jing stated,

How should I put it? The government definitely has provided financial support to the universities, but mostly, I suppose, the money has been spent on the natural sciences and engineering disciplines. For faculty members from the social sciences or arts and humanities disciplines, we don't know how the idea of building WCUs would influence our department. I don't feel any direct impact of the policies, especially on the marginalized non-key departments like ours. We cannot feel any influence of the national policy agenda and therefore know very little about the policies (related to the building of WCUs in China). (Jing, Professor in Social Sciences and Humanities)

Jing's comments reflect the situation of faculty members from the non-key disciplines, as defined by the university and the government. Actually in the global pursuit of WCUs, it has been a common practice for both China and many other countries to attach comparatively much more importance to the development of the natural sciences, medical and engineering disciplines, while underestimating the significance of the social sciences and art and humanities studies, since the former is perceived to be more closely related the enhancement of the national economic competitiveness. The preference of the Natural Sciences over the Social Sciences is also a reflection of what Belle called the emphasis of "utilitarianism" in the current higher education system. In Xu, Tan and Zhao's (1995) study that examines "the funding ratios of 21



major countries/territories in social science based on 813,809 research Articles from 2009 to 2013” (p. 673), they find there is a huge gap between the funding ratios in the Social Sciences and those in the Natural Sciences. This finding echoes the participants’ responses in this study.

During the interviews, participants, especially those from the natural sciences or the selected “key” departments, generally responded that there was no drastic difference in terms of infrastructure and facilities between those of their departments and of the overseas top universities they once visited. The major differences, as they identify them, lie in the management concept and the academic culture of the university and departments. In addition, some participants believe that WCUs usually have more “international academic influence” and “explore new frontiers of knowledge” (Ban). In all the interviews, the participants agree that the soft infrastructure (human-related factors) of a university plays a far more significant role than the physical infrastructure in the university’s pursuit of its world-class status, though the latter is also indispensable.

Apparently, funding is the key for the development of a WCU. Salmi (2009) identifies “concentration of talent, “abundant funding” and “appropriate governance” as the three key success factors of the high-ranking universities (p. 31). Needless to say, the first two features are budget-related. Even the “appropriate governance”, as suggested by Salmi, is about creating an environment that “fosters competitiveness, unrestrained scientific inquiry, critical thinking, innovation, and creativity” (p. 28). To achieve these goals, a university is expected to be autonomous from “bureaucracies and externally imposed standards” so as to “manage their resources with agility and quickly respond to the demands of a rapidly changing global market” (p. 28). The “appropriate governance” will therefore enable the university to “pay higher salaries

to reward the more productive academics or to attract world-class researches or to invest in leading-edge research facilities” (p. 29).

The salaries, research funding, teaching/research materials and career development opportunities, therefore, are determinant factors for a university to attract and keep talent, especially the top-notch scholars. During the interviews, the participants shared their knowledge and perspectives on these issues. Fei explained the sources of a faculty member’s income and benefits, and he asserted that,

Part of the income for faculty members comes from the Ministry of Education, and the rest is provided by the provincial government. In the affluent provinces their provincial governments are able to generate more revenue and provide more funds for the local higher education institutions. With the support from the local governments, these higher education institutions can enhance the financial conditions of the faculty members through providing more bonuses or benefits. The basic income doesn’t vary much from university to university, but the bonuses and benefits vary greatly. (Fei, Professor in Social Sciences and Humanities)

The income of the faculty members is therefore closely linked to the economic conditions of the area where the university is located. As discussed previously, University A is located in a less developed province, and the faculty members’ incomes are therefore comparatively lower than those in the more developed areas. Within University A, different departments also have different sources of income. Fei stated,

Those departments of basic sciences, such as chemistry, physics and mathematics, are different from us engineering departments. We can take some government-funded or corporate-funded projects, and earn extra service income or benefits....The faculty

members from the basic sciences basically solely rely on the income from the university... I know a professor at the Department of Mathematics. He went to another university and now earns twice or three times higher than he did in the past. (Fei, Professor in Social Sciences and Humanities)

As suggested by Fei, some faculty members from an engineering department may earn extra income through taking on various projects. A number of participants also mention other sources of income, such as lecturing at other education/training institutions, or offering private classes.

Xun stated,

I know some of my colleagues are teaching outside of the campus...the department doesn't allow this, so they do it privately. The situation is: if you feel you don't earn enough money, you can just go out and make some, instead of spending the same amount of time doing research. (Xun, Lecturer in Social Sciences and Humanities)

Xun disagrees with those who teach outside of the university, not because this is against the university policy, but because she believes that faculty members should devote their time on teaching and research instead. "You really don't have that much energy. I feel I am already overloaded with teaching, research and family obligations" (Xun).

Even though several participants mention that working as a faculty member does not have a high economic rate of return, all participants appreciate the flexible work schedules and locations and long vacation. More importantly, they consider teaching as a respectable and stable profession. The participants in this study overall consider themselves to be in "middle-income stratum" in the city and most of them are content with their earnings, considering that the living expenses in City B is also comparatively lower. Meanwhile, they admit that the location of University A has affected adversely the university's effort to recruit new talent.

In terms of the teaching and research materials, almost all participants in the interviews have mentioned the benefits of information technology for their teaching and research. In addition to the wide range of teaching and research resources accessible from the internet, most participants mentioned some popular learning platforms such as MOOC (Massive Open Online Courses), which provide good learning opportunities for both students and professors. Moreover, the participants all talked about the various studying or training opportunities provided by the governments or the university. Belle, for example, stated,

The university could have done better in helping the faculty members with their career development. But it (the university) has been doing quite well during the past few years. Like what I said, (it provides opportunities for faculty members to) go abroad for short-term training or exchange. It also provides some financial support to encourage us to take some online courses. Once we finish the course and get the certificate (of completion) the university will reimburse us. (Belle, Lecturer in Social Sciences and Humanities)

Undoubtedly, to develop an “international dimension” has becoming increasingly important for universities all over the world. Hu talked about how the university encourages international exchange and cooperation:

The university encourages the faculty members to actively engage in international exchanges in various forms, including encouraging them to attend international conferences, to visit foreign universities on short or long terms, to submitting their works to publish in international academic journals, or to develop research partnerships with foreign universities. (Hu, Associate Professor in Social Sciences and Humanities)

Xun also stated,

The department encourages faculty members to go abroad for a PhD degree, and your job position can be retained during your leave. You may also be able to get the financial support from the China Scholarship Council. The department will keep your position...you know, usually people will need to spend at least 4 or 5 years abroad to obtain a PhD degree. (Xun, Lecturer in Social Sciences and Humanities)

Obviously, both the central government and the university have been striving really hard to “internationalize” the university. It has been encouraged in many institutional policy documents to obtain foreign learning and visiting experience and to publish in foreign academic journals. The message that internationalization is one major element to become a WCU has been widely accepted among the faculty members. Here we see how policy, as a way of allocating values (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010), has taken effect in shaping the participants’ imaginaries. When being asked how she would comment on statement that “Globalization is westernization”, Eileen responded,

I think because of globalization, we need to speak to the world. You won’t be heard if you speak in Chinese, so we have to use a global language, which, apparently, is now English. You have to speak in English regardless of your linguistic background. This is an irresistible trend, and you cannot change it. In addition, in terms of research methodology, some scholars think there is no domestically-originated methodology in China in the social sciences research arena. It is true that we basically draw upon the foreign research theories in our own research. So, if someone insists that “Globalization is Westernization”, it seems correct, too. However, if you want your voice to be heard by this world, you have to adapt to the world first. It is not because that I really want to be westernized, but because this will allow myself to be heard. If you insistently reject to be

westernized, and insist in publishing in Chinese for the domestic readers to read only, I feel it will be difficult for your ideas to be known. Your wine cannot sell no matter how fine it is. (Eileen, Associate Professor in Social Sciences and Humanities)

Eileen's statement reveals the paradoxical situation that academics in many non-English speaking countries are facing: they have to publish in English to be known by the world, which only further strengthens the hegemony of English as a global language, and diminishes the role of their indigenous languages, and even cultures and identities. Eileen views English as a mere means of communication while ignores the danger of "neo-colonialism and racism through linguisticism by empowering the already powerful and leaving the disadvantaged and powerless peoples further behind" (Guo and Beckett, 2008, p. 57-58). This "linguistic imperialism" as named by Phillipson (1988) (also cited in Guo and Beckett, 2008, p. 58) may further enlarge the gap between the privileged and unprivileged groups. Under the forces of neoliberal globalization and the pursuit of WCUs, however, to publish academic papers in English as a "standard" practice has been well justified. To cope with this standard is perceived to be the individuals' pursuit of self-interest. Just as what Eileen stated,

All the faculty members that I know who are working in the natural sciences, engineering , agricultural or medical departments, are reading English journals, and striving hard to publish in English, as long as they are motivated, want to do research and are not satisfied with being just a teaching fellow. (Eileen, Associate Professor in Social Sciences and Humanities)

Apparently, English as a global academic language has not been questioned here, but rather, English is associated with advanced knowledge and an "international" recognition. The capability to read and write English articles is related not only to the personal ability but also to

the “motivation” or ambition of being a faculty member. This rationality is undoubtedly related to Chinese experiences of semi-feudal and semi-colonial history, if not more closely linked with the market economy reform that produces individuals as self-responsibilizing citizens. It is worth noting that the socialist discourse that emphasizes collectivism and relates personal achievement to the national development is also taking effect in justifying this rationality. It is through the education policies, mass media and other sources that the “conduct of individuals and organization” are linked to the “political objectives” through “action at a distance” (Miller and Rose, 1990, p. 1).

Miller and Rose (1990) borrowed the term “action at a distance” from Bruno Latour (Latour, 1987) to analyze the “indirect” mechanisms for “aligning economic, social and personal conduct with socio-political objectives” (p. 2). They wrote,

We argue that such action at a distance mechanisms have come to rely in crucial respects upon 'expertise': the social authority ascribed to particular agents and forms of judgement on the basis of their claims to possess specialized truths and rare powers. And we contend that the self-regulating capacities of subjects, shaped and normalized in large part through the powers of expertise, have become key resources for modern forms of government and have established some crucial conditions for governing in a liberal democratic way. (p. 2)

In the case of China’s policies on building WCUs, the “expertise” here can be the voices of the government policies, the opinions of “foreign education experts”, the “internationally recognized” university ranking criteria and many other agents that have the power to normalize certain values and render people into self-regulating subjects. The power of the expertise, meanwhile, always operates within a specific political and cultural context, since there is always a cultural or political discourse behind people’s respect of each form of the expertise.

Even with the university's favorable policies to support the faculty members without a PhD degree to study abroad, or to visit abroad, many faculty members still have some practical concerns. Xun stated,

It is usually difficult for people to make the decision to go abroad for a PhD degree. After all, you have to leave the family and work behind. Many faculty members of my age have very young children. I know someone went to Hong Kong and New Zealand recently. Most of us keep a close eye on these opportunities, but only very few can make this hard-hearted decision...not to mention that it is also difficult to obtain the degree. A lot of people go abroad to visit, though. Among twenty some people in our office, four or five are visiting abroad, now. (Xun, Lecturer in Social Sciences and Humanities)

Despite the difficulties, participants all agree on the benefits of going abroad. Helen stated,

Going abroad definitely does more good than harm. It will be good for my career development. At least, within my discipline, going abroad will allow me to see and experience how my research area is being studied. It is also a good opportunity for me to practice my English communication and writing, which is good for my research work upon my return. So, I think, even though the university is now forcing us – maybe “force” is not the right word, but it kind of contains this message – to go abroad, this policy allows you to overcome all those disturbing considerations to study. This is good for our personal development. (Helen, Associate Professor in Natural Sciences and Engineering)

Apparently, the policies that emphasize the building of WCUs have enhanced University A's material conditions in many ways. In addition to the increased numbers of domestic and international exchange and visit programs, the participants have also mentioned the increased opportunities to apply for research grants:



For most young faculty members, usually in the first few years the university will provide funding for them to start a “Young Scholars Project”, so that to get them prepared for their future applications for the higher-level projects. In our university, as long as you work hard enough, you should be able to get the project grants provided by the university or the National Social Science Foundation of China. Unless you are from a really weak discipline, such as Fine Arts or Physical Education, you should have no problem (of obtaining the grants). (Peter, Associate Professor and Administrator in Social Sciences and Humanities)

Even with the increased opportunities, the pressure of working as a faculty member stays high, since the opportunities, are not simply given to everyone, but are distributed based on fierce competition. Just as Ling commented,

(These policies bring about) Opportunities. It is now quite convenient for you to apply to visit whichever university that you want, or to communicate with whichever expert in your field, both domestic and international. The university offers opportunities to visit or study abroad, and you can always apply. If you have more passion in teaching (than conducting research), there are various teaching rewards and teaching contests. You can work towards that direction if you like. There are challenges everywhere, though. But without challenges, there will be no driving forces. Apparently, you are expected to get your academic ranks promoted continuously. There are so many people, and the quotas are limited. You need to accomplish your teaching tasks, and also meet certain requirement of research performance evaluation. You need to exceed others so as to get the opportunities. In fact, in a research-intensive university like ours, the pressures on the

faculty members are tremendous. (Ling, Associate Professor in Natural Sciences and Engineering)

As an administrator, Peter explained how the competition had been handled in his department:

Sometimes there were three or four faculty members who all met the requirements outlined in the university policy, but only one person could be nominated. In this case, they had to compete. Our evaluation rationality is: the more you exceed the requirements, the better you prove yourself to be. This is the only selection criteria that we administrators can follow. This logic can be well accepted by people in our department, and this is the only way that the policy can be implemented. If you want to get the opportunity, you have to exceed others. This is the fairest method. (Peter)

Though all participants have mentioned the high pressure associated with competition, they also believe there is no better alternative than competition, which they consider are comparatively “fair and transparent” (Ying). As one participant said, “You are not the only one who has to follow the policies and requirements made by the university. Everyone else has to do the same (Fei).” In this sense, the policies are nuanced in a way that values not only excellence but also equity, which means the equal opportunity for everyone regardless of their backgrounds. When analyzing the word “equity”, Rizvi and Lingard (2010) wrote,

Equity can be viewed, for example, in a weak sense, as simply implying formal access to provisions without any examination of the social and economic conditions that permit such access. Stronger notions of equality, those associated with the policies of affirmative action, in contrast, emphasize the need to pay attention to the historical conditions that define people’s capacity to benefit from state provisions – not simply to issues of access, but also to outcomes (p. 76).

The pursuit of WCUs in China, just like everywhere else around the world, is basically an effort to foster academic elites, which requires “huge financial commitments, a concentration of exceptional human capital, and governance policies that allow for top-notch teaching and research” (Salmi, 2009, p. 13). To obtain each of these three basic elements will require some trade-offs between the value of “equity” and “efficiency”. The central question here is what Rizvi and Lingard (2010) have proposed, “What kind of interference is acceptable as a price of distributive justice (p. 76)?” Just as what the participants state, the material differences between University A and the super-class domestic universities are huge, but meanwhile they enjoy much better teaching and research conditions than those who work in the non-key higher education institutions. Even so, no participants question or challenge the uneven distribution of resources among universities, because such distribution rationality – distribution based on excellence and efficiency – has been justified and normalized through various discourses. Here, we see the discursive facet of policy work and process as described by Ball et al. (2012). It is through not only the direct stipulation of policies, but also the subtle expression of values in the policy documents/artefacts and the socio-cultural media that the faculty members are constituted and constituting themselves. In addition to the globally dominant neoliberal ideology as was discussed previously, we cannot ignore the deep-rooted national culture and history at play in the participants’ subjectivity formation process. From the Imperial Examination system in the ancient time to the National College Entrance Exam in contemporary China, the competition for excellence or the selection of elites is always an important part of the Chinese culture. There has always been an appreciation for hard work and perseverance and a respect of people who were born poor but turn out successful through their own efforts. Related with learning, this sort of mentality can be seen from numerous poems and proverbs such as:

*di shou zhong song bai, ren qiong zi du shu* (In barren land pine and cypress trees grow;  
from poor families people study diligently).

The respect of “fair play” regardless of people’s backgrounds has always been well-accepted, even though people are aware of their different starting points. In the higher education system, the fierce competition among students starts right from the National College Entrance Exam, and continues all through their undergraduate and graduate years. The ranking of the universities where people obtain their degrees and the competitiveness of their own academic performance usually determine the competitiveness of the university where they can find a job as faculty members. Most if not all “985” Universities only recruit faculty members who’s first (Bachelor’s) degree is obtained from “985” or at least “211” universities, even though since 2013 the Ministry of Education has officially prohibited the employers’ degree- related discrimination against university graduates (The General Office of the Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China, 2013). To some extent, the National College Entrance Exam works as a national discourse, which influences significantly not only the learning models of elementary and high school education, but also the distribution of teaching and learning resources in the higher education institutions. While people generally accept the exam system as a fair method, there are still controversies regarding the fairness of the exam system itself (Zhang, Zhao and Lei, 2012).

To sum up, as a “985” and “211” university, University A has improved its material conditions over the past twenty years, despite its unfavorable geographic location. This material enhancement reflects the governmental and institutional efforts on building of WCUs in China. The resources are distributed based on the policies that embody the values of excellence, efficiency and international competitiveness. However, just as Rizvi and Lingard (2010) assert, the distribution of these values are “politically mediated by particular national traditions” and

also “discursively formed within particular social imaginaries (p. 185). Since China has actively participated in the global competition, it has inevitably become part of the competition network. The emphasis on raising the standard and creating benchmarks reflect the powerful discourse of neoliberal forces of globalization, and produced the faculty members as “self-responsibilizing, self-capitalizing individuals” (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010, p. 184). The discussion of the education policies emphasizing an “international dimension” of the university and encouraging to publish in English academic journals also creates a space for us to reflect on the historical legacy of globalization. As Rizvi et al (2006) suggest, an examination of globalization in its historical terms through the lens of postcolonialism, “makes visible the history and legacy of European colonialism”, allowing us to understand how “it continues to shape most of our contemporary discourses and institutions—politically, culturally and economically” (p. 250).

The university budget is key to the building of world-class universities. Despite of the overall enhanced teaching and research conditions, the participants have pointed out some material obstacles that hinder their academic work, such as the undesirable technical support, the inconvenient access to international research resources, and the large class size. Large population and limited resources have indeed posed challenges to education resources distribution and have created extra pedagogical difficulties for the faculty members to handle the large class size. In addition, the large population further intensifies the already fierce market-driven competition. It is within this material and ideological context that the participants are constituted and constituting themselves.

### **Summary**

This chapter examined the policy enactment and the formation of the participants’ subjectivities through analyzing the situated and material contexts of University A. It

demonstrated how policies could act as both the texts and discourses to distribute resources, create social imaginaries and constitute people's subjectivities. Even as a beneficiary of the national policy agenda that emphasizes the building of WCUs in China, University A has also experienced difficulties in attracting and maintaining highly qualified students and top-notch professors, due to its unfavorable location. This "brain drain" phenomenon is closely related to the national economic development agenda, the market-oriented distribution mode, the value system that urge people to "move upward", and the globalization that has blurred the regional and national boundary, created the social imaginaries, and shaped a culture of performativity.

## **Chapter Seven: Data Analysis Part Three – Policy Enactment Through the Perspectives of Faculty Members**

### **Introduction**

In Chapter Five and Six, I touched upon the faculty members' perspectives on several aspects of the policies emphasizing the building of WCUs in China. This chapter focuses on the "interpretation" and "translation" of the national policy at the institutional level (Ball, Maguire & Braun, 2012, p. 43). The purpose of this section is not to capture a holistic picture of the policy enactment, which I understand is a mission impossible given the limitations of merely employing interview methods data and policy documents as data sources. Rather, the purpose is to examine from the faculty members' standpoint, how the meanings of policies have been negotiated at the institutional or department level, "sold" to faculty members, and translated into the institutional policy practices as instances of policy enactment. Through drawing upon the interview data to make sense of this complicated process of policy enactment, I thereby bring into discussion how policy discourses are inscribed into practices through "tiny, everyday, physical mechanisms" (Foucault, 1979, p. 222; also cited in Ball, Maguire and Braun, 2012, p. 48), which "constitute the individual as effect and object of power, as effect and object of knowledge" (Foucault, 1979, p. 192; also cited in Ball et al., 2012, p. 48).

### **Policy interpretation**

Policy interpretation, as Ball et al. (2012) define it, is a "meaning-making" process, which means, to relate "institutional priorities and possibilities" to "political necessities" (p. 44). In this study, policy interpretation is understood as the institutional strategy that articulates and explains the policies in a way that balances the national policy agenda and the specific context and needs of the university. The interpretation involves the negotiation among different

stakeholders and a strategic articulation of the policy document. The following questions guided my examination of the policy interpretation from the perspectives of the interview participants:

Through what channels do they get to know these policies? At what levels are the policies interpreted? What are the roles of the participants in policy interpretation?

The participants' responses varied concerning their knowledge about the policies emphasizing the building of WCUs in China. For the majority of the participants, their immediate response to this question was that they were not familiar with or concerned about the policies:

I am not too concerned about the national policies, so I don't know much of them. I am not even familiar with the university's policies. For me, my responsibilities as a faculty member are really simple – teaching and research. I don't pay much attention to those things. (Eileen, Associate Professor, Social Sciences and Humanities)

We may not know much about these policies regarding the building of WCUs in China. But in general, no matter what goals the university intends to achieve, it definitely wants to become stronger. No matter what goals the university wants to achieve, for us, it always means taking on more research projects, publishing more high quality papers and of course, in the first place, ensuring the quantity and quality of our teaching at both undergraduate and graduate levels. (Ban, Associate Professor, Natural Sciences and Engineering)

We don't pay special attention to these things, or to be exact, we don't have a lot of channels to understand these policies. For example, when you read these policies from the university website or through other channels, you cannot feel there is a clear thing that you can follow. Basically, they (the policies) just require you to do very specific



things, or to meet certain requirements. And, because the teaching materials remain unchanged for these years, and everyone mostly still relies on the same teaching materials, there hasn't been much change. Actually at least in our department, we really haven't seen much change. For me, I am having some new experiences in teaching in the experimental class, but other than that, nothing new. (Belle, Lecturer, Social Sciences and Humanities)

Participants' unfamiliarity with or disinterest in the policies reflects their inability or unwillingness to get involved in the policy process. For these participants, policy making is merely the responsibility of the "university leaders or the academic authorities" (Eileen). They consider their role as faculty members to be prescribed regardless of any policy reform. Meanwhile, as Belle mentioned, there were limited channels for faculty members to understand the policies, and the policies only functioned as dictating instruments, rather than approaches that initiated "real" change to the universities. For Belle, if these policies are aimed at building WCUs, she expected some substantial reforms or changes resulting from the policies, but she did not think that this was the case. In this sense, policy is something rather abstract and remote from her academic life. Just as Ball (1994) indicates, "The teacher is increasingly an absent presence in the discourses of education policy" (p. 50). What is particularly worth noting is that the participants' responses suggest that they have taken this absent presence for granted, and have considered their unfamiliarity with or disinterest in the policies as natural and normal. Their understandings of the roles of faculty members and their subjectivities have been established through certain experience, "schemes", or "procedures" (Foucault, 1997a, p. 87). It is through the "techniques of the self" that the procedures have been "suggested or prescribed to individuals in order to determine their identity, maintain it, or transform it in terms of a certain number of

ends” (Foucault, 1997a, p. 87). It is under the influences of the discourses available to them, especially the historical and cultural realities, such as the legacy of the Chinese traditional social hierarchy system, and the already long-established and socially-accepted local practices of policy making, that they came to understand their roles in the policy process as a faculty member, and came to naturally accept things the way they are. A number of other participants, on the other hand, indicated that they were quite concerned about the policies regarding the building of WCUs in China:

I am quite concerned with these policies, especially those related to income and benefits. I may also try to learn something about the university’s development strategies, but I always feel that only the University President or Department Head need to worry about those things. As a young faculty member, I may keep an eye on those policies, but to be honest, I am more concerned with those that are closely related to my benefits....My colleagues all pay close attention to the policies, but usually we don’t talk about them with others. Those policies are quite accessible from the university website. You can always see them, such as the policies about applying to visit abroad. Whoever is eligible will just go ahead to apply but may not tell other people that they have applied. We don’t exchange much of this kind of information. We all keep a low profile. (Helen, Associate Professor in Natural Sciences and Engineering)

The university website is a major channel for faculty members to gain access to the policies. In addition, participants suggest that department meetings also worked as an important way for the policies to be disseminated. According to the participants, the interpretations of the policies were usually made at the university level, with the involvement of the department head or academic authorities. Before an important new policy came out, the University usually consulted with the

faculties and staff through surveys, but faculty members in general were not involved officially in the policy interpretation process. The participants stated,

I have never been involved (in the policy making). But I think the university may conduct a survey before a new policy is launched. For example, now they decide to decrease the class size. The university may conduct comprehensive research first, and have a clear idea of the faculty members' current hours of teaching and class sizes. They may also ask for opinions of the students and the faculty members. And, they may also need to consider their own interest as administrators. (Xun, Lecturer in Social Sciences and Humanities)

The average faculty members are not involved. The department head might be. (Ling, Lecturer in Natural Sciences and Engineering)

The policies are basically decided at the university level by the Academic Council, and then are released to each department. Because our university is so large with so many departments, it is impossible for the university to consult the departments one after another. The decision has to be made at the university level. Since all the administrators used to be faculty members, too, and they should be aware of the situations of the departments. Also, most policies are not brand new. Mostly they are the modifications of the old ones. (Fei, Professor in Natural Sciences and Engineering)

We are not involved much. Maybe things are different in cities such as Beijing or Shanghai? Maybe the universities in our area are comparatively backward? Our conceptions are more traditional. Maybe things will get improved in the future, and more faculty members could be allowed to participate in the policy making? I have been

working at this university for 12 years but have never been involved. Some senior professors may have. (Heng, Associate Professor in Natural Sciences and Engineering)

There are two things to be noted here. First, Heng's responses demonstrate an internalized and normalized labelling of the universities in terms of their geographical location, ranking and status. He conceives that universities in Beijing or Shanghai would have a more "improved" policy making process which allows more involvement of the average faculty members, since Beijing or Shanghai are recognized internationally as urban hubs of financial networks, tourism and are considered to be much more "developed" than City B (where University A is located) in many aspects including the qualities, concepts and governance of higher education. In this sense, the geographical location has become another form of benchmarking to rank the universities. The broader forces of globalization and neoliberalism, as discussed in previous chapters, further enlarged the gap between the "international cities" and the less developed areas, and have created certain social imaginaries that allow things to be labelled and defined.

Second, for the average participants, the policy interpretation remains a vague process which they are neither familiar with nor interested in, though occasionally they may have certain assumptions and expectations of this process. It seems contradictory that on the one hand, they express their disinterest in the policy interpretation process, and consider that it is natural for them not to be involved much since they trust the leaders are able to make sensible policy decisions, while on the other hand, they expect "things" to "get improved in the future" and expect more involvement in policy interpretation. One participant explained the origin of this contradiction, and faculty members' disinterest in involvement even though they may actually want their voices heard.

In fact, the average faculty member has the opportunity to participate in policy making. However, most faculty members think that policies are not so related to them. What related to them are their own interests, individual development and benefits. Besides, policy making usually takes a very long time, but is not done within a couple of days, so the change always occurs gradually. Even if the policies are perfectly made, the implementation is another thing. So, there are many things to think about, and even if you have the chance to express your opinion, your voice is very weak, basically unheard. So gradually, less and less faculty members are interested in the policies. But still some influential faculty members have to be involved because the administrators need sufficient people to participate. Among these influential faculty members, some may share similar views with the administrators, and they usually get more involved in policy making....University and the department will disseminate surveys and questionnaires to faculty members, and you can also contact the university administrators directly to raise your concerns or suggestions. However, the effectiveness or functionality of these questionnaires and the availability of the channels [for communication] are pretty low. It is normal that most faculty members are not willing to invest time or energy in this. (Dai, Lecturer in Natural Sciences and Engineering)

Faculty members' disinterest in policy making demonstrates the "lack of space for 'other' discourse" in the policy making process (Ball et al., 2012, p. 68). With limited channels to gain access to policy making and slim chance to influence the policy interpretations, it is understandable that faculty members would lose interest in the participation of policy making, but rather are concerned more with their individual interests and development. Some of them also keep an eye on the policies, but are mostly "concerned with those that are closely related to

my benefits” (Helen, Associate Professor in Natural Sciences and Engineering), because they believe it to be a much more sensible choice to focus on coping with the policies in a way to benefit their career development. It is through the multiple available discourses that this belief has been instilled into the minds and practices of faculty members.

The administrators, on the other hand, are much more informed of the institutional policy interpretations. Shan claimed,

The policies are mainly decided at the university level. There are a number of offices specifically in charge of this kind of policy construction. The Development Planning Office is the major office, and its work is coordinated by some other related offices such as the Office of Humanities and Social Sciences, The Office of Sciences, and the Department of Human Resources. (Shan, Associate Professor in Social Sciences and Humanities)

Hu, another participant, works in one of the “coordinating offices”, and therefore had some experience of working with the Development Planning Office, and he explained in detail what he knew about the interpretation process of the policies of building WCUs in China:

The Development Planning Office (DPO) took the lead, and we (people from the other offices) coordinated. For example, DPO wanted to know how well our university performed based on the “international benchmarks” in the university ranking systems, and wanted to obtain the corresponding data. We provided the DPO with the data, and maybe along with a rough data analysis, which, though was quite limited, so that the DPO could provide the university leaders with some suggestions on things such as the university’s future development agenda or its cooperation programs with the province. (Hu, Associate Professor in Social Sciences and Humanities)

Hu further explained the functions of the DPO:

Based on the requirements of the national government and the specific conditions of the university, the Development Planning Office (DPO) offers the University leaders some advice regarding the future development direction of the university. DPO doesn't make any policy decisions itself, but it plays a very important role in the development of the university. It is capable of providing the university leaders with a holistic, clear picture of the current conditions of the university. Meanwhile, the DPO has a very clear understanding of the impact of the national policies on higher education, especially on our university. Eventually, the DPO will base the specific conditions of the university to better accommodate the requirements of the national government. Meanwhile, every five years, our university will make a Strategic Plan to plan and guide the development of the university. We even have to make the medium to long-term planning to plan what goals the university needs to achieve in the long run. To achieve this goal, the university has to take into consideration of its own phase of development, complying with the direction and trend of the government policy, and even following some global trends of development. Besides, we need to have a very clear understanding of our teaching and research capacities before we can make such a planning, which is a very difficult thing to do. (Hu, Associate Professor in Social Sciences and Humanities)

As suggested by Hu, even though the DPO is not a policy-making body, it plays an essential role in the interpretation and localization of the national policies. It is worth noting that besides the national requirements that the university needs to comply with, the “global trends of development” also need to be taken into consideration. The global “emphasis on outcomes and performance” as Rizvi and Lingard (2010) suggest, has generated a “performance-oriented

culture” that legitimates global comparison as an unmistakable trend that the universities all over the world are expected to follow (p. 122). At University A, it involves a separate department, DPO, to be dedicated to doing the job of collecting data related to the “international benchmarks”. Hu continued,

The DPO is a separate department, which is huge. The staff is specifically hired to do this job, but not temporarily extracted from the individual departments, though DPO may contact the departments if they need relevant data. For example, they may disseminate forms and require the departments to provide them with the data regarding each department’s research achievement, faculty composition, the setup of the programs, or the capacity of the programs. DPO is very professional in handling things similar to the world university ranking. It is familiar with all other benchmarks. It evaluates the university through collecting the relevant data directly from the departments, and then determines to what degree our university can meet those benchmarks required in the ranking systems. (Hu, Associate Professor in Social Sciences and Humanities)

Apparently, University A has attached great importance to the positioning of itself in the global university ranking system, and this orientation is clearly a decision based on careful consideration of the national and international contexts. Nowadays, policy language such as “to develop an international dimension” can be found everywhere from educational documents to mass media, and it has become an unmistakable trend. According to Hu, University A’s emphasis on the international dimension has gradually strengthened over the years:

The wording in our institutional policy documents used to be “participating in the internationalization process”. Now our wording is “enhancing the international competitiveness of our university and of our faculty members and students”. This change



in our policy wording indicates a much more active attitude towards internationalization. More importantly, we take it as an opportunity to develop ourselves. Of course, as a university, as faculty members, or as students, we also do it to comply with the national development strategy. I think this is something really good and something we really need to do. (Hu, Associate Professor in Social Sciences and Humanities)

The above excerpt best illustrates the shift in the functions of policy “from government to governmentality” and “from discipline to subjectivity” (Ball, 2013, p. 120). As Rizvi and Lingard (2010) explain, “Government is usually taken to refer to the political party, parties or political coalitions that control state structures (the public service) and state practices (e.g. introducing legislation, law making, policymaking, creating regulations and appointments to the judiciary) (p. 118). The dictating power of policy used to be the dominant force that regulates the policy subjects to follow what is required by the policy. Just as Hu mentions, University A used to take the national education policies regarding “reaching the international standard” or “creating an international dimension” as something it has to do as required by the government, but not something it voluntarily desires. “To comply with the government’s policies” was the mentality of both University A and the faculty members. Governmentality or Governance, on the other hand, “signifies changes in the form of government linked to the effects of globalization” (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010, p. 118). Foucault (1978) described this new form of governing as, not of imposing law on men, but of disposing things: that is to say, of employing tactics rather than laws, and even of using laws themselves as tactics – to arrange things in such a way that, through a certain number of means, such and such ends may be achieved.(p. 95)...This art of government tried, so to speak, to reconcile itself with the theory of

sovereignty by attempting to derive the ruling principles of an art of government from a renewed version of the theory of sovereignty... (p. 98)

Foucault's notion of government allows for a more complex analysis of how neoliberal forms of government have subtly modified the culture of higher education and the subjectivities of faculty members over the past few decades. The neoliberal forms of governance, taking the form the "international comparative measures of performance" have "become a global aspect of the new governance" with intensified globalization (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010, p. 123). The establishment of the validity of the "audit culture" (Power, 1997; also cited in Rizvi and Lingard, 2010, p. 124) is achieved through multiple international and national strategies, which include creating international education indicators or, setting up world-class benchmarking. This performance-oriented culture which emphasizes "maximize[ing] the educational performance" of the university students and faculty members, tends to "elide" and "weaken" other education purposes (p. 138). Gradually, there will be a "goal displacement" – students, faculty members, and the university "spending more time on self-representation than actually working at achieving their "real" goals" (p. 138). Several participants in this study express this concern. Just as Shi (Associate Professor in Social Sciences and Humanities) indicated, "Our energy has been mostly spent on meeting the criteria required by the academic title evaluation".

This shift in government well explains the shift in faculty members' attitude towards the idea of "acquiring international learning or visiting experience" – from passively accepting with reluctance to actively seeking more international exchange opportunities. During this process, self-regulating and self-responsible subjects are created. For example, when commenting on the responses of her colleagues to the faculty performance evaluation system, one participant stated,

Personally, nobody likes it (the evaluation). Nobody likes to be pushed all the time. But I think everyone knows this is the right way to go. That “Nobody likes it” doesn’t mean it is not good for us. (Eileen, Associate Professor in Social Sciences and Humanities)

It is evident that this global trend of shift in governing has profoundly influenced University A’s interpretations of the education policies that emphasize the building of WCUs in China. As Hu suggests, the policy interpretation involves DPO, a whole institutional unit, and the assistance of other departments, to specifically work on collecting and analyzing enormous data in order to provide university leaders with informed suggestions for the interpretation of the national policies. Meanwhile, Hu talked about the significant role that the university leaders play in policy interpretation:

Another important factor that works on the articulation of the national policies at the institutional level is the individual wills and preferences of the university leaders. The university leaders, especially the principal leaders, usually have their own considerations regarding the future of the university. The opinions of one individual or of a few people may become the future development direction of the university, or even turn into ten or twenty pages of “strategic planning”. This is a critical part of the policy making, which the DPO has to face. To put it simple, the President or Party Secretary of the university plays a critical role in the university planning. (Hu, Associate Professor in Social Sciences and Humanities)

The critical role of the university leaders is also mentioned in other interviews. For example, Ying (Professor in Natural Sciences and Engineering) claimed: “There is a frequent change of leaders, which has disrupted the policy continuity”. This policy discontinuity is frustrating for faculty members:

Most Chinese universities don't have an established management system, which is stable and complete. In such a system, the faculty members may sometimes feel at a loss as to what to do. For example, the criteria of the academic title evaluation at our university are changing almost every year. Even though it may be because that the standard is continuously increasing, still, you have a strong sense of insecurity. In terms of teaching, our teaching plan changes every two or three years. To build a world-class university, no matter if it is for the new-emerging subjects or the traditional subjects, the teaching system should not change this frequently. In each discipline, it should be decided at the beginning what are the core courses – those that should always serve as a basic component of the program, and what are the selective courses that may be added or removed over time. However, in our department these things always change, and you don't feel it is a stable system. (Shi, Associate Professor in Social Sciences and Humanities)

This discontinuity in policy, as Shi suggested, may not only result from the change of university or department leaders, but also reflect that Chinese universities have not established their own development models. In either case, the discontinuity in policy may put faculty members, such as Shi, in a vulnerable position: they feel “muted” or marginalized in the policy making process (Ball et al., 2012, p. 61). Consequent to their underrepresentation in policy making, the participants experienced frustration and anxiety.

It can be seen from the discussion that the policy interpretation at the university level involves the balance and contestation among multiple global, national, local and individual policy priorities. Just as Ball et al. (2012) have described, “There are all moments of recontextualisation, different points of articulation and authorisation that make something into a

priority, assign it a value, higher or low” (pp. 44-45). After the national policies are rearticulated in the form of institutional policies and are disseminated to the departments, the meanings of the policies will be negotiated for a second round at the department level. Hu stated,

Based on the requirement of the university, each department has to develop its own plan that states what goals it can achieve within five or ten years. Actually this is a must-do job for every enterprise or public organization. (Hu, Associate Professor in Social Sciences and Humanities)

The interpretations of policies at the department level, however, are further constrained by the priorities and emphasis of the university policies, or in other words, the explicit or subtle values embedded within the policies. As Ball et al, (2012) suggest, the interpretation of policy is one key part of “the policy process and of the articulation of policy with practice”, which is “fused by relations of power” (p. 43).

### **Policy translation**

While the process of policy interpretation process may appear more abstract and inaccessible for most participants, the policy translation process seems to be more concrete and transparent. Policy translation, as Ball et al. (2012) suggest, is “an iterative process of making institutional texts and putting those texts into action”, and is to make policy into “materials, practices, concepts , procedures an orientation” (p. 45). Translation can happen in both “staged events and processes” and “mundane exchanges”, taking various forms (p. 45). In this section, I will draw on the interview data to demonstrate how policies that emphasize the building of WCUs in China are rearticulated at the university or department level in the forms of faculty performance appraisal, international exchange programs, institutional education reforms and many other policy documents or practices with the aim of “raising standard benchmarks” or

“increasing international competitiveness”. Along with the analysis of these forms of translation, I will bring into discussion how a number of prevailing discourses (e.g.: neoliberalism, patriotism, Confucianism) enter into the university system and discursively and subtly modify the subjectivities of the faculty members.

a) Faculty Performance Appraisal (FPA)

The FPA constitutes one of the more important components in University A’s translation or articulation of the national agenda regarding its quest for WCUs. Previous studies have recognized several major positive impacts of the FPA system, including “integrating objective management into process management”, “integrating competition and incentive mechanism into faculty body construction”, and “promoting the teaching and research level”(Jiang and Wang, 2011, p. 617-618). Meanwhile, the FPA system has been criticized for many negative impacts such as its being “too frequent and overwhelming to disturb normal teaching and research” (Wang, 2014, p. 257), or its tendency to “demonstrate their (the institutions’) organizational quality to the external world [rather] than reflecting on the internal teaching and learning quality” (Zou et al., 2012. p. 169). In the interviews, the participants’ share their knowledge and perspectives regarding some recent changes in University A’s policies about FPA as a response to or a localization of the national education policies.

The continuously increased standard bar is one most frequently emerged theme. A number of participants touched on this issue:

The university has been continuously raising the standard bar for us, in terms of both the quantity and quality of our publications. The university also awards us with bonuses based on the quality levels of our publications, and the bonuses are increasing. Under such circumstance, we have to keep improving ourselves. Besides, the university is also

setting a higher application threshold for other things, such as the qualification to get a professional title, to supervise master students, or to become a *bodao*<sup>11</sup> (supervisor of doctoral students). (Ying, Professor in Natural Sciences and Engineering)

Since last year, the university has started the annual appraisal policy, which aimed at examining the faculty members' qualification to supervise master students. If you fail to meet the requirements, you are no longer qualified to supervise master students. (Shi, Associate Professor in Social Sciences and Humanities)

At our department, as a graduate supervisor, if you haven't published sufficient papers in the last few years, you are no longer allowed to recruit new students. If you have plenty of publications and projects, you get more bonuses. (Dai, Lecturer in Natural Sciences and Engineering)

It can be seen from the participants' responses that the major change in faculty appraisal policies is an increasing emphasis on producing publications and applying for project grants. Meanwhile, the research performance is closely related to both their academic career and economic benefits. In this way, the university policies have been working as a strong disciplinary power to encourage faculty members' research performance. Through coping with the faculty appraisal policies, faculty members have been gradually forming an understanding of "what counts as a good university professor" and "what should be the priority of their academic work". In Foucault's words, it is through the "self-mastery or self-knowledge" that they are constituted and constituting themselves as particular academic subjects (Foucault, 1997a, p. 89).

Teaching, on the other hand, has been much less emphasized:

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<sup>11</sup> At most Chinese universities, not all faculty members are allowed to supervise graduate students, especially doctorate students. *Bodao*, or "supervisor of doctorate students", is an academic title that one has to apply for.

The teaching evaluation is based on your workload, the students' evaluation of your class and superintendents' observation of your class. Though teaching is also evaluated, the policy baton is not pointing to this direction. At our department, there actually hasn't been enough emphasis on teaching. (Dai, Lecturer in Natural Sciences and Engineering)

Research takes the majority of my time and energy. For the universities selected by Project 211 and Project 985, research basically takes more time, and the average university may attach more importance to teaching. Even though the policies usually require these "211" and "985" universities to lay emphasis on both teaching and research, in the real implementation process, it is still research that is emphasized more. For example, in the faculty performance evaluation, the university basically looks at how many publications you have, how many projects you have applied to, and how much research grants you are provided. The evaluation of teaching, on the other hand, just looks at if your teaching hours meet the minimum required amount. (Fei, Professor in Natural Sciences and Engineering)

One participant explained why teaching is not a priority for most faculty members:

To my understanding, the university is the place to cultivate talents, so undergraduate education should be the focus. However, now the faculty members are under intense pressure to meet research targets. With limited energy, one definitely would invest more time in research and less time in teaching. We can put it this way –faculty members are now less careful in preparing for classes. The reason why some faculty members like to adopt the instilling or dictating teaching approach is because they don't have time to continuously organize their teaching materials. If their areas of research are not closely related to this course, they may not find time to familiarize themselves with the most



recent research findings related to this course and incorporate the newest knowledge into their own teaching, which will definitely negatively affect their teaching, and fail to enlarge students' visions. (Ying, Professor in Natural Sciences and Engineering)

According to the participant, both teaching and research are time-demanding, but research is often given priority to because the “policy baton” has been pointing in that direction. Even for some teaching-intensive departments, research is still a must-to-meet target for faculty members, which has created even higher pressure for those without a doctoral degree (Belle, Lecturer in Social Sciences and Humanities).

To solve this problem, University A is also working on alternative policies to accommodate these faculty members with less research background. One participant stated,

The faculty performance evaluation policies are changing – a newer policy is about to be released very soon. I overheard that under the new policy, faculty members can choose to be in either the teaching or research stream. Those who choose to be in the teaching stream need to teach the minimum required courses; those who choose to be in the research stream need to produce a certain amount of publications annually. Most faculty members, I assume, will choose to be in the teaching-research dual stream. (Xun, Lecturer in Social Sciences and Humanities)

The reason why most people will still choose to be in the “dual-stream” is because University A has been positioned by both the government and itself as a “research university”. Staying in the teaching stream only usually means that one will have limited space for career development. Just as one participant stated, “Those who are not strong in doing research would have an increasing difficulty to maintain their positions at the university” (Peter). To choose to stay in the teaching-stream only at a research university, for some participants, means to choose to be marginalized.

Here we see the impact of education policy in allocating values. The preference of research over teaching in the FPA system has also created a social imaginary that labels faculty members in the research stream as more competent and valued academics. That explains why all participants admitted that they had to put more effort into research even though they have stressed the importance of teaching.

This finding echoes what Lai, Du and Li (2014) have found in their study that examines how faculty members are struggling to handle their teaching and research at select universities in Mainland China. They find that under the pressure of the Ministry of Education's new university employment reform, which requires faculty members to produce more research, faculty members at universities of different tiers all attach more importance to research. They wrote,

As a research university, the first-tier university required its academics to concentrate on research. The second-tier university tried to upgrade from a research-teaching university to a research university. The third-tier university struggled to upgrade from a teaching-research university to a research-teaching university. Such upgrades were initiated because they provided a higher academic status and greater financial resources. (p. 976)

From the perspective of each university, the enhancement of its research capacity is beyond an academic matter, since it also means an enhancement of its domestic and international reputation and more financial support from national and local governments. The reputation and financial strength, in turn, are essential for the further development of the university, since without them the university would have difficulty in attracting high-quality students and top-notch scholars.

It is worth noting that the emphasis on teaching, especially undergraduate teaching has never been absent from the government's and university's policy documents. In fact, the government has issued multiple policies aimed at enhancing the undergraduate teaching in

Chinese universities. For example, on March 16, 2012, the Ministry of Education of the PRC released a document titled “A number of suggestions on promoting the quality of higher education in all directions”, in which undergraduate teaching as “the most fundamental and most basic task” in higher education was emphasized. The document stipulates,

The administrators’ efforts, the resources distribution, the funding arrangement, and performance evaluation should all reflect the central position of undergraduate teaching. Each higher education institution should hold an annual meeting on undergraduate teaching, striving to resolve important and difficult problems on talent cultivation and education. Through making specific policies, each institution should make it a basic regulation that full professors should teach undergraduate course, and should make undertaking undergraduate courses a basic requirement for the application for a full-professorship. The institutions should allow the most excellent faculty members to teach the undergraduate courses. It should be encouraged to develop experimental spots for the core-course teaching, and it should be advocated that the prestigious professors to open the freshman seminars so as to stimulate students’ interest and motivations in learning. The national, local and institutional “teaching masters award and recognition system” should be improved, and particular commendation should be given to the faculty members who have made outstanding contributions on the teaching of undergraduate students. A special inspection should be conducted on a regular basis to ensure that the full professors are undertaking undergraduate courses. (The Central People’s Government of the People’s Republic of China, 2012)

In the above excerpt of this policy document there is an emphasis on full professors being specifically required to undertake undergraduate teaching. This particular emphasis, however,

seems to indicate that it may have been a common practice for full professors not to undertake undergraduate teaching at least by the time the policy was released. Otherwise, the policy would not need to emphasize that “a special inspection should be conducted on a regular basis” to ensure that they are teaching undergraduate students. In this document, it has also been emphasized that universities should take various approaches to encourage teaching, which should be the primary consideration in “resources distribution”, “funding arrangement” and “performance evaluation”. No specific requirement, however, has been specified in terms of how to ensure the achievement of these goals. This policy document can be further examined using Foucault’s “rationality of government”, or “governmentality”, which means “a way or system of thinking about the nature of the practice of government (who can govern; what governing is; what or who is governed) (Gordon, 1991, p. 3). For Foucault, “to govern” is “to govern things” (Foucault, 1991, p. 94). He wrote,

with government it is a question not of imposing law on them, but of disposing things: that is to say, of employing tactics rather than laws, and even of using laws themselves as tactics – to arrange things in such a way that, through a certain number of means, such and such ends may be achieved. (Foucault, 1991, p. 95)

The release of the policy that emphasizes teaching can be seen as tactics that may gradually modify the way faculty members govern themselves. The policy itself, however, is unable to function properly as such a tactic if no further measures are taken to relate teaching with “resources distribution”, “funding arrangement” and “performance evaluation”. On the other hand, with the strong neoliberal discourse which emphasizes research productivity and other quantitative benchmarking measures, faculty members’ subjectivities and academic work are still largely shaped by the emphasis on research performance.

Through looking at institutional policy documents posted at University A's official website, we can see that this national policy guideline has been translated into a number of detailed institutional initiatives. For example, a policy document regulating faculty members' teaching practice released in 2016 states,

All faculty members are required to undertake and complete all required workload regarding undergraduate teaching. Professors and associate professors are specifically required to lecture a minimum of one undergraduate course and undertake all the corresponding responsibilities related to their teaching. Faculty members are expected to participate voluntarily to the reform and construction of undergraduate teaching. . . . In the event of receiving extremely negative reviews from the students, the faculty member's qualification to lecture this course will be suspended, and penalties will be given based on the corresponding regulations. For those who fail to pass the teaching evaluation, their application for the professional titles will not be approved. The failure to meet the basic requirement of the teaching load and the teaching quality are not allowed to take the corresponding position. (Sources are not provided due to confidentiality concerns)

Besides, participants also report that teaching competition in various forms have been organized every year by the university and the department in order to encourage the faculty members' enthusiasm in teaching.

While both the national and institutional policies seem to have attached great importance to teaching, some participants still express concerns over the situation that research has been given much more priority and preference. One participant stated:

This is a very practical issue, and everything happens for a reason. (In this case, the reason is) The system – the education system. What is valued the most in the current

faculty performance evaluation? – Research. For example, if you have obtained ten million or even two hundred million research grants, you basically don't need to teach, because in this case you may have to supervise quite a number of graduate students, and the supervision hours can be counted as teaching hours. At University A, the workload of supervising one master's student counts as 40 to 60 teaching hours, and supervising a PhD student may count as more. As a result, if you supervise 6 or 7 students, you don't really need to teach any class, because you already meet the minimum teaching requirement. However, I think it is so important for those scholars with rich teaching and research experience to impart knowledge to students through teaching.... Now the Ministry of Education has particularly specified that professors have to teach an undergraduate course. It is really a sad thing that we need to emphasize this. In many foreign countries, it is a very normal practice for the professors to teach undergraduate students, even Nobel Prize winners also lecture in undergraduate courses. The domestic universities, however, because of the evaluation system which focuses on research, have made research performance the determinant of everything....As for teaching, as long as you reach the required workload, no one really examines your teaching effects. Yes there is a teaching evaluation system, but teaching is rarely referenced during the evaluation process, unless you are awarded with national or provincial teaching awards, which are extremely difficult. (Fei, Professor in Natural Sciences and Engineering)

According to Fei, even though the university and department hold various teaching contests to encourage teaching, the honors or awards received from such contests are not recognized as “teaching achievements” under the current FPA system, and they therefore do not count when the award recipient applies for a professional title such as associate professorship or full

professorship. “Teaching achievements” under the current evaluation system at University A are mostly like a “teaching-related research achievements” (Fei). That means, they have to be the national or provincial awards one receives through doing things such as editing a textbook, implementing a teaching project, constructing a teaching system, designing a lab course, and so on. These kinds of awards, as Fei suggests, are usually very difficult to obtain, and are usually only slightly if not related to the faculty members’ everyday classroom teaching practice. Consequently, even with the national and institutional policies’ emphasis on the importance of teaching, teaching is still a marginalized area in the FPA system. For faculty members, the “teaching performance evaluation” is mostly a calculation of the workload, and an investigation of major teaching accidents. In comparison, research performance evaluation is much more concrete and detailed. The amount of research grants and number of publications are non-negotiable rigid target that one has to achieve.

It is worth noting that although almost all participants considered research as over-emphasized in the FPA, none of them denied the importance of research, since they actually stressed the positive effects of research on teaching. The question is to what extent should research be emphasized, which is exactly why some participants expressed their concerns over the fact that some professors had devoted too much of their time and energy on their own projects and publications, and may therefore place teaching on the bottom of their priority list. Though in this study there is no evidence that teaching has been ignored or has been negatively affected, an inconvenient truth is that a powerful discourse of neoliberalism has played a significant role in shaping the education policies and regulating faculty members’ academic work.

The problems that the participants identified in the current FPA system, as they described, also resulted from the contradictions between the target of pursuing world-class status and the

material realities of University A. As was discussed in Chapter Five, the development of University A has been constrained by its geographical location, its uneven development among different departments, its limited resources and its imperfection and discontinuity in policies and regulations. As a result, the emphasis on research may be well-accepted among certain groups but creates anxiety among others. These contradictions, or the challenges to development, are actually identified in a recent university policy document:

We have a wide range of disciplines, but only a low percentage of high-quality ones. The scale and structure of disciplines are yet to be prioritized, and department restructuring is still a formidable job....The high-quality teaching resources are comparatively very limited, and the sharing mechanism of these resources is yet to be completed....The faculty team is large, but the high-quality faculty members are significantly insufficient, and the teaching incentive mechanism is yet to be further developed. Though we have started research-based teaching, the reforms of the teaching contents and pedagogies have not been deepened, and the traditional teaching models still take the dominant position. The cultivation of the high-quality top-notch innovative talent is still comparatively very limited in scale. The students' overall ability, their ability to be innovative and entrepreneurial, and their international competitiveness are yet to be improved. The preservation of the education tradition and cultural heritage needs to be strengthened. With the increasing competition in field of undergraduate education among domestic universities, we are under tremendous pressure in terms of positioning and presenting ourselves in the domestic undergraduate education field and producing presentative education outcomes. (Sources are omitted due to confidentiality concerns)



The major contradiction, as we identify from this excerpt, is the one between the urgent need to become “world-class” or “internationally-comparative” and the limited “high-quality” resources of various kinds. This urgent need is a result of the grim trend of the global and national competition, and also the imperatives specified in the national education policy. To translate the national policies based on their own material conditions and developmental priorities has thus become a formidable job for University A. From the above policy document excerpt, it can be seen that the policy makers at University A are fully aware of its limitations, but still are determined to increase the scale of the “high-quality teaching resources”, to cultivate more “high-quality top-notch innovative talents” so as to be better self-represented in the global higher education market. To achieve this goal with limited resources means the university has to prioritize the use of the resources, and attach more importance to outcomes that are more visible to the outside world, and more globally influential. As Rizvi and Lingard (2010) remind us, “these policy priorities were largely derived and justified in terms of neoliberal economic thinking” (p. 197). The emphasis on competitiveness in higher education is legitimated through various international university ranking benchmarks, and driven by the economic interest. University A, therefore, has taken various initiatives as I discuss in the next section.

b) Other reforms as a localization of the national policy agenda

According to the participants, University A has also launched a number of “reforms” in response to enacting the national policies. My following discussion centers on the reforms devoted to resource redistribution, department restructuring and program development.

As an administrator, Peter (Associate Professor in Social Science and Humanities) was more familiar with the reforms:

To respond to the national policy agenda, the administrators at the university or department level usually come out with some new policies to promote the university's reputation or to present to the outside world that "the university is developing". These new policies emphasize the redistribution of the resources within the university. They look at an important indicator called ESI<sup>12</sup> (Essential Science Indicators). They will first find out among all the disciplines at University A, what disciplines can be counted as the top 1 percent or the top 0.1 percent based on the ESI standard. Then, the university will decide what specific policies should be applied to those top disciplines, for example, how much money should be invested in such disciplines annually. So, the evaluation standard of the disciplines has been basically determined at the university level, and the departments usually won't question it much. Because ESI is a very objective indicator, and it indeed reflects what disciplines are comparatively stronger at our university.... This selection is very objective. This is the evaluation and appraisal of the disciplines. It is worth noting that ESI can only be used to evaluate the development level of the Natural Sciences and Engineering disciplines, but not those of Humanities and Social Sciences, such as philosophy, sociology, political science, law, education and history. The university has therefore organized a Discipline Development Committee, which is composed of the most authoritative representatives from each department. The Committee will vote on a decision to redistribute the resources. This whole process is

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<sup>12</sup> The Essential Science Indicators™ (ESI) database, published by Thomson Scientific/ISI, presents an array of data that ranks scientists/health professionals, their individual papers, and the journals in which they are published, as well as countries and institutions that perform scientific research. By using this resource, it is possible to prepare ranked statistical lists. The resource covers 6,000 journals published in both the United States and from international publishers. (Fitzpatrick, 2005, p. 67)

actually a negotiation and compromise. (Peter, Associate Professor in Social Sciences and Humanities)

The above excerpt well illustrates how the discourse of neoliberalism has entered into the higher education system, and further enlarged the gap between “weak” and “strong” departments through redistributing the limited education resources. It is important to note that this rationale for distribution has been well accepted and normalized among faculty members. It is through various tactics and procedures that the disciplinary power has been formed, and “exercised through its invisibility” (Foucault, 1995, p. 187). Education policy, working as an instrument to relocate values, has successfully shaped the values and beliefs of the faculty members. In the above excerpt, Peter thinks the resources redistribution based on ESI is a very “objective” process. This is similar to what we discussed in Chapter Six – the participants consider that competition is a fair and transparent way to distribute resources. While ESI as an indicator to tell which discipline is comparatively stronger might be justifiable, it does not follow that resource distribution based on competition is justifiable. Within this logic system, faculty members are evaluated and defined by numbers (Ozga, 2008), or as Ball (2013) terms it, “a moral economy”, an economy of the “worth” and “value” of the faculty members (p. 105).

In addition to resource redistribution at the university level, the departments also launched reforms aiming at enhancing their competitiveness. One participant, Dai (Lecturer in Natural Sciences and Engineering) talked about the “restructuring plan” at his department:

In terms of restructuring of the department, you cannot launch any reforms just because you feel it is necessary. You need to take many things into consideration. First, you need to have funding. Second, you need to obtain the support from the department. Third, you need to consider whether the restructuring will affect the student recruitment or the

employment of graduates. The process may also include student evaluations, or the involvement of international organizations.... Last year, we invited some experts who work in our discipline from some prestigious universities overseas. We introduced to them the current conditions of our department to seek advice on how to launch the reform. These specialists worked really hard, and eventually provided some conclusive remarks, which are open to all faculty members. We took a look and found their main advice was to rebuild the department – break the old one, and rebuild a new one. This new one would be more like a research center, following the foreign models, and recruiting top-notch scholars. The new department will also take in some selected “good” faculty members from the “old” department, and will gradually increase the scale of the cutting-edge research areas, decreasing the scale of those existing research fields in the old department. This is the main idea of their suggestions. However, whether this plan will be approved or not, or how it could be implemented in reality is still a problem. While a lot of money needs to be invested in this reform, no one can predict what the result will be. (Dai, Lecturer in Natural Sciences and Engineering)

As suggested by Salmi (2009), there are three major approaches to establish world-class universities: “upgrading existing institutions”, “merging existing institutions” and “creating new institutions” (p. 9). These approaches may also apply to the reforms at the department level. The one Dai mentioned above is closer to the third approach, which has the benefit of selecting “the best (staff and students)” and of creating “culture of excellence” (p. 9). Apparently, a brand new department may better serve the university’s aim of becoming globally competitive. This initiative, however, is questionable in this case. It can be better understood through Ball’s (2006) discussion of the impact of the culture of performativity, as, Rizvi and Lingard (2010) described,

“the culture of performativity provokes individual and organizational fabrications”, which “can result in goal displacement, with individuals and organizational units spending more time on self-representation than actually working at achieving their ‘real’ goals” (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 138).

The department restructuring that Dai was talking about, however, is different from establishing a new university, since in this case, the administrators at University A are also required to consider the placement of the majority of faculty members in the existing department, since only a small percentage of them could be selected to continue to work in the “new” department. As Dai stated,

These faculty members (those who are unlikely to be selected to work in the new department) said to the foreign experts, “You cannot just leave us alone.” So far it hasn’t been decided whether this reform will be launched or not, but the majority of the faculty members’ attitude is – at least you cannot take away what we have now. For them, it is acceptable if they are not given more work opportunities or increased benefits, but they think their current positions at the university should be maintained. The department cannot just be disbanded. (Dai, Lecturer in Natural Sciences and Engineering)

Dai’s responses provide a glimpse into the complicated process of policy enactment, which is not only the negotiation and contestation among different stakeholders, but also among different value systems. The direction of the policy and how far the policy can go will depend on some very practical considerations of the university or the department, and more importantly, will be influenced by the prominent values held by the policy makers. As Rizvi and Lingard (2010) suggest, the dominant view of education in recent years is the “social efficiency” value, which “assembles the traditional values associated with public policy – equity, efficiency, security,

liberty and community – ordering them in a particular fashion, giving each of them a specific meaning that is located within a broader discursive structure” (p. 79). In fact, both the department restructuring plan as Dai mentioned, and the resources distribution tactic mentioned by Peter earlier are driven by the social efficiency value and represent an instance of its materialization in this particular university. With increased global and national competition, University A is trying to prioritize the use of its limited resources so as to better position and present itself nationally and globally. For University A, the initiatives or plans of this kind are both imperative approaches they have to take to survive in the globalizing higher education market, and the active responses to the national policy agenda. It is no longer the traditional hierarchies that impose pressure on the university or faculty members – it is more about the “power associated with the networked society, nationally and globally” (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010, p. 126). The neoliberal values in the context of globalization, expressed through voices of the “international authorities”, in the forms of university rankings or performance evaluations, have established their legitimacy in the higher education terrain. It is through engaging with this global discourse that the university leaders and faculty members established their notions of higher education, set their priorities and constituted their subjectivities.

The enactment of the initiatives as Dai described, however, might encounter various obstacles. As suggested by Dai, since the policies have to be narrated locally in a way that is acceptable and performable for the majority of the stakeholder. In the case that Dai describes the perceived consequences of potentially disbanding the old department and replacing it with a new research center, which he stresses will be challenging for the university and department leaders in terms of accommodating the existing faculty members, as well as pointing out the opposition and resistance from the majority of existing faculty members that is likely to ensue. In the

contemporary era, the operation of policy has to be functioned more through the “technologies of the self” – the policy receivers’ active embracement and engagement with the policy. In this sense, policy analysis will have to include the discussion of the discursive facet of policy work and process as an indispensable part.

### **Summary**

This chapter uncovers the “three constituent facets of policy work and the policy process – the material, the interpretive and the discursive” (Ball et al., 2012, p. 15). In other words, I shed light on how the national policies are narrated at the institutional level, and translated into concrete institutional policy work and process, and what kind of discursive impact the policy has exerted on the shaping of academic work of the participants. In the next chapter, I will continue to discuss the discursive construction of the academic subjects through examining the participants’ responses to the policies that emphasize the building of WCUs in China.

## **Chapter Eight: Data Analysis Part Four – The Construction of Academic Subjectivities**

### **Introduction**

The aim of this chapter is to examine how participants are constituted and are constituting themselves as particular academic subjects through: 1) exploring their responses to the policies emphasizing the building of WCUs interpreted and enacted at University A, and 2) examining their understandings of what counts as a “good” professor. Interview data are analyzed through drawing upon my proposed theoretical framework, relevant literature and government/institutional policies. I thereby attempt to explore through what channels and during what processes faculty members’ subjectivities are continuously constructed and modified. This analysis involves an examination of both the discursive facet of the policy process, and the “technologies of self” at play and which help to explain the practices of subjectification in forming the ways in which faculty are engaging in modes of self-governance and self-regulation (Foucault, 1993, p. 204).

### **Participants’ responses to the policies**

This section explores how faculty members are constituted and constituting themselves as particular academic subjects through exploring their attitudes and responses to the policies. Ball et al. (2012) take “professional culture” as one important context in the process of policy enactment. The faculty members’ attitude and responses, to some extent, reflects the “ethos” and faculty members’ “values and commitments” within the university (Ball et al., 2012, p. 26). The examination of the participants’ responses to the university policies, therefore, also constitutes an indispensable component in my analysis of the policy enactment process.



What has been manifested on the basis of the interview data is that the professional culture within University A is very complicated. Different participants respond to the interview questions differently, even though there is a general consensus among all participants that the policies have created better opportunities for the individual and institutional development.

The different perspectives could be connected to the following factors. First, as Ball et al. (2012) point out, “departments can operate, at least some of the time, as fairly autonomous units” (p. 28). This is especially true for University A. As a large-scale university, University A has several campuses with a wide range of disciplines with very different teaching and research capacities. Each campus has its own specific history and academic culture. Second, some disciplines are recognized as state-level or provincial-level key disciplines and specialties, and have obtained extra support from the national and provincial governments. The overall research capacities of the faculty members in such disciplines are stronger than the others. On the other hand, there are departments that are teaching-intensive (such as foreign languages), and most faculty members in such departments do not have a PhD, and the overall research outputs are much lower. Since the policies emphasizing the building of WCUs generally attach great importance to publication and research funding, faculty members from different academic backgrounds are affected differently by the same set of policies. Third, the participants report that it is more difficult to publish in some fields than the others. For example, some participants from the departments of basic Sciences, such as physics and mathematics, suggest that it usually takes comparatively longer time for them to produce high quality academic publications. Finally, even within the same department, faculty members’ individual experiences may make them think and act differently in response to the same policies, which will be discussed in detail later in the section.

Ban is an associate professor in Natural Sciences and Engineering who has been working at University A for nine years. He talked about the differences brought about by the policies:

There is no major difference, but there are definitely minor ones. Compared with nine years ago, both the university and the departments have been continuously adjusting its positioning, the requirements and goals of development, and the evaluating standards of faculty members, so as to be in line with the national policy agenda. For us faculty members, we are constantly changing, too. What remains unchanged is the pressure, or, to put it another way, our obligations as faculty members... No matter what goals the university wants to achieve, for us, it always means taking on more research projects, publishing high quality papers, and of course, in the first place, ensuring the quantity and quality of our teaching at both undergraduate and graduate levels. For me, this goal never changes. In fact, all evaluating standards, such as the conferring of academic titles or the everyday performance audit, are related to these (teaching, publishing and securing research funding). As long as we accomplish these well, we don't need to worry about any evaluation. It is true that the standard or bar is being continuously raised, but we all should try our best to meet these requirements, for both self-improvement and contributing to the university. (Ban, Associate Professor in Natural Science and Engineering)

Ban's perspective is representative among some participants, who think that it is both their obligation and responsibility to "try their best" to meet the university's requirement. They take different competition systems as a driving force of both the institutional development and individual improvement. Here we see the national policies focusing on the building of WCUs and the "international" benchmarking of a WCU have constructed the "modern WCU" and the

academic subjectivities in a discursive way. Ban responds to the policies very positively and voluntarily and in this sense constitutes himself in a manner that is consistent with institutionally sanctioned norms governing the international benchmarking of a WCU. As Foucault wrote,

subject constitutes himself [sic] in an active fashion, by the practices of the self, these practices are nevertheless not something that the individual invents by himself. They are patterns that he finds in his culture and which are proposed, suggested and imposed on him by his culture, his society and his social group (Foucault, 1991a, p. 11).

This regulatory effect of norms is also reflected in other interviews. For example, Shi reported,

Doing research is what you are supposed to do as a faculty member. Besides, there are always comparisons among colleagues. So, on top of the pressure you experience from the performance evaluations, the pressure also comes from the environment.... If you don't work hard, you will be left behind. (Shi, Associate Professor in Social Sciences and Humanities)

Such a culture of performativity appears to be another force that pushes the faculty to strive for higher standards. In nature, however, this competition-oriented culture is just a reflection of an agreed interpretation of the national and institutional policies that emphasize the building of WCUs. As Ball (2012) wrote,

The nation, its schools, teachers and individual students .... are captured in a matrix of calculabilities. Within what Ozga (2008) calls "governing knowledge"; that is, a regime of numbers – a "resource through which surveillance can be exercised (p. 64) – addressed to improvements in quality and efficiency, by making nations, schools and students "legible" (p. 268). (p. 103)

Faculty members, being captured in this “matrix of calculabilities”, are constituted and constituting themselves as neoliberal, enterprising academic subjects through performing this socially validated norm.

It is worth noting that some participants, especially younger faculty members, take a very positive view of the policies, and think these policies afford opportunities. Fei is a young full professor in Natural Sciences and Engineering and has published extensively. When commenting on the challenges and opportunities brought about by the policies, he stated,

I think opportunities and challenges are the same thing. Without these challenges, you don't have these opportunities at all. Then what will you do? Dawdle away your time? If you want to strive for excellence, here is your very good chance. What is a challenge? It is not about competing against other people – it is about challenging yourself – pushing yourself to limits. In fact, people are challenging themselves every day; no matter they progress or go backward. You are not challenging others. If you want to challenge, you have to progress first. If everyone else is progressing but you are not, then you will have the pressure, and this will become a challenge. If you want to survive, or to be respected, you have to work hard. (Fei, Professor in Natural Sciences and Engineering)

From Fei's perspective, the pressures that the policies have imposed are also opportunities for career development. He looks at the policies this way partially because the unspoken “régime of truth” – working hard and tapping into his full potential – has been well accepted and internationalized, and partially because he believes there are no better alternatives, since working hard is also the only way “to survive, or to be respected”. Under the current performance evaluation system of governance, to succeed in gaining respect and recognition is to meet and exceed the standard required by the national and institutional policies.

Performative culture is also reflected in the participants' responses to the university ranking. Helen is an Associate Professor in Natural Sciences and Engineering who has been selected by the university as one of the young talents to receive special research funding. When commenting on the university ranking, she stated,

I think the ranking is necessary to some extent – it is an incentive. For example, if I find our university is ranked behind, I would feel upset for sure, and I would be like, “How could my university be ranked this low?” If my university is ranked higher, I will be very happy. The ranking is an incentive for both the university and the professors. That is to say, no matter how indifferent you may feel about this ranking, if your university is ranked on the top you will still feel very happy. If it is ranked behind, you may think, “Maybe I am also responsible for holding my university back? I need to move forward.” And also, if your university is ranked high, other people will say, “Oh, you are working at this (prestigious) university!” So, I feel, to some extent, ranking has a positive influence on a university's development. For me, of course I hope my university is ranked highly, but you have to work hard to make it happen. So now they are ranking universities by looking at the publications on the SCI journals with high impact factors? If you could publish articles of this kind, you are entitled to various benefits, and the university can also progress. When the university progresses, you get a better platform, and you will eventually benefit more from it, so this is a virtuous cycle. (Helen, Associate Professor in Social Sciences and Humanities)

Helen's perspective demonstrates a strong sense of collectivism – she immediately associates the ranking of University A to herself, and closely relates her personal achievements to the institutional development. This sense of collectivism reflects the Confucian tradition in which an

individual is always defined by her/his relationship to the larger community. Meanwhile, we see the panoptic and regulatory effects of the policy at work at the level of individual faculty members' own self-constitution as an academic subject. Though Helen personally does not fully agree with the various ranking criteria, the ranking has definitely played an important role in shaping the university's policies and the social norms regarding "what counts as a good university". As Ball (2013) wrote, "Teachers and learners were positioned within systems of inspection and comparison and 'terror' – 'payment by result' (Perryman, 2007)" (p. 42). Neoliberal governance in the form of the university ranking system has been justified and internalized as illustrated here in terms of the participants' endorsement of such a system of governance and its disciplining effects in terms of how faculty members think about and navigate their academic work.

Apparently, Helen thinks very positively about these policies from which she has indeed benefited, especially the policies aiming at encouraging young academics. According to Helen, University A has launched a series of initiatives specifically to stimulate young faculty members' enthusiasm of teaching and doing research. For example, young academics under a certain chronological age can apply for special research funding, and then in another few years, fifty percent of the selected young academics will be provided a second round of funding if they meet the requirement of certain evaluation benchmarks. Though this plan may exert tremendous pressure on young academics, Helen felt very positively about it:

I think this plan is very good. It pushes me to publish, to apply for project grants, and meanwhile, the publications and the project grants that I obtained during this plan period can be used in my application for the full professorship in the immediate future. I think this plan is really good. At least, all the selected young faculty members are very

motivated. We all hope to be selected to enter the second phase of the plan, so as to receive more funding, which is a great support to our research. (Helen)

Helen takes these initiatives as a driving force for her career development, and this perspective is reflected in a number of other interviews as well. Apparently, the individual performance, or obtaining a certain academic status, has been aligned with the ranking of the university as world-class. Rizvi and Lingard (2010) suggest, globalization has created a global neoliberal value system. They suggest that, “an important component part of the new educational governance on a global scale has been the construction of a commensurate space of educational measurement globally” (p. 133). Under the influence of the strong neoliberal rationality, “to increase the standard bar”, or to “meet the international standard” is considered to serve not only the national government’s interest but also that of the individual faculty member. In China, in the official educational policy language, neoliberalism operates in conjunction with nationalism or patriotism, which is related to a strong collectivism that has a particular historical legacy in the Chinese context. The neoliberal rationality that emphasizes excellence and the competitiveness of the nation is consistent with the Chinese national discourse that stresses national independency and development, which is consequent to China’s semi-colonial experience from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. These historical and cultural factors help to explain why the participants take the pursuit for excellence and world-class status as both an individual and social responsibility.

One limitation of this study is that all participants are in their 30s and 40s, and hence, there was not an opportunity to talk to more established academics. Some participants mention that the ongoing policies usually put more pressure on senior faculty members, especially those who may not have PhD degrees or may not be able to read and write in English very well. As a

result, some encounter more difficulty publishing in English journals which is required in the performance evaluation in most departments. Another participant, Shi, an Associate Professor in Social Sciences and Humanities commented on the situations of older academics:

Some of them may say, “That’s about it.” They may feel no matter how hard they try, there may not be much improvement (in terms of enhancing their research capacities and outputs). So they probably focus only on teaching, or just remain the way they are. But I notice there are also senior professors who are making positive efforts to cope with the performance evaluations, not to mention those who are really strong in doing research.

(Shi)

Under the current evaluation system, on top of a strong education and research background, a desirable faculty member is expected to have international learning or at least visiting experience, and the ability to publish in foreign language academic journals (English most of the time). The discourse of “internationalization” is reflected in various national and institutional policies and documents, such as the university strategic development plan, the faculty recruitment advertisements, the awards management system and so on. Through these mechanisms and techniques, policies are “rendered into practice” and faculty members are “enmeshed within in a disciplinary programme of visibility and production” (Ball et al., 2012, p. 72).

The high pressure to publish is not only for senior academics without sufficient research and linguistic capacities. Even for younger faculty members, participants’ perspectives may vary due to their own specific backgrounds. Xun is a lecturer from a teaching-intensive department, which is responsible for teaching a language course to all undergraduates and graduates. About twenty years ago, due to the specific characteristics of the subject, the majority of the teaching faculty members in this department were only required to have master’s or even bachelor’s



degrees. As a result, the overall research capacity is much lower than other departments. Even though in recent years all new faculty members employed in this department have to hold a PhD degree, there is still a majority of faculty members who started teaching with a bachelor's or master's degree and are neither able nor willing to receive more academic training. Xun has been working in this department for over ten years. When becoming a faculty member, she only held a bachelor's degree, but she is now among the many of her colleagues who are pursuing a PhD degree while teaching at the same time. When talking about the professional culture at her department, she stated,

Some people are really busy, but others are very laid-back. In the past, only one core publication was needed to be promoted to Associate Professor, but now at least four CSSCI (Chinese Social Sciences Citation Index) publications are required, plus, you need to be the primary investigator of at least one project at the provincial level. If you want to be promoted, you can try to make it happen. If you feel it is too difficult, and don't want to do it, then you can just focus on teaching. Of course (in this case) you don't need to spend time reading books and conducting literature reviews. Some faculty members decide to continue their studies, pursuing a PhD degree, so they can be very busy. Some other may apply to teach the elective courses (which are not mandatory to teach) if they are interested, and these people may also be very busy. Another group includes those who help to organize the activities in the department, such as organizing the summer camp, hosting the speech contest, or taking part in teaching contests. When the university starts the performance evaluation, it also needs professors from different departments to help with it. Overall some people are really busy, and others are extremely laid-back....

Mostly, they choose to be busy. Sometimes, people are busy because they are capable of

helping with certain things. When people in charge find them and ask them to teach a course or organize an event, I think most people are very motivated, and usually will just say yes when being asked by the leaders. They won't say, "Oh, I cannot do this." This group of faculty members are all making positive efforts. (Xun, Lecturer in Social Sciences and Humanities)

"This group" certainly does not include those "laid-back" colleagues who spend time researching "nice food, travelling, and raising kids", which has nothing to do with their professional obligations, as Xun points out. The socially accepted image of a "normal" or "typical" "good professor" is definitely not "laid-back". Xun also admitted that with these policies the pressure to publish was high, but she stated,

I think these policies are important. They have the directive functions. They give people the driving forces to do things. But for me, I don't do these things because the University wants to become first-class or internationalized. These policies are certainly effective, but these intended influences cannot be reflected on me. I do these things because I am interested, and I feel good when doing these, and I don't do these because they are required. Anyhow, if I have to publish four articles to be promoted (to associate professorship), my thought is that if I am qualified, promote me, otherwise, don't bother promoting me, and I won't apply to get this promotion, either. (Xun Lecturer in Social Sciences and Humanities)

Even though Xun rejects the idea that her work as a faculty member has been entirely influenced by the performance evaluation, her understandings of the teaching profession and her subjectivity are still largely influenced by the norms shaped by performative measures embedded in the cultural and policy discourses, which are embraced and internationalized as part of her

own values. Having a very clear idea of the expected “ethical” conduct of an academic in mind, Xun embraces the policies’ “directive functions”, and also uses policies as a standard to judge what counts as appropriate or inappropriate conduct for faculty members. In this sense, the enactment of the policies that emphasize building of WCUs in China, as schemes or “technologies of government”, has been subtly transforming the subjectivities of the faculty members. The faculty members are empowered to act as self- responsabilizing individuals through both technologies of the government and those of the self, which permit them “to effect by their own means or with the help of others” to “transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality” (Foucault, 1988, p. 18).

Though Xun personally disregards the pressure caused by the performance evaluation system, she admits that this evaluation benchmark is difficult to reach for the majority of faculty members in her department. There are several major reasons. First, the numbers of the high-quality or “recognized” domestic journals in her discipline are limited, but the number of faculty members in her discipline are among the largest both at University A, and in the overall Chinese higher education system. It therefore becomes extremely competitive to publish in journals that can be recognized according to the criteria for their performance evaluation. In addition, Xun stated,

This (difficulty) is also closely related to our low starting point. Most of the faculty members in our department started their teaching career with only a bachelor’s or a master’s degree, and therefore have very limited awareness and capacity of conducting research. While faculty members in other departments are all PhDs, they are able to get the project grant immediately after graduation and their teaching and research experiences enrich each other. For us, we have been groping our way forward from the

very beginning. Through years of exploration some of us finally get to know how to do research, but this process has been so long. (Xun, Lecturer in Social Sciences and Humanities)

Eileen, from the same department, is an associate professor with a PhD degree, and she also talked about the diverse perspectives among faculty members within the same department. When discussing faculty members' responses to the policies, she stated,

This really depends. Some people actively meet or even exceed these requirements, but others are like, "Forget it. This is the best I can do. In the worst scenario, you can lay me off or transfer me to the staff position. If I am fired, I will find another job.".... My response to their attitudes can be quite ruthless, and I want to say, "Nobody stops you doing it. Why don't you pursue further education? Why don't you improve yourself? Isn't it a good thing to improve ourselves?" Personally for these people who don't spend time improving themselves, I don't think they have actually done anything especially meaningful.... Even if you don't get a PhD degree, that doesn't mean that you cannot do research. I don't think it is a particularly difficult thing to conduct research as long as you have the heart to do it. Especially, there are various online courses you can take, both domestic and international, and some are even for free. As long as you want to do it, and you want to learn it, you can do it. Even if you don't have a PhD degree, when you send your article to the reviewers, nobody cares if you are a PhD or not since the submission is anonymous. Even if you are an undergraduate student, you can get your paper published if your research is good. Besides, under our current faculty performance evaluation system, you can apply for the promotion to associate professorship without possessing a PhD degree. Of course, a PhD degree is still required for the promotion to full

professorship. So, (if you don't do your job well) it is because you are not putting efforts into it, and you are not determined to become an excellent professor. If one day you are forced to be out of the faculty team, it is very justifiable, because you are not putting your heart into it. (Eileen, Associate Professor in Social Sciences and Humanities)

For Eileen, individuals are expected to be responsible for their own career development, and they are supposed to try their best to cope with the policies. Neoliberalism, as Harvey (2007) describes it, has “pervasive effects on ways of thought to the point where it has become incorporated into the common-sense way many of us interpret, live in, and understand the world” (p. 3). Through Foucault's perspectives of governmentality, we see how neoliberal forms of government lead and control individuals through not only direct state apparatuses, but also indirect techniques. As Lemke (2000) argued,

The strategy of rendering individual subjects "responsible" (and also collectives, such as families, associations, etc.) entails shifting the responsibility for social risks such as illness, unemployment, poverty, etc. and for life in society into the domain for which the individual is responsible and transforming it into a problem of "self-care". (p. 12)

Eileen emphasizes the individual subjective initiatives, which may have underestimated other important factors that may make “publishing in accepted journals” very difficult. She actively embraces this work ethic which is enshrined in a discourse of self-responsibilization and uses it as a disciplinary norm to govern herself and others (Rose and Miller, 2008).

Though Eileen tends to dismiss the need for a PhD degree to conduct research and get published, some other participants have a different viewpoint. Belle, for example, shared her perspectives regarding the requirement for publication. She claimed,

It is extremely difficult to publish. You need to be at least an Associate Professor or have a PhD degree, and I have neither of these. It is difficult to publish in CSSCI (Chinese Social Sciences Citation Index) journals, or any journal at the provincial level. Initially I underestimated the difficulty to publish, and thought it wouldn't be that difficult to publish in a provincial journal. But now I find all journals have increased their acceptance standard. Without certain academic titles or a PhD degree, it is very hard (to publish). (Then how could students publish their papers?) Well, here is the situation: the editor sometimes may not even take a look at your paper if you don't have any academic titles or a PhD degree, unless your paper is extremely well-written or your paper is recommended to the editors by your supervisors. If nobody recommends you, it is very unlikely that your paper will be accepted. (The researcher: I feel this is a dilemma: on the one hand, you need to publish before you are promoted to associate professors. And on the other hand, without the associate professorship you cannot publish. How do faculty members usually cope with this dilemma?) I think some people are really good, and they can get published even without any title or a PhD degree. However, most of the people, I assume, get published because they have some kind of networking, and some even spend money to get published. (Belle, Lecturer in Social Sciences and Humanities)

Eileen and Belle have very contradictory views regarding the difficulty with publishing. In Eileen's statement, the role of the editor in the academic publishing world is overlooked, and the importance of a PhD degree in conducting research and getting published is underestimated. Both Eileen and Belle are among many faculty members who are in teaching-intensive departments, but who also need to meet the requirements of research performance appraisal, even though these faculty members may not have strong academic training in research.

Peter, another participant, expresses his concerns over the overall low research capacity of his department, and he mentions the majority of his colleagues are unable to meet even the minimum research evaluation requirement (even though he himself could easily exceed this standard). As a promising young scholar, Peter is now an Associate Professor and Associate Dean of his department. He is very optimistic about the situation of young academics. When talking about applying for research funding, he claimed,

For most of the young academics at universities of our level, as long as they are hard-working enough, they should be able to get the research fund at the provincial or national level. (Peter)

While most participants actively and positively respond to the policies, not all participants think the same way. Dai, a lecturer in Natural Sciences and Engineering, for example, reported,

Though these policies and reforms have a huge impact on myself as a faculty member, I feel mostly that I just passively accept them, and it is very rare that I am able to make any changes based on my own choice. Because, the trend (policy) is like a river, and I am a leaf floating on it. Wherever the river flows to I float in the same direction....No matter if it is teaching or research, you have to follow the department's lead, since the distribution of bonuses or benefits is closely related to your teaching, publication and research project grant application. If most of the faculties regard the lead as important, they will strive to publish if publication guarantees more bonuses, and they will try hard to teach more courses if teaching guarantees more bonuses. Some faculties may not follow the lead, though, and they may have their own thoughts. Either because they are academic leaders, or at least don't have much financial pressure, or because they have reached a new

frontier – they don't care the basic necessities of life at all. We are differently. With family and kids to support, we have to take this into consideration. (Dai)

These “imperative/disciplinary policies”, as Ball et al. (2012) suggest, “produce a primarily passive policy subject, a ‘technical professional’ whose practice is heavily determined by the requirements of performance and delivery” (p. 92). As Dai's comments illustrate, to meet the performance evaluation standard is not only accepted as ethical conduct in the Foucaudian sense of relating to oneself according to the terms of these disciplinary norms, but is also closely related to accruing financial benefits for academics. Through setting various “standards” and linking these standards with economic gains (also interpreted by some participants as social recognition), the policies are enacted within a “logic of conformity” (Ball et al., 2012, p. 97), which means that there is no better alternative for faculty members to choose, unless they can afford to escape from adhering to these “norms”.

Dai also talked about the importance of *guanxi* (net-working, interpersonal relations), as one important legacy of Chinese Confucian culture, in one's professional career as a faculty member. He reported,

You can see what your colleagues are doing. It might not be just today, since there is always this tradition: For those who work really hard but unable to handle *guanxi* really well, they usually don't earn as much as those who don't work much but are very good at handling *guanxi*. For those who don't work much and cannot handle interpersonal relationships either, they are usually out of the game.... Guanxi is really important, but it is complicated as well, and is far beyond the comprehension of people with my EQ (Emotional quotient). (Dai, Lectuer in Natural Sciences and Engineering)



Dai's comments on *guanxi* reflect his concerns over the fact that sometimes policy enactment may also be influenced by the judgement and preference of certain interest groups. Related to the construction of professional culture, the existence of the concept of *guanxi* also operates to shape certain academic subjects.

Compared with other participants, the four administrators who were interviewed in this study tend to pay closer attention to the policies. Hu is an administrator who has been working at University A for over 20 years. With his administrative obligations, he seldom teaches these days, and he shared his perspective which involves a shift from being a faculty member only to becoming an administrator:

To be honest, before I took the administrative role, I wasn't concerned too much with the University policies as I am now. I thought as long as I did well what I was supposed to do as a faculty, you know, teaching and doing research, it should be fine. For me, I didn't think it mattered to me much what the university was going to develop into. But now I think differently. And, I know a lot of the faculty members may still think similarly to what I used to think. They may think, "In such a large university, will the university's direction in development affect me? I don't think so. I only need to get my own work done." However, from what I feel and see, more and more faculty members are starting to think differently. Of course the departments have also put considerable efforts into promoting, introducing, encouraging or dictating some institutional policies so as to assist the University in implementing the policies that reflect its intentions. That is to say, the university allows us faculty members to understand more about what the University is encouraging, so that we can find some opportunities for ourselves, for example, the opportunities to conduct transnational research studies, to pay a long or short-term visit to

a foreign university, or to bring in and make use of the foreign high-quality educational resources. In short, the University wants faculties to participate more in international exchange and practice. From what I have observed, these days more and more people start to recognize the importance of and take part in the international exchange and have actually been benefiting from it, since they have developed a wider vision and their research capacities have also improved, more or less, during this process.... They start to realize that international cooperation can provide them with a better platform and offer them more opportunities. Even seven or eight years ago, they may still have felt, “Why does the University require me to do this? Why do I have to visit abroad for at least a year to be promoted to an associate professor?” Their responses to the policies were pretty negative, and they took policies as something unpleasant and unavoidable, but now, they mostly are quite actively, and are voluntarily responding to the policies. They may feel, “I should give myself a chance. I want to go out. I want to do this.” I can feel these changes. (Hu)

To Hu, the perspectives of faculty members towards university policies are shifting: there has been a shift from being a “passive receiver” to an “active actor”, which has resulted in a very different sort of policy enactment in response to such modes of neoliberal governance with their performative implications. From an administrator’s perspective, Hu points to the interactive and mutually facilitating relationship between the individual professional development and the development of the university. On the one hand, we see how the technologies of delivery and performance have subtly and gradually modified faculty members’ perspectives and academic practices. As Ball et al. (2012) point out, faculty members are “‘caught up’ in a marvelous machinery of policy”, with little space to negotiate or contest policy (p. 72). On the other hand,

as Hu suggests, University A has put considerable effort to nuance the policies emphasizing the building of WCUs in a way that is easier for the faculty members to accept and internalize, since University A is also caught up in the neoliberal globalization and has no better alternatives but to “engage actively with the national policies” (Hu).

To sum up, “working hard” or “striving for excellence” are catch phrases in all interviews. There are multiple reasons behind this kind of work ethic. It reflects the Chinese traditional culture that values efforts and perseverance, the burden of material life, the peer-pressure or specific Chinese face-saving tradition, and sometimes simply the passion of teaching and conducting research, and last but not the least, we see the impact of neoliberalism that enters into the higher education system, in the form of creating a culture of performance and deliverability. The participants’ responses vividly demonstrate how these different discourses operate together to shape the professional culture of the university which, in turn, impacts on how they come to understand themselves as faculty members and to govern themselves according to the norms driving the university’s neoliberal endorsement of and investment in building a WCU.

As reflected in the participants’ responses to the policies, we see how policies have travelled through the university system by employing the “technology of delivery”, (Ball et al., 2012, p. 97), and successfully shape faculty members’ subjectivities and academic work. Ball et al. (2012) draw upon Barber’s (2007) work to explain the key elements of ‘deliverology’, which include, “the use of good data”, “setting targets and trajectories”, “consistent, regular and frequent stocktaking (reporting)”, “figuring out the ‘Delivery Chain’”, and tracking progress on a regular basis” (p. 76). Ball et al.(2012) write, “These tactics produce day-to-day ‘pressures’ for and ‘awareness’ of and a ‘focus’ on ‘standards’, as a new meta-narrative of schooling as performances” (p. 76). In this respect, policies enable the participants to align their personal

professional development closely according to the norms driving institutional development and priorities. To conform to “standards” has thus become the norm, which has been internalized as ‘free will’, as a choice for the participants to pursue. It is the neoliberal discourse embedded in the education policies that has created academics as the “self-responsibilizing, self-capitalizing individuals” – the “desired product” of the policies (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010, p. 184). It is through both the policies’ regulating effects and the participants’ performativity that the latter are constituted and are constituting themselves as enterprising academic subjects, capable of a sense of their self-transformative efficacy as scholars in accordance with the university’s neoliberal agenda.

### **The discursive construction of academic identities**

This section is an attempt to explore how the participants identify themselves as particular academic subjects through examining their responses to the question, “What does it mean to be a good professor?” This question is specially designed to shed light on two important facets of the participants’ understanding of their academic identities as a faculty member: the roles and responsibilities of a professor in contemporary society, and the values and preferences upon which the participants’ definitions of a “good” professor are constructed. Based on the findings, I highlight the discourses through which the participants’ values and perspectives are shaped. In particular, I examine the roles of education policy and the global context in allocating values, and how these values are negotiated within a specific cultural environment.

The participants’ understandings of a “good” professor are articulated in two interrelated yet different ways: one has been expressed in terms of how they understand who they are as academics and what this role actually involves, and the other entails more of a utopian view where the participants imagined the “ideal professor”. Even though most participants considered

this imagined “ideal professor” to be too good to be true, and do not see it as superseding their own view of themselves as faculty members, their images of the “good” professor are still closely related to who the participants are as faculty members, and reflect their professional ambitions, motivations and social imaginaries.

The findings in this section are organized under three themes which reflect the interrelationship among a number of discourses that operate in the construction of the academic identities of the faculty members: a) academic identities negotiated within the specific Chinese cultural context, b) academic identities negotiated within an era of globalization, and c) academic identities negotiated within the political context.

**Academic identities negotiated within the specific Chinese cultural context.** Peter, an associate professor from a Social Sciences Department, shared his idea of a ‘good’ professor:

To be a good professor, first, you need to have passion for research. Second, you need to have a solid knowledge base and excellent intellectual accomplishments. Third, since you need to communicate with students, as a good professor you need to have great teaching skills. You are expected to have good teaching pedagogies and strong ability to interact and communicate with students. (Peter, Associate Professor in Social Sciences and Humanities)

He further elaborated his viewpoint:

A good professor should be a brilliant speaker, with abundant academic knowledge and rich social experience, and is able to vividly relive his or her knowledge and experience in class, convincing students. A good professor should also be a great thinker. What s/he talks in class should reflect the depth of the questions, the depth of the knowledge and theories, and an enhanced height of the social awareness. Third, a good professor should

be an artist (figurative), who can nourish the soul of life through education, and provide the students with the beauty of education.

There is a tone of passion in Peter's statement, which suggests that this constructed image of the good professor is what Peter aspires to be as a faculty member. From the above excerpt, it is interesting to note that though Peter stressed the importance of research many times during the one hour interview, he actually attached equal if not more importance to teaching in his description of a good professor. For Peter, most of all the other qualities in a good professor, such as the profound knowledge, in-depth thoughts and a high awareness of social responsibility only serve as "enablers" that make great "teaching" possible.

This emphasis of good teaching as a basic element in a good professor is reflected in the majority of the participants' responses:

First of all, a good professor should have sufficient things to share with the students, not only in term of knowledge but also of experience and skills. These would benefit the students directly. This is basic (requirement for the professor), but not enough. Second, it is important for a professor to have a strong ability of communication....Third, a good professor should have a very good knowledge structure, and also the capacity to accept new ideas, and be innovative, which is especially important in an age of globalization when knowledge is being updated at an unprecedented speed ....Fourth, if the professor is able to quickly blend in with his or her students, it will definitely make his or her teaching easier. A professor's personal charisma, sense of humor, and eloquence will definitely help them to get along with the students. A good professor also needs to have strong research abilities....Even at those teaching-intensive departments professors should have certain levels of research abilities. Teaching and research can promote each

other and have to go hand in hand. (Hu, Associate Professor in Social Sciences and Humanities)

A good professor is someone who is liked or admired by the students, or who can always stand in the students' shoes. You are supposed to try to make your class informative in an entertaining way. You should care about the students and help them. I find the kids nowadays seem to have more mental health issues than we used to have, and they tend to be really weak in dealing with pressure. (Helen, Associate Professor in Natural Sciences and Engineering)

Professors should, in the first place, be the mentors of life. They should teach the student how to be a good person, so that the student can do good things to the society. A mentor of life means that the professor's guidance should last lifelong... Even after the student graduates, a professor is preferred to stay connected with the student, so that when the student seeks advice on making important decisions, the professor is able to provide insights. The professor, on the other hand, should be the mentor of the student's academic study... You are supposed to tell the students the frontiers of knowledge. You are supposed to stand from a certain height, guiding the students to discover questions and resolve them. Students educated in this way, with their own efforts, are likely to become the leading figure in their research field. A good supervisor is not necessarily a master in his/her field, but his/her students should be. Since you are a "*lao shi*" (teacher)... "*Shi*" means you need to have a high moral standard, and profound knowledge. But if you are not good at mentoring students, you won't be counted as a very good professor. (Ying, Professor in Natural Sciences and Engineering)

Apparently, these participants immediately associate a good professor with good teaching, both intellectually and morally. A good professor, for them, is someone who is able to offer students guidance and help with both their studies and moral cultivation. It is interesting to note that during all the interviews, most participants would call the university students “kids” when mentioning them. They seem to naturally position themselves as parents or guardians of the students, and take it as their own responsibility to ensure the students are growing in a socially-accepted “good” way. Even though “research” has been a catch word throughout all the interviews, when talking about what counts as a good professor, the participants start to emphasize more of the teaching and modeling roles of a professor. The research ability is recognized as well, but mostly as one of the basic elements that can enrich a professor’s academic capacity of teaching and role modeling.

Examined from a cultural perspective, we will see this emphasis of teaching is closely connected to the Chinese traditional view of “teacher”. In the Chinese language, a faculty member is called “*da xue jiao shi*”. “*Da xue*” means “higher learning/education”, and “*jiao shi*” means teacher. “*Jiao*” means “to teach/instruct”, and “*shi*” means “model”. “*Jiao shi*” (teachers) of various kinds, therefore, literally refers to someone who is both teacher and role model. Just as discussed in Chapter Four, the traditional roles of a teacher in China are “to propagate the doctrine, impart professional knowledge, and resolve doubts” (*chuan dao, shou ye, jie huo*). Besides, in traditional Chinese culture, teachers are highly respected to such an extent that they are compared to parents. As the saying goes, “A teacher of one day is a father of a lifetime” (*yi ri wei shi, zhong sheng wei fu*). A teacher, on the other hand, has been portrayed in countless poems, sayings and stories as someone who is morally refined, and is willing to sacrifice without expecting a reward. Many metaphors have been used to praise the selflessness and devotion of



teachers. For example, teachers are compared to “candles” that consume themselves to light the way for others, to “silkworms” that keep spinning silk until the end of life, and, to “gardeners” who nurture with care. For instance, in a study examining the Chinese learners, Jin and Cortazzi (2011) found that Chinese students conceptualized teachers as “a humane, caring guide” – notably “not the stereotype of an authoritative or authoritarian transmitter of knowledge” (p. 85). These cultural conceptions and expectations of the teacher well explain why the majority of the participants would immediately identify “teaching” and “role modeling” as the most important qualities in a good professor, even though they are well aware of other roles and responsibilities of a professor at a modern university, such as “doing research and providing services to the society” (Peter, Associate Professor in Social Sciences and Humanities).

The participants’ responses point to the strong and persistent impact of the cultural discourse, even in the contemporary era when neoliberalism has acquired the dominant position in the higher education system. It is within this specific Chinese cultural context that the participants’ academic identities are constructed through performing of their roles as educators. One participant shared what she told her students in the last class of the school year:

I shared with them something that my supervisor used to teach me: Be a kind person, be less utilitarian when doing things, be tolerant to others, and be helpful to people in need as long as you can. (Xun, Lecturer in Social Sciences and Humanities)

The above excerpt demonstrates what Xun believes are the most important things for the students to know – they are not so much about academic knowledge but one’s attitude toward others and life. Here Xun is performing what she believes is an important role as a faculty member. The cultural norms of a teacher, as discussed previously, have been internalized in her and guided her academic work.

Examined through a Foucauldian lens, the participants have been constituted and constituting themselves, or at least express the hope to do so, as morally refined, self-sacrificing, knowledgeable teachers, through engaging with the “technologies of dominance” which derive historically from the legacy of the traditional Chinese culture, and “technologies of the self”, “the ways in which individuals constitute themselves” through practices of what they believe are culturally and ethically appropriate (Allen, 2011, p. 43).

Some participants’ responses also demonstrate two other prominent culture-related conceptions of a faculty member in the contemporary Chinese society: a) Faculty member as someone who does not emphasize the material gains, and b) teaching as a profession particularly “good” for females.

a) Faculty member as someone who does not emphasize the material gains.

One participant explained:

When I started job hunting after graduation, it was possible that I could find a higher-paid job, or a more promising job based on my capacity. The reason why I finally chose to work at the university is because of my personality – I am not that into wealth and fame. I love doing things that I really like. Since I didn’t think I have a high financial pressure, I felt that I would enjoy more the freedom of working as a faculty member other than taking another occupation. (Shi, Associate Professor in the Humanities and Social Sciences)

Similarly, another participant, Fei (Professor/Administrator in Natural sciences and Engineering), also supports this viewpoint regarding the socio-economic status of the academic profession, maintaining that “To be a professor means you choose to be poor.”

Both Shi and Fei's understandings of the teaching profession can be attributed to the low economic status of teachers and scholars in China's feudal history, during which teachers, though being respected, had belonged to one of the lower social class groups. In fact, the participants have reported that even today they earn comparatively lower income than people with education background similar to theirs. Some participants reported that their basic monthly income was around RMB 2000 (approximately USD\$316) ten years ago. Even though this number has almost tripled during the past years, some participants reported the financial pressure of working as a faculty member.

b) Teaching as a profession particularly "good" for females.

Interview data have surprisingly demonstrated a strong patriarchal discourse in the participants' account of the teaching profession:

For women, I think it is a good choice to work at the university, as long as you don't have high expectations of material life. I think it is good to be a faculty member, especially for women....you have four months' vacation every year. If you don't have a high expectation on research, and mostly just teach, your income is good enough to live an average life. (Fei, Professor/Administrator in Natural sciences and Engineering)

There are a number of implied, unspoken meanings behind Fei's statement: women are not expected to earn a high income, so this profession is good enough for them; women are not expected to be devoted to research even if they have long vacations; the flexible work schedule and long holidays are especially suitable for women (because they are expected to have a high family devotion). Apparently, this patriarchal mentality has been instilled in the minds of the participant and has operated to constitute his perspectives of a female faculty member.

Several other participants shared similar viewpoints:

To be honest, it is not easy for a female PhD to find a job. But if she can find a faculty position, this is really a good choice for girls. When I finished my PhD study, I happened to get a chance to work at the university, which I think is a blessing. (Helen, Associate Professor in Natural Sciences and Engineering)

When I graduated, I was planning to pursue another degree in Law. At that time, a teacher said to me, “Why bother pursuing another degree? As a girl, why don’t you try to apply to teach in the Department of X?” I followed his advice and applied, and was accepted. (Xun, Lecturer in Social Sciences and Humanities)

To work as a faculty member is good for women. For men, to work at a university, wait, I think to work at any academic levels, men have more strength to be teachers. I think a good male teacher is very attractive. And, in terms of doing research, men are more persevering than women, so they usually do better than women. So, men are also suitable to become teachers, but they still need to have the desire of teaching. Otherwise, it would be meaningless to force him them to be teachers. (Eileen, Associate Professor in Social Sciences and Humanities)

Surprisingly, both male and female participants consider working at the university is a better choice for women than men. They say so, not because they think women can be better educators, but because: 1) Women usually do not have better working options to choose from; 2) Working at the university is not good enough for men, mostly in terms of the comparative lower income; and 3) Men are more capable of being a faculty member, or being in many professions, but teaching may not be men’s ideal career choice (as they are many other more promising options for them to choose). All these gendered conceptions of women or female faculty members come from the participants’ lived experiences and the prevailing discourses available to them. The

gendered views of female faculty members are not particular to the Chinese context. Existing literature has abundantly recorded the difficulties that female academics around the world have experienced within the university (David and Woodward, 1998; Mukherjee, 2000). The particularity of the gendered conception in the Chinese context is about the tremendous impact of the historical legacies of Chinese patriarchy, which have highlighted the dominant role of men over women, as dictated in the deep-rooted Confucius culture during China's long feudal history.

Almost all female participants in this study talked about their challenges in balancing family and work, and how these challenges had prevented them from competing with their male colleagues. As they suggested, their male colleagues were usually not engaged with many family obligations and could therefore be more focused on their academic work. This particular finding is relevant with my examination of how neoliberalism is negotiated in the Chinese context, because it highlights the difficulties the female faculty members have to encounter while trying to cope with the multiple "moral system(s)" (Ball, 2013, p. 138) – they are expected to perform the traditional patriarchal roles of women, the traditional self-sacrificing and enlightening roles as teachers and role models, someone who is indifferent to material benefits and, mostly importantly, a neoliberal enterprising academic subject as will be discussed in the next section. Neoliberalism, while negotiated in such a complex Chinese context, fueled with historical legacies and moral values, has become contested discourse full of tensions and possibilities. The construction of the academic subject within such a sociocultural context has thus become more complicated. Undoubtedly, the traditional perspectives of educators have been challenged by the new moral systems emerging in the contemporary society. The findings of this study, however, still highlight the functions of the historical discourses in "dispose(ing) things", in disseminating values and governing the subjectivities of faculty members (Foucault, 1991, p. 95).

**Academic identities negotiated in a society in transition.** Even though “good teaching” and “role modeling” have been recognized by the majority of the participants as most important qualities in a good professor, they are not sufficient. As suggested by the participants, the traditional cultural conceptions of a good professor or teacher have been challenged in the contemporary society. Hu, for instance, explained:

There are definitely changes regarding the roles of faculty members in the contemporary society. These changes, for me, are mostly responses to the new situations at the global, national and institutional levels. The faculty members have to adapt to the new environment. Simply put, they want to get promoted, from lecturers to associate professors, and to full professors. They have to meet or even exceed all the benchmarks required by the university. There are requirements related to teaching, and more so research. In addition, you need to have research projects. To get published, you need to have research ability and writing ability, and these are not enough. For example, you also need to be able to promote yourself, improve your image. When communicating with the journal editors, you need to have excellent communication skills. There are so many abilities that you need to have. (Hu, Associate Professor in Social Sciences and Humanities)

The shifting roles of the professors are inevitably linked with the changing roles of the universities on a global scale. Since the end of twentieth century, with a tremendous impact of neoliberal globalization, universities worldwide are experiencing an unprecedented restructuring and transformation. This is reiterated by Fallis (2004):

We live in tumultuous times – unpredictable and perplexing. The ideas of our age are changing society. The ideas of our age- may transform the university. The new

relationship between citizen, market and state limits government expenditure, forcing higher tuition fees and increased reliance on external fundraising. Governments are shifting from supporting basic research toward supporting applied research and are asking that commercialization of research become a fundamental responsibility of the multiversity. (p. 52)

“Multiversity”, is a term coined by Kerr (2001) to refer to today’s large American university. It is “a whole series of communities and activities held together by a common name, a common governing board, and related purposes” (p.1):

A university anywhere can aim no higher than to be as British as possible for the sake of the undergraduate, as German as possible for the sake of the graduates and the research personnel, as American as possible for the sake of the public. (Kerr, 2011, p. 14)

According to Kerr, teaching, conducting research, and providing service to the society are three major functions of today’s university. The faculty members in today’s university have to perform multiple tasks and meet multiple requirements from different stakeholders in the higher education system. One participant talked about how these new changes in the higher education system had posed challenges for professor to maintain their traditional roles:

My colleagues and I also have this kind of frustration. In today’s society, the public still holds very traditional expectations of teachers. People expect the teachers to “propagate the doctrine, impart professional knowledge, and resolve doubts”. On the other hand, they have many new expectations of teachers. Most of these requirements are not merely abstract demands raised by the public, but are mostly very concrete things required by the students’ parents, the university administrators, and the corresponding national governmental agencies. In the past, teachers were supposed to be authoritative. As the

saying goes, “A teacher of one day is a father of a lifetime”. Now this authoritativeness is completely overthrown. (Hu, Associate Professor in Social Sciences and Humanities)

As Hu suggests, people’s expectations of teachers at various academic levels have not changed, but he does claim that “some other changes in the society have made it difficult for the faculty members to meet these expectations”. These changes include the pressures caused by faculty appraisal system, the advancement of information technology, and many other factors related to the market-economy reforms and globalization. Faculty members, therefore, have to reexamine their roles in a society of economic and cultural transition in an era of rapid global change.

Peter supported this viewpoint:

The responsibilities of the professors haven’t changed in today’s society – we are still supposed to teach, to serve society and to contribute to the development of the society.

The change is that with the current knowledge economy and the highly intensified globalization, there may be more temptations that a professor has to face outside of the Ivory Tower (university). There will be more economic lures. Under such circumstance, some faculty members may teach for extra income without the approval of the university, and may teach outside of the university for short-term economic gains. (Peter, Associate Professor/Administrator in the Humanities and Social Sciences)

Peter points to the impact of the market economy on modifying the subjectivities of faculty members. In the contemporary society, on the one hand, faculty members are educators, and on the other hand, they are like people in any other profession, who are judged and evaluated by the social norms based on their socioeconomic status. The market economy makes it possible for faculty members to earn extra income through working out of the campus, which simultaneously reshape their understanding of this profession – educators and education service providers at the



same time. The impact of market-economy and the neoliberal value system have placed the faculty members in a situation: they are expected to increase their socioeconomic status as a representation to become “valued” or “socially-recognized” successful individuals. Ball (2013) identifies “performativity” as “a key mechanism of neo-liberal government that uses comparisons and judgements, and self-management, in place of interventions and direction” (p. 137). This performativity is not merely about the rankings of the universities or the academic performance of the faculty members – in the material world, it is also about how well an individual could perform economically in a way that meets the benchmarking of the neoliberal value system.

The subjectivities of the faculty members are also shifting within the new policy discourse of building WCUs, as corroborated by Peter:

As required by our government, professors nowadays need to have international experience, and a broad global perspective. These things are being emphasized and required by the government, the society and the public. These changes also require us to reexamine our academic identities as faculty members within this grand background of internationalization. It is also our own hope to have the global perspective. For me, I read academic articles published in English journals, draw on their research ideas and methods, and conduct research studies that touch on the global issues, rather than merely focusing on the domestic issues. (Peter, Associate Professor in Humanities and Social Sciences,)

These new expectations, to an extreme extent, reduce faculty members to an evaluation criterion in the world-class university ranking system. They are expected to meet certain standards so as to become a competitive number when the university is positioning itself in the higher education global marketplace.

To sum up, faculty members are navigating their academic identities through negotiating the multiple discourses at play in a society in transition which are driven to a certain extent by a performative emphasis that is supported by a mode of neoliberal governance that seeks to position the university and its faculty members within a global market place of higher education as a means by which to enhance the university's world-class status and ranking.

**Academic identities negotiated within a political context.** Participants' responses also suggest that they are negotiating their academic identities within a political context and under specific conditions of Nationalist Party governance. One participant claimed,

Our university is a principal-in-charge institution under the leadership of the Party committee....The primary focus of the university is not simply to teach but to maintain the political stability of the nation. What it teaches, therefore, is more than academic knowledge, but to foster determined-minded and politically-correct professionals. (Peter, Associate Professor in Humanities and Social Science)

Different from many western countries, higher education in China has always been closely related to the strong political and economic agenda of the government and mediated by its specific cultural characteristics. Nationalism is therefore a strong discourse in the education policies that emphasize the building of WCUs in China. In ancient times, the purpose of higher learning was concerned to enhance learning, self-cultivation, management of family, government of the state and eventually, the achievement of world peace. Higher learning institutions were established, and the Imperial Examination was adopted mainly for the purpose of selecting the potential government officials for the feudal emperors (Ren & Xue, 2003). During the semi-feudal semi-colonial China, the first modern universities in China were established mainly as a way to cope with the invasions of the external powers and to achieve the independence and

development of the nation. In the early years of the People's Republic of China, China was facing the extreme shortage of professionals in every industry or trade. Higher education was therefore mainly developed to cultivate talents to build "a new republic of socialism" (Gu, Li & Wang, 2009).

In addition to the regular standard higher education system, other forms of higher education institutions, such as part-time vocational training colleges (in which students are at the same time workers) and "socialist-minded and professionally competent spare-time universities" (providing education to students of good political background) were established aiming at enhancing the average education levels of socialist-minded people (Zhang, 2012, p. 57). These non-formal higher education institutions increased rapidly in number during the Great Leap Forward<sup>13</sup> period (1958-1962) to be in line with the political agenda of achieving an economic breakthrough rapidly. Even these unconventional forms of higher education were academically far less competitive compared with the standard universities in China, they eventually took the dominant position in China's higher education system during the Great Leap Forward period, while the professors in the traditional standard universities, on the other hand, became the target for "political remolding" (Zhang, 2012, pp. 71-72). After the Cultural Revolution, when economic development replaced political struggle as the major theme of the country, higher education was perceived as the means to develop science and technology, which constitute the primary productive force of the country, so as to promote economic development.

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<sup>13</sup> The Great Leap Forward (Da Yuejin) was an economic and social campaign led by the Communist Party of China (CPC) under the leadership of Chairman Mao Zedong from 1958 to 1962. This campaign aimed at achieving "an economic breakthrough that would put China on a path of self-sustaining growth" (MacFarquhar, 1983, p. 4), but resulted in a total imbalance of the Chinese economy (p. 89), and caused the Great Chinese Famine (1959–1961) (p. 328).

With the intensified international competition, the task of higher education in China is currently defined by the government as “to cultivate high-quality professionals, to develop science, technology and culture, and to promote the construction of socialist modernization”, and to build a number of world-class universities and disciplines so as to “contribute to the enhancement of the comprehensive national power” (Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China, 2010). As a socialist country with a strong Confucian cultural background, collectivism and nationalism are well-accepted discourses. Reflected in higher education policies, these discourses allow individual faculty members to connect their academic work with the development of the nation, which explains why the participants would embrace the policies that emphasize the building of WCUs in China. For example, one participant explained,

China had been for a very long time humiliated and oppressed since the Opium War. After obtaining independence, people definitely had the will and determination to become stronger. This will has become stronger under the leadership of our current president, Xi. The international situation is changing every day. If you don’t become stronger, you leave yourself vulnerable to attacks. Technology is the first thing that a nation needs to become stronger... Education is the key to develop technology, so higher education is the most important thing to develop. That is why our universities have to be in line with the world, and we have to build world-class universities. There are so many reasons for us to develop the WCUs – this goal is out of cultural and historical reasons, and it also comes from our own wills. When people are lagging behind, they usually don’t have much desire to develop WCUs, but after their economic power has reached certain degree, or maybe after frequent communications with the foreign countries after the opening-up, people’s ideas have changed, and they start to have a stronger desire to develop. Building

WCUs is the only way to enhance ourselves, so as to realize our dream to build a powerful nation of science and technology. This is what President Xi names the Chinese Dream, the dream to make China a strong nation. (Ying, Professor in Natural Sciences and Engineering)

There is a strong appeal to a discourse of nationalism in Ying's statement, which reflects the impact of the national history, culture and the discursive facet of the policies on the shaping of academic subjects and their subjectivities. Under such political conditions with their historical contingencies, a faculty member is defined, in the first instance, as a Chinese citizen who is responsible for national development, and, thus, as a patriotic academic professional who is supposed to contribute to the development of China's higher education and its standing internationally and in the global sense.

To sum up, under specific cultural and political conditions with their historical contingencies and legacies, and in a society that is in transition, faculty members are constituted and constituting themselves according to a range of available discourses that are particular to their context, but which are in turn being mediated by broader forces of globalization and neoliberal governance. For example, while they perceive themselves often in somewhat idealistic terms as teacher, role model and educator, their understandings of such roles are also mediated by broader neoliberal, political and cultural forces at play which position them, for example as education service providers within a global market place where ranking of universities is a key marker of status attribution which impacts on the extent to which they are willing to embrace certain institutional norms governing their constitution as academic subjects. As I have illustrated throughout this chapter, such practices of subjectification are mediated by socio-economic status indicators as well as Nationalist and political discourses specific to the Chinese

context. These multiple discourses interact with one another and operate together to shape how faculty members come to understand themselves as academic subjects in contemporary Chinese society.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I examined how faculty members are constituted and constituting themselves as particular sorts of academic subjects through examining their responses to specific nationalist policies and understandings of their responsibilities and roles as faculty members. The findings suggest that as faculty members they come to understand and make sense of their academic subjectivities within multiple cultural, political and global discourses, under the impact of educational policies, and in a society in transition, given broader forces of globalization and neoliberal governance. In particular, I argue that neoliberalism, while negotiated within the specific Chinese context, has displayed new characteristics through interacting with other social discourses in contemporary China. The Chinese traditional values of education and educators have been tremendously challenged by the neoliberal discourse, but yet they still function persistently in governing the conceptions and practices of the participants. Faculty members are therefore placed in a very complicated situation in which they are expected to cope with multiple moral and regulatory norms so as to be culturally and socially recognized as “good” professors. In short, one of the major findings documented in this chapter is that neoliberalism in China both encourages and dispels the operation of the local discourses in the process of shaping the subjectivities of the faculty members: Neoliberalism has encouraged the discourse of nationalism or patriotism, which has simultaneously embraced the neoliberal competition in order to promote national development; On the other hand, the neoliberal conceptions of education and educators are in conflict with the Chinese traditional norm of “good teachers”. Faculty members’

subjectivities have been shaped by the specific conditions of neoliberal governance and their alignment with a tradition of Chinese culture that has historical legacy and contingency.

## Chapter Nine: Conclusion

### Reflecting on Research Findings

In the introduction of this dissertation, I set my goal of conducting this study as to address the following four questions: 1) How are faculty members at a Chinese university responding to and interpreting the policies that emphasize building WCUs in China? 2) How are these faculty members constituted and constituting themselves as particular sorts of subjects in the complex policy enactment process? 3) What are the effects of the specific national socio-cultural practices on determining who they are? And, 4) How are broader forces of globalization and neoliberalism, in the form of a commitment to build world-class universities, affecting how professors in China are coming to understand themselves as particular sorts of scholars or academic subjects? In other words, I was concerned to generate a deeper knowledge and understanding about the ways in which multiple local and global discourses shape the policies that emphasize the building of world-class universities in China, and influence the institutional and individual responses to the policies, thereby transforming the subjectivities of faculty members.

Data collected from fifteen in-depth interviews were analyzed through drawing upon the Foucauldian analytical framework (Foucault, 1980a, 1980b, 1987, 1988a, 1988b, 1993), critical policy theories (Ball, 1994, 2005; Ball, Maguire & Braun, 2012; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010), and globalization studies (Rizvi, 2008, 2009, 2014; Rizvi & Lingard, 2006; Burawoy, 2000). These theoretical inspirations facilitated my theorizing of subject formation in relation to policy enactment in the contemporary era of globalization, which, as I mentioned in Chapter One, entails three major tasks: 1) Understanding globalization in its historical terms, and how it operates as a hegemonic force that is fueled by neoliberal influences; 2) Understanding how



globalization is reshaping education and the formation of subjects; and, 3) Situating subject formation in the intersections of numerous interrelated yet sometimes conflicting discourses. These three tasks were tackled in this dissertation through analyzing the intensive interview data, drawing upon the relevant national and institutional policies, and examining China's specific historical and cultural realities. Below I provide an overview of the significant findings with some reflections on their relevance for extending our knowledge, understanding and contribution to the field of policy and globalization studies in education:

**The impact of globalization and neoliberal governance.** The research provided some insights into this phenomenon through its examination of China's pursuit of world-class universities. What has emerged is how such a pursuit is consistent with the logics of neoliberal globalization as manifested through a discourse that values efficiency, deliverability and performance, and encourages competition, excellence and high rates of return. It is within this context that the government of China decided to cope with international competition through developing higher education, which is perceived key to the national development and productivity growth. In this respect, my research provided some insights into the terms and enactment of various educational and economic policies in China that were driven by such a neoliberal rationality, how it entered into the university system to influence governance of higher education, as well as how it gradually penetrated the minds of academics to shape their subjectivities.

**The impact of globalization and neoliberal governance on the formation of academic subjectivities.** The research also provided some detailed insight into how faculty members in one Chinese university, with a commitment to establishing and consolidating its world-class status, have been navigating their subjectivities under the impact of neoliberalism. The data

provided insight into the enactment of university policies – how their material, interpretive and discursive dimensions operated together in the construction of academic subjects and their self-understandings. The participants' responses to the interview questions demonstrated that they were both passive policy receivers who were subjected to the dictates of the policies, and active policy enactors, who actively engaged with the policy process. Most if not all the participants believed that these policies were necessary and important and embraced the norms of competition and the pursuit of excellence embedded in such policies. For example, many of the participants felt that there were no better alternatives to the current faculty performance evaluation system. They indicated that they were actively committed to meeting the requirements prescribed in the policies, even though they confessed to have confronted challenges and difficulties during the process. In short, they became engaged in the culture of deliverability and performance in ways that highlighted their investment in certain practices of self-regulation and self-responsibilization (Rose and Miller, 2008).

As discussed previously, neoliberal values are different in many ways from the Chinese traditional values related to education and educators. The participants' responses reflected their struggle between meeting the traditional expectations of educators (as self-sacrificing teachers and role models), and addressing the requirements prescribed in the education policies and shaped by the market-driven ideology (in which they are redefined as education service providers, and are also expected to become efficient and competitive knowledge producers). Even though there are some connections between the two expected academic roles, participants indicated that they found it difficult to accommodate both roles, because each of them emphasizes different priorities and agendas. It was this dilemma that created challenges for faculty members in terms of attempting to find ways to allocate their energy, and to redefine

themselves as enterprising academic subjects committed to a norm of enhancing their status as aligned with that of embracing the university's commitment to establishing and maintaining a world-class status within the global market place of the higher education system. In this respect my research provided considerable insight into examining this interplay of micro and macro level operations of power and subjectification involving an examination of global forces at play in relation to explicating the effects and manifestations of neoliberal governance at one Chinese university in its quest for seeking international recognition as a WCU.

**The geopolitical salience of the Chinese context.** The research also highlighted how such neoliberal forms of governance and forces of globalization need to be considered in terms of how they are mediated within specific geopolitical and nationalist contexts. For example, the functions of higher education in China have always been closely related to the strong political and economic agendas of the government. With nationalism as a strong discourse in the education policies that emphasize the building of WCUs in China, and with collectivism as both resulting from China's Confucian tradition and its socialist nature, the research revealed that individual faculty members closely connected their academic work with the development of the nation and in this respect such investments became aligned with norms governing the forces of neoliberalism and globalization at play in the Chinese context and within the specific university that was the subject of my research. For example, the participants' responses have demonstrated how a university located in a less developed province usually means it has more difficulty in attracting and retaining high quality students and faculty members, which are indispensable parts in the construction of WCUs. Through exploring the origin of this unbalanced distribution of educational resources, this study also pointed to the close connection between the national economic policies and education, and also created a space to reflect on the equity issues related

to education resource distribution and the recognition issues consequent to the unbalanced educational development as one that needs to attend to the geopolitical salience of the Chinese context.

**Insights into global and local manifestations of neoliberalism in the Chinese context.**

The research has found that neoliberalism, while negotiated in the Chinese context, has demonstrated new characteristics. It interacts with the local discourses in a way that both accommodates and repels them. Given the cultural experience of China in the last century and the strong political and economic tasks that higher education entails, one primary focus of China's higher education has been to emphasize the practical applicability of knowledge. The government has also encouraged conducting cutting-edge research but primarily for the purpose of national development. This instrumental function of higher education has also resulted from the large population and comparatively limited resources of the country, which have fostered fierce competition and a tendency to emphasize the utilitarian aspect of education. The material realities and the colonial experience of the nation have cooperatively formed a strong "developmental discourse" among Chinese people over time. A wide-accepted belief is that the country has to develop so as to avoid the oppression of external powers and, so that people can live and work in peace and contentment. This "developmental discourse" has been strengthened through mass media, government policies and through people's performance of themselves as academic subjects. My research found that under such conditions, the individual life experiences of faculty members at this one university were tied closely to national development, as previously mentioned. However, my argument is that such experiences and practices of subjectification need to be understood against the historical backdrop related to the examination culture and worship of education, inherited from the feudal society, which has penetrated into the

Chinese culture and has formed a “discourse of excellence” that continues to influence Chinese education at this point in time. As such, the research supports the argument that both the discourse of development and the discourse of excellence have enabled neoliberal education policies that emphasize efficiency, excellence, deliverability and performance to obtain legitimacy and acceptance in Chinese society. Besides, deeply embedded in the Confucian culture, there is an affirmation or appreciation of hard work, personal strivings and the pursuit of excellence, which coincides with and is easily aligned with a certain logic of neoliberalism with its focus on self-responsibilization and individualism.

### **Contribution and implications of the study**

**Empirical knowledge on policy enactment under conditions of neoliberal governance.** This study filled an important empirical gap by generating knowledge about the process of subjectification in relation to the enactment of China’s policies that emphasize building of WCUs. Existing literature on China’s pursuit of WCUs has usually tended to focus on policy review or analysis, or policy implementation studies. This study, however, has filled a significant gap by examining from a critical lens the complicated and “messy” process of construction of academic subjects in relation to specific policy enactment vis-a-vis this pursuit, framed and understood in terms of a response to the particular forces of globalization that are driven by a neoliberal logic. In this respect, unlike previous studies which have been devoted to exploring the way things are – describing the implementation of the policy or focusing on the policy themselves (Choi, 2010; Guo & Ngok, 2008; Wang & Cheng, 2009; Wang, Wang & Liu, 2011) – my research provided key insights into policy enactment in generating knowledge about the interconnected networks of power relations at both the local and global levels of governance, and, hence, the channels and processes through which current conditions of neoliberal

governance in higher education in China have become the way they are (i.e. the political terms of these conditions of emergence). In this respect, my research has demonstrated how neoliberal governance as it relates to enacting a commitment to WCUs in China is negotiated within a specific local university context. It also provided key insights into how Chinese historical and cultural traditional discourses can be in conflict with neoliberalism in some ways while simultaneously facilitating it other ways in order to gain its legality in the higher education terrain. More specifically, it has generated particularized knowledge regarding practices of subjectification in relation to how faculty members are being constituted and constituting themselves as particular sorts of academic subjects under these specific conditions of neoliberal governance and their alignment with a tradition of Chinese individualism that has historical legacy and contingency. This focus on enactment in the Chinese context with its critical policy focus on enactment and engagement with Foucauldian analytic insights has not been addressed in the existing studies on China's pursuit of WCUs.

**Theoretical implications.** This study also provided theoretical possibilities for future critical policy studies and studies on neoliberal globalization. It explored how globalization was negotiated in a specific context through interacting with local cultures and discourses and their specific contingencies. It emphasized the critical role of history and culture in shaping the contemporary discourses and policies. In addition, it represented an attempt to provide a detailed analysis of policy enactment and highlighted the specific role of Foucauldian analytics as well as an application of policy sociology perspectives in conjunction with an engagement with theoretical literature addressing the forces of neoliberal globalization and neoliberal governance. In this respect the study is an exemplar of the particular use of theory with implications for thinking about knowledge generation and methodological questions pertaining analysis of data

that is sensitive to addressing the politics of policy enactment, subjectification and the formation of academic subjectivities with attention to its specific cultural specificities and historical contingencies within the broader context of addressing forces of globalization and the manifestation of neoliberal governance in a particular geopolitical context of a nation located in a Global South.

**Implications for policy making.** This study also identified significant issues emerging from China's current pursuit of WCUs, particularly with regards to raising critical awareness and reconsideration of the purpose of higher education, the roles of faculty members and the question of balancing quality and equity in the process of policy enactment. It offers implications for policy making in the following aspects:

***Rethinking the faculty appraisal system.*** The findings of this study suggest some pitfalls regarding the current faculty appraisal system. Apparently, setting incentives or standard benchmarks can be a good thing – they can have a positive impact on encouraging and fostering an active learning environment. The question, however, remains as to what extent should such standards be emphasized or prioritized, especially when they are driven by neoliberal modes of rationality. When faculty members have to set aside considerable time and energy to focus on meeting the standards, their normal teaching and research may be affected. It is therefore essential to address this issue through avoiding the one-size-fits-all evaluation policies and creating context-appropriate strategies and regulations to encourage teaching and research, and at the same time reducing the anxiety among the faculty members to ensure better teaching and research quality/output. The problem, however, is that creating such conditions runs counter to a neoliberal logic which emphasizes self-responsibilization and efficiency without providing the necessary resources and support to faculty. In short, faculty are required to do more and to take

on more responsibility for enhancing their academic standing in a global market place of higher education under conditions that are not conducive or that realistic in the sense that faculty are just not equipped to achieve such a goal in terms of research output, and especially with regards to generating publications in English in international refereed journals that have currency in the Global North.

Even though the emphasis of teaching was mentioned in both government and institutional policies, it was not amply reflected in the faculty appraisal system at University A. In fact, despite the mandatory requirement for the full professors to teach, as prescribed in the government and university policies, according to the accounts provided by faculty members there was a decided lack of attention attached to teaching. The rewarding mechanism developed to encourage teaching excellence is still a secondary consideration in universities in China.

In this sense this study highlighted the role and prioritization of building research capacity and output in Chinese universities as a basis for gaining representation and standing in the global ranking market of higher education, in which research (in the form of publications) is the major criteria. For policy makers, it is important to ensure that the emphasis on teaching is more than a slogan. This teaching-research dilemma cannot be avoided simply by using strategies such as allowing faculty members to be in a teaching, research or dual stream, especially given the privileged status that is given to research productivity. It is important to understand and promote the potential synergistic relationship between teaching and research (i.e., how each informs the other and the benefits of this dialectical relationship for enhancing both activities), which highlights the necessity and importance of supporting faculty in both teaching and research. However, for dual-stream faculty members, this is a dilemma that still needs to be



tackled. As the participants suggest, most faculty members at a research university still prefer the dual stream as they do not want to risk being marginalized in a research university.

*Rethinking what counts as a “reform”.* This study also creates a space for policy makers to reflect on what counts as a “reform” that can encourage and enhance teaching, learning and research capacity in universities, and therefore provides implication for reflecting on potential strategies that can lead to substantial reform. However, it needs to be understood that such enhancement and capacity building cannot be built without providing the necessary resources, capital and conditions for faculty to achieve university mandated outcomes. The problem is that such calls for enhancement are often driven by a neoliberal logic that is not concerned so much with creating the material conditions that would enable faculty to achieve these goals. Hence some form of engagement with the critical literature on the impact of neoliberalism and critical dialogue in universities is needed. What forms such dialogue may take and the possibilities for initiating them are indeed the subjects for further research and require some attention to existing resistance within universities and how this is being manifested and mobilized.

With respect to the issue of neoliberal reform agendas within the context of this study, it was clear that, the changes resulting from the current policies that emphasize the building of WCUs in China mainly took the form of an enhanced faculty performance evaluation standard, increased domestic and international academic exchange opportunities, an enhanced quality of the university infrastructure and teaching/research facilities, an increased number of scholars introduced from abroad, and other changes regarding funding redistribution and department restructuring as were discussed in Chapter Seven. However, much skepticism on behalf of faculty members was expressed regarding such initiatives. They believed that systemic reform was required at the level of university governance with its potential for impacting the overall

academic culture in creating better conditions to encourage and promote teaching and research. As the participants themselves highlighted, simply enforcing standards as a basis for enhancing teaching and research capacity without providing the necessary professional development is not conducive to achieving such goals. Some participants also discussed how the benefits of their international visiting and learning experiences are largely limited by the short time frame and the lack of teaching and research communications and cooperation with the receiving universities abroad, which once again speaks to material conditions which are not being addressed by the current neoliberal policy agenda. Further to this point, it is clear from the research that changes in terms of the academic culture of the university and departments are also desired and needed as faculty members spoke about differential allocation of funds and support for building research capacity across different departments.

*Rethinking merit-based distribution of resources.* The research has also raised some questions about the need for more attention to be directed to the consequences of resource optimization in the form of allocating more resources to the competitive departments or institutions for the purpose of self-positioning in the global ranking market. Both existing literature and the findings of this study have pointed to the issue of brain drain, emerging within China and internationally. With the high-quality education resources concentrated in the big prosperous cities, there is a reduced opportunity for students from less-developed areas, especially rural areas to obtain access to these resources. The unbalanced development among different regions, universities, departments and groups of people, therefore, runs the risk of intensifying the hierarchy within the higher education system, and prevents the social mobility of people. This unbalanced development among different education institutions, among different departments, and among different groups of people within the country, may simultaneously

result in the “misrecognition” issues as suggested by Fraser (1995). The material differences and the consequent differences reflected in their social status or education may further reduce these disadvantaged institutions, departments, or groups of people, leading them to be judged as inferior or incapable. These misrecognitions will further prevent certain groups from improving their socioeconomic status, and hence, further enlarging the already existing material gap. The task for policy makers, as suggested by Fraser (1995), is to create “a political strategy for integrating recognition claims with redistribution claims with a minimum of mutual interference” (p. 70). However, the polemics of how to engage with an investment in neoliberal policy governance and to foster productive policy dialogue with the senior administration at universities in the interest of securing resourcing and better conditions for faculty members is a fundamental one that the research leaves us pondering.

### **Limitations of the study**

There are a number of limitations of the study resulting from the nature of case study, the participant selection, and the research method. First, a case study is expected to provide a rich and holistic picture of the unit of analysis, which in this study is the process of subjectivities construction in relation to the policy enactment. In this study, even though I have interviewed 15 participants of different genders, from a range of departments, with different academic titles to ensure the richness and scope of data, the data collected were still insufficient to fully capture the complicated process of subjectivities construction, given the limited time frame and access to the resources.

Second, concerning the participant selection, the faculty members who voluntarily participated in the study are mostly young and promising scholars who are able to cope with the current faculty performance appraisal system. One implication for future research, therefore, is to

examine the “others”, who have difficulty in meeting the evaluation requirement of any kind. Also, it would be helpful if the students’ perspectives regarding the policies could be obtained, so as to understand from the students’ perspective on how faculty members are performing their roles as educators and researchers, and how their academic work has influenced the students’ learning.

Third, interviews were conducted through voice or video interviewing instruments. Face-to-face interviews may be able to create a more comforting environment for the participants to discuss their feelings and perspectives and lead to enhancing the rapport between the researcher and researched.

Fourth, interviews were conducted in participants’ first language, Chinese, and were translated by the researcher. There might be lost meanings in the translated transcripts.

### **Future research directions**

The findings of this study illuminate the directions for future research:

This study points to the importance of geographical location in policy enactment and the construction of the academic subjects in the Chinese context. Though this study has no intention to generalize the common conditions of Chinese universities’ pursuit of world-class status, future studies are desired to examine how the policies are nuanced in different locations, such as the three or four “super-class” universities in China, a university which is ranked similarly to University A but is located in a prosperous province, or an non-key university that hasn’t been heavily financed by the government.

This study delimits its examination of the policy enactment process through interviewing the faculty members only. Future studies are therefore desired to include other groups of policy

stakeholders into the research so as to gain a deeper understanding of the complexity of the policy enactment and the construction of people's subjectivities in the policy process.

### **Final thoughts**

Overall, the study raised important questions not only about policy enactment under neoliberal governance, and given specific forces of globalization in relation to a particular case involving a university's quest for world-class status in China, but also leaves us with food for thought with regards to addressing the politics of policy making under such neoliberal conditions. Given the prioritization of certain policies involving the aspiration to be a WCU framed in terms of embracing a neoliberal social imaginary that is tied to the global market place of higher education with its status rankings of universities, how can resistance against such a logic be mobilized by those faculty members on the ground to secure the conditions that can best serve their academic interests and well-being? It is important for further research to examine this question of mobilization and resistance against neoliberal policy reform agendas in Chinese universities as a basis for addressing the politics of policy making processes and networks and various points of attempted intervention to alter the terms of those policies in service of those affected or harmed by them.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Ethics Approval



#### Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board NMREB Delegated Initial Approval Notice

**Principal Investigator:** Prof. Goli Rezai-Rashti  
**Department & Institution:** Education\Faculty of Education, Western University

**NMREB File Number:** 107799

**Study Title:** The quest for world-class universities in China: Faculty members' subjectivities in the era of globalization

**NMREB Initial Approval Date:** April 21, 2016

**NMREB Expiry Date:** April 21, 2017

#### Documents Approved and/or Received for Information:

Document Name	Comments	Version Date
Recruitment Items	Second-Party Recruitment Email_Chinese version	2016/04/06
Recruitment Items	Second-Party Recruitment Email English version	2016/04/06
Instruments	Interview outline_Chinese version	2016/04/06
Instruments	Interview outline_English Version	2016/04/06
Western University Protocol		2016/04/06
Letter of Information & Consent	English	2016/03/22
Letter of Information & Consent	Chinese	2016/03/22
Recruitment Items	Recruitment Email - English	2016/03/22
Recruitment Items	Recruitment Email - Chinese	2016/03/22

The Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (NMREB) has reviewed and approved the above named study, as of the NMREB Initial Approval Date noted above.

NMREB approval for this study remains valid until the NMREB Expiry Date noted above, conditional to timely submission and acceptance of NMREB Continuing Ethics Review.

The Western University NMREB operates in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2), the Ontario Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA, 2004), and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario.

Members of the NMREB who are named as Investigators in research studies do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on such studies when they are presented to the REB.

The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 00000941.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Ethics Officer, on behalf of Dr. Riley Hinson, NMREB Chair or delegated board member

Ethics Officer to Contact for Further Information: Erika Basile \_\_\_ Nicole Kaniki \_\_\_ Grace Kelly \_\_\_ Katelyn Harris \_\_\_ Vikki Tran  \_\_\_

**Appendix B: Recruitment Email (English version)****Recruitment Email****Subject Line: Invitation to participate in research**

My name is Bailing Zhang. I am a doctoral candidate at the Faculty of Education, the University of Western Ontario. I would like to invite you to participate in a study that we, [Principal Investigator: Professor Goli Rezai-Rashti (Phone; E-mail) & Professor Wayne Martino (Phone; E-mail), and Student Researcher: Bailing Zhang (Phone; E-mail)] are conducting. Briefly, the study involves examining your perspectives as a faculty member concerning the national and institutional policies that emphasize the building of the world-class universities in China. It is also aimed at investigating how related education policies have influenced your understandings of higher education and your roles as a faculty member. The interview will be conducted in Mandarin for 60-90 minutes over the phone, through skype or at a place of your choice. If you would like more information on this study, please refer to the attached Letter of Information and Consent, or please contact the researchers at the contact information given above.

Thank you very much in advance for your time and kind help with our study.

Sincerely,

Bailing

Bailing Zhang  
PhD candidate  
Faculty of Education  
University of Western Ontario



## Appendix C: Recruitment Email (Chinese version)



### 研究参与邀请函

#### 邮件标题：研究参与邀请

我叫张白翎，是加拿大西安大略大学教育学院的博士生。非常荣幸地邀请您参与我们的一项研究 [研究负责人: Goli Rezai-Rashti 教授 (电话; 电子信箱), Wayne Martino 教授 (电话; 电子信箱:), 学生研究员: 张白翎 (电话; 电子信箱)]。简言之, 这项研究想邀请您分享您从一名高校教师的视角, 如何看待国家和高校的强调“在中国建立世界一流大学”的相关政策。同时, 这项研究也想考察相关的政策如何影响您对高等教育以及对大学教师这一角色的看法。访谈将使用普通话, 时间为 60 到 90 分钟。访谈可以通过电话, skype 或者其他您选定的方式。

只要如果您想了解关于此项研究的更多信息, 请参见附件《知情同意书》, 或者通过上文提到的通讯方式联系研究人员。

提前感谢您对我们的研究付出的时间和友好帮助。

此致

祝好

张白翎

**Appendix D: Second-Party Recruitment Email (English version)****Second- Party Recruitment Email****Subject Line: Invitation to participate in research**

Dear Professor X,

Hope this message finds you well.

I am currently conducting my doctoral research study that examines how faculty members at a Chinese university understand and respond to the national and institutional policies that emphasize building of world-class universities in China, and how related education policies have influenced their understandings of higher education and their roles as faculty members. I would like to invite some faculty members at University A to participate in this study. Attached please find the Recruitment Email and the Letter of information and Consent. I would appreciate it very much if you could help me to forward this email to any faculty member you know who may be interested in participating.

Thank you very much in advance for your help and support.

Sincerely,  
Bailing

Bailing Zhang  
PhD candidate  
Faculty of Education  
University of Western Ontario

**Appendix E: Second-Party Recruitment Email (Chinese version)****第二方研究参与邀请函****邮件标题：研究参与邀请**

亲爱 X 教授：

望一切安好！

.我现在在做我的博士课题，这个课题旨在研究高校教师如何看待和回应国家和高校的强调“在中国建立世界一流大学”的相关政策，以及相关政策如何影响大学教师对大学教育以及对大学教师这一角色的理解。我想邀请 A 大学的老师参与这项研究。随信附上邀请函和研究知情同意书。如果您能帮我把这封电子邮件转发给您认识的那些可能有兴趣参与的老师，我将不胜感谢。

提前感谢您对我的帮助和支持。

此致

祝好

张白翎

## Appendix F: Letter of Information and Consent (English version)



### Letter of Information and Consent

**Project Title:** The Quest for World-Class Universities in China: Faculty Members' Subjectivities in the Era of Globalization

**Document Title:** Letter of Information and Consent – faculty members

**Principal Investigator:** Professor Goli Rezai-Rashti (Phone; E-mail) & Professor Wayne Martino (Phone; E-mail)

**Student Researcher:** Bailing Zhang (Phone; E-mail)

#### **1. Invitation to Participate**

My name is Bailing Zhang, and I am a doctoral candidate at the Faculty of Education, the University of Western Ontario. I would like to invite you to participate in my doctoral research study that examines how faculty members at Chinese universities understand and respond to the national and institutional policies that emphasize building of world-class universities in China. In addition, this study is to investigate how related education policies have influenced your understandings of higher education and your roles as a faculty member.

#### **2. Why is this study being done?**

The quest for world-class universities (WCUs) has become a high priority for governments around the world. Existing studies have well documented how this educational agenda of building WCUs has been localized and implemented in different places. Inadequate attention and research effort, however, have been given to an examination of how faculty members are responding to the national agenda of building WCUs and how their understanding of higher education and their roles as faculty members are shifting in the face of the changes caused by globalization and specific cultural conditions. This study is aimed at filling in the empirical gap through interviewing 15 faculty members at a Chinese university to enrich the understanding of these issues.

#### **3. How long will you be in this study?**

Each interview will last 60-90 minutes. One follow-up interview may be conducted, with your permission, in order to clarify certain information you provide. The follow-up interview will last for no more than 20 minutes.

#### **4. What are the study procedures?**

If you agree to participate in this research, I will conduct an interview with you at a time of your choice. The interview will be conducted in Mandarin. The interview will be audio recorded with your consent. I will turn off the recorder any time at your request. Or, if you choose not to be audio recorded, I will take notes instead. In the case that there are follow-up interviews to clarify certain information you provide, I will contact you through email or phone to obtain your consent.

#### **5. What are the risks and harms of participating in this study?**

There are no known or anticipated risks or discomforts associated with participating in this study.

**6. What are the benefits of participating in this study?**

There is no direct benefit to you from participating in this study. This research however, will provide you with an opportunity to share and reflect on your perspectives and experiences related to the policies that emphasize building of world-class universities in China. This study can have empirical and theoretical implications for future policy studies for China and beyond.

**7. Can participants choose to leave the study?**

Yes. You may withdraw from the research project for any reason, at any time without explanation or penalty of any sort. If you decide to withdraw from the study, you have the right to request withdrawal of information collected about you. If you wish to have your information removed please let the researcher know.

**8. How will participants' information be kept confidential?**

A pseudonym will be used in the review at your choice. Your name, institutional affiliation, and any other personally identifiable information will not be collected in the interviews. I will also permanently delete any collected information that may lead people to associate certain data with your identity from both the audio recordings and the interview transcripts.

All data collected will be kept confidentially. After the interview, I will save the data collected for my future research. The data in the form of electric files will be stored in password-protected folders at the personal computers of the research team. Hard copies of the data (research notes and photocopies of the transcripts) and the USB hard drives used to store the backup data will be locked in filing cabinets. All data will be accessed only by the members of the research team. I will retain the data for up to 5 years after the study is over, and will then ensure that all related copies of recordings and transcripts be deleted.

Representatives of The University of Western Ontario Non-Medical Research Ethics Board may require access to your study-related records to monitor the conduct of the research.

While we do our best to protect your information there is no guarantee that we will be able to do so. If data is collected during the project which may be required to report by law we have a duty to report.

**9. Are participants compensated to be in this study?**

You will not be compensated for your participation in this research.

**10. What are the rights of participants?**

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may decide not to be in this study. Even if you consent to participate you have the right to not answer individual questions or to withdraw from the study at any time.

We will give you new information that is learned during the study that might affect your decision to stay in the study.

You do not waive any legal right by signing this consent form.

**11. Whom do participants contact for questions?**

If you have any questions about this study, please contact the researcher(s) using the information at the top of page 1;

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of this study, you may contact The Office of Research Ethics (519) 661-3036, email: [ethics@uwo.ca](mailto:ethics@uwo.ca).

**This letter is yours to keep for future reference.**

### Written Consent

**1. Project Title:** The Quest for World-Class Universities in China: Faculty Members' Subjectivities in the Era of Globalization

**2. Document Title:** Consent Form

**3. Principal Investigator + Contact:** Dr. Goli Rezai-Rashti (Phone; E-mail) & Dr. Wayne Martino (Phone; E-mail)

**4. Student Researcher:** Bailing Zhang (Phone; E-mail)

I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree to participate. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to be audio-recorded in this research

YES  NO

I consent to the use of unidentified quotes obtained during the study in the dissemination of this research

YES  NO

Name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\*\*\*\*\*

Name of Person obtaining Informed Consent (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Person Obtaining Informed Consent: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



### Verbal script for Consent

Hello, this is Bailing Zhang. I am the student researcher for the research study titled “The quest for world-class universities in china: Faculty members’ subjectivities in the era of globalization”. Though I have already sent you a copy of the Letter of Information and Consent, I am now going to read you the letter just in case you have any questions. [**Clearly read the letter of information the participant over the phone**]

Do you have any questions?  
[**Answer any questions they may have**]

Do you agree to participate in this study?

*\*If yes, continue with the study*

*\*If no, thank them for their time and say good-bye*

Do you agree to be audio-recorded in this research?

*\*If yes, audio record the interview.*

*\*If no, take notes instead.*



## Appendix G: Letter of Information and Consent (Chinese version)



### 知情同意书

**研究课题：** 在中国寻求构建世界一流大学：全球化时代背景下大学教师的主体性研究  
**文件名称：** 知情同意书——面向大学教师

**研究负责人：** Goli Rezai-Rashti 教授（电话； 电子邮箱:）， Wayne Martino 教授（电话； 电子邮箱）

**学生研究员：** 张白翎（电话； 电子邮箱）

#### 12. 参与邀请

我叫张白翎，是加拿大西安大略大学教育学院的博士生。很荣幸邀请您参与我的博士研究课题。这项研究主要探讨中国大学的高校教师如何理解和回应国家和高校制定的与“在中国构建世界一流大学”这一议程相关的政策。此外，这项研究也探讨这些相关的教育政策如何影响您对大学教育以及高校教师的角色的理解。

#### 13. 研究目的

世界多国政府都已经高度重视追求建立世界一流的大学。现有的研究已经很好地记载了“构建世界一流大学”这一教育议程如何被本土化，以及如何各地被实施。可是却没有足够的学术和科研工作关注大学教师如何回应“构建世界一流大学”这一国家议程，以及当他们面临着全球化和特殊的文化环境所引发的变迁的时候，他们对大学教育以及对自身角色的理解发生着怎样的改变。通过采访一所中国大学的 15 名教师，本研究旨在加深对这些问题的认识，从而填补实证上的文献空缺。

#### 14. 研究的时间

每个访谈持续 60-90 分钟。在得到您的允许后，为了澄清您提供的某些信息也许会有一个后续访谈。后续访谈的时间不会超过 20 分钟。

#### 15. 研究程序

如果您同意参与这项研究,我们将在您选择的时间内对您进行一次采访。采访使用普通话。在征得您同意之后，采访将被语音录音。在采访过程中，您可以在任何时候要求暂停录音。或者如果您选择不接受录音，我们将作笔录。如果为了澄清您提供某些信息需要后续采访，我们将通过电子邮件或电话与您联系，征得您的同意。

#### 16. 研究风险和伤害

参与此研究没有已知或可预见的风险。

#### 17. 研究收益

参与这项研究对您没有直接的收益。本研究可为您提供一个机会来分享和反思您对“在中国构建一流大学”这一政策的看法以及与之相关的经历。本研究也会为以后中国和其他国家的政策研究提供实例和理论方面的借鉴。

### **18. 参与者能退出研究吗？**

可以。您可以以任何理由，在任何时间，无须任何解释，不受任何一种形式的处罚退出本研究。如果您决定退出研究，您有权要求撤回已经收集的和您有关的数据。如果您希望清除您提供的信息，请联系研究人员。

### **19. 如何保护参与者的隐私？**

采访时您可以选择用一个匿名。在采访过程中，我们不会收集您的真实姓名，大学院系以及其他信息任何有可能显露您身份的信息。如果我们认为您在访谈中对某些问题的回答可能导致人们识别出您的身份，我们还将在音频文件和访谈记录中永久删除这些信息。

所有收集的数据将被保密保存。采访结束后，我们将保存研究收集的数据用以我们今后的研究。以电子文件形式的数据将被存储在研究人员的个人电脑中的有密码保护的文件夹里。副本数据（研究笔记和副本的复印件）和用来存储备份数据的 USB 硬盘将被锁在文件柜里。所有数据只有研究团队的成员才能访问。研究结束后，数据将被保存 5 年，然后我将确保删除所有收集的录音和采访记录。

为了监控研究的进行，西安大略大学非医学研究伦理委员会的代表有可能需要访问您的和本研究有关的记录。

虽然我们尽全力保护您的信息，我们不能担保我们有能力做到。如果司法机关要求我们报告收集的数据，我们有责任报告。

### **20. 参与者有酬劳吗？**

参与这项研究您没酬劳。

### **21. 参与者的权利是什么？**

您参与本研究完全自愿。您可以决定不参与。即便您同意参与了，您也有权力不回答某些问题，或者在任何时候退出研究。

如果在研究过程中，我们获知了一些新的信息，这些信息有可能会影响您决定是否继续参与我们的研究，那么我们将告知您这些信息。

签署这份知情同意书不会让您丧失任何合法权利。

### **22. 参与者如果有问题联系谁？**

对于此项研究如果您有任何问题，请通过首页顶部的通讯信息联系研究人员。

对于您作为研究参与者的权利，如果您有问题，请联系科研伦理办公室。电话：1 (519) 661-3036，电子邮箱：[ethics@uwo.ca](mailto:ethics@uwo.ca)。

此同意书副本将由您保留作为日后参考

## 书面同意

**5. 研究课题：** 在中国寻求构建世界一流大学：全球化时代背景下大学教师的主体性研究

**6. 文件名称：** 知情表

**7. 研究负责人：** Goli Rezai-Rashti 教授（电话； 电子邮箱）， Wayne Martino 教授（电话； 电子邮箱）

**8. 学生研究员：** 张白翎（电话； 电子邮箱）

我已经阅读了知情同意书，研究人员也已经向我解释了这项研究的性质。我同意参与。我的所有问题都得到了让我满意的答复。

我同意在本研究中接受录音。

是  否

我同意在发布研究结果时，研究人员可以匿名引用我在访谈中原话。

是  否

姓名： \_\_\_\_\_

签名： \_\_\_\_\_ 日期： \_\_\_\_\_

\*\*\*\*\*

知情同意的获得者姓名： \_\_\_\_\_

知情同意的获得者签名： \_\_\_\_\_ 日期： \_\_\_\_\_



## 口头同意脚本

您好，我叫张白翎。我是研究课题为“在中国寻求构建世界一流大学：全球化时代背景下大学教师的主体性研究”的学生研究员。尽管我已经给您发了一份知情同意书的副本，以防您有任何问题，我在此给您读一遍。（清晰地通过电话或Skype给参与者读知情同意书）

您有问题吗？

（回答他们的任何问题）

您同意参与这项研究吗？

*\*如果同意，继续进行研究。*

*\*如果不同意，感谢他们的时间，再见。*

您同意在研究中接受录音吗？

*\*如果同意，给访谈录音。*

*\*如果不同意，研究人员笔录。*

## **Appendix H: Interview Outline (English version)**

### **A. Knowledge and perspectives of the national and institutional policies emphasizing the building of world-class universities in China.**

1. How long have you been working at University A?
2. Could you talk about your roles as a faculty member at University A?
3. Do you know any of the national or institutional policies that emphasize the building of the world-class universities in China? If you do, how would you comment on these policies?
4. Do you think these policies are important? Please explain.
5. Do you think the policies drafted and enacted at University A are in line with the national agenda of building world-class universities in China? As far as you know, is there any gap or inconsistency between this national policy agenda and the institutional responses and practices?
6. Are far as you now, what factors are usually taken into consideration when drafting the institutional policies that respond to the national agenda of building world-class universities?
7. Are faculty members at University A concerned with these policies, or are involved in the making of certain institutional policies of this kind?

### **B. Impact of the policies on the faculty members' teaching and research.**

8. How relevant do you think these policies you mentioned above are for you as a faculty member?
9. What experiences have you had related to any of the policies you mentioned above?
10. What impact do you think these policies have had on faculty members, students and the university?
11. As far as you know, what kind of attitudes do you and your colleagues have towards these policies? How do you respond to these policies?
12. Would you please share any of the influences that these policies have had on your teaching and research work?

### **C. Perspectives of university rankings and globalization.**

13. Are you familiar with university rankings? Do you have any comments on the rankings?
14. In your opinion, what kind of universities could be called "world-class"?
15. Do you think University A is a "world-class" university?
16. Why do you think the Chinese government and higher education institutions are pursuing world-class universities?
17. In your opinion, are there any historical, social or cultural reasons for China to establish world-class universities?

18. How would you understand the impact of globalization on China's higher education, and, in particular, on your role as a faculty member?

**D. Faculty members' subjectivities**

19. Would you share some of your experiences or thoughts that have made you decide to be a faculty member?

20. Please describe what you consider to be a "good" faculty member at a university? Have your thoughts changed over the years? Please explain.

21. As far as you are concerned, have the policies emphasizing the building of world-class universities in China brought about any challenges or opportunities? Please explain.

## Appendix I: Interview Outline (Chinese version)

### A. 是否了解以及如何看待国家和大学的有关在中国建立世界级大学的政策

1. 请问您在 A 大学工作多久了？
2. 能谈谈您在 A 大学工作的主要职责吗？
3. 您了解任何国家的或者大学的，有关在中国建立世界级大学的政策吗？如果了解一些的话，能谈谈您怎么看这些政策吗？
4. 您觉得这些政策重要吗？请解释。
5. 您认为您所在的大学制定和执行的相关政策符合国家关于建立一流大学的政策议题吗？据您所知，国家的议题和大学的回应以及做法之间有无差异或者不一致的地方？
6. 据您所知，当制定政策来回应国家关于建立世界级大学这一议题的时候，大学通常有哪些方面的考虑。
7. 在 A 大学工作的教职人员关注这些政策吗？您们有没有参与制定与此相关的某些大学的政策呢？

### B. 政策对大学教师教学和科研的影响

8. 您觉得上面提到的这些政策和您作为一名大学教师联系密切吗？
9. 能分享一下您自己的与上面提到的政策相关的经历吗？
10. 您觉得这些政策对大学教师，学生还有大学本身有什么样的影响呢？
11. 据您所知，您和您的同事一般怎么怎么看这些政策？都如何回应这些政策呢？
12. 能谈谈这些政策如何影响您的教学和科研工作吗？

### C. 大学教师对大学排名和全球化的看法.

13. 您了解大学排名吗？您对排名这件事怎么看？
14. 您觉得什么样的大学能称之为“世界级”大学？
15. 您觉得您所在的大学是世界级大学吗？
16. 在您看来，为什么中国政府和高校在追求建立世界级大学？
17. 在您看来，中国要建立世界级大学，有没有什么历史，社会，文化方面的因素？
18. 您怎么理解全球化对中国高等教育的影响？尤其，如何影响您作为一名高校教师的职责？

### D. 大学教师的主体性

19. 您能分享一下您的哪些经历和想法让您觉得成为一名大学教师吗？

20. 您觉得什么样的教师可以被称为是一名好的大学教师？您的想法这些年改变过吗？请解释。
21. 就您而言，这些强调在中国建立世界级大学的政策给您带来了哪些挑战和机遇呢？请解释。



## Curriculum Vitae

**Name:** Bailing Zhang

**Post-secondary Education and Degrees:** Bachelor of Arts (English Language and Literature)  
Jilin University, Changchun, Jilin, P. R. China, 2001

Master of Education (Curriculum and Instruction)  
University of Regina, Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada, 2009

Doctorate of Philosophy (Education Studies – Critical Policy, Equity and Leadership Studies)  
The University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario, Canada, 2018

**Honours and Awards:** University of Regina Teaching Fellowship  
Fall, 2006

University of Regina Graduate Scholarship  
Winter, 2007

University of Regina Graduate Scholarship  
Spring & Summer, 2007

Ontario Graduate Scholarship (OGS)  
2013-2014 deferred to 2014-2015

Douglas Ray Award  
2016

**Related Work Experience** Full-Time Lecturer  
School of Foreign Language Education  
Jilin University, Changchun, P.R. China  
2001-2005

Research Assistant  
Centre for Social Justice and Anti-oppressive Education  
Faculty of Education, University of Regina, Regina, Canada  
2006

Lab Instructor  
Language Resource Center, Faculty of Arts, University of Regina  
Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada

2008

Research Assistant  
Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research  
University of Regina, Regina, Canada  
2008-2009

Sessional Lecturer  
Department of International Language, Faculty of Arts  
University of Regina, Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada  
2008-2010

Research Assistant  
Faculty of Education, the University of Western Ontario  
London, Ontario, Canada  
2010-2013; 2014-2015

Teaching Assistant  
Faculty of Education, the University of Western Ontario  
2012-2013

#### **Selected Refereed Publications and Conference Presentations:**

**Zhang, B.** (2017). The quest for world-class universities in China: Faculty members' subjectivities in an era of globalization. Comparative and International Education Society of Canada, CSSE Annual Conference, 2017. Ryerson University, Toronto, ON, May 27 – May 31, 2017.

**Zhang, B.** & Blachford, D. (2017). Understanding the ethical imaginaries of social sciences research in China: A case study. Ireland International Conference on Education, Dublin, Ireland, April 24 – April 27, 2016.

**Zhang, B.** & Blachford, D. (2016). Interpretations and practices of social sciences research ethics in China: Perspectives of faculty members. Comparative and International Education Society of Canada, CSSE Annual Conference 2016. University of Calgary, Calgary, AB, May 28 – June 1, 2016.

**Zhang, B.** (2015). Policy enactment and the discursive subject formation: Theoretical inspirations and possibilities. Canadian Committee of Graduate Students in Education, CSSE Annual Conference 2015. University of Ottawa, Ottawa, ON, May 30 – June 3, 2015.

Blachford, D. & **Zhang, B.** (2014). Rethinking international migration of human capital and brain circulation: The case of Chinese-Canadian academics. *Journal of Studies in International Education*. 18(3), 202-222.

**Zhang, B.** (2014). The use of critical policy analysis in the realm of higher education internationalization: A case study. Canadian Committee of Graduate Students in Education, CSSE Annual Conference 2014. Brock University, St. Catharines, ON, May 24 – May 30, 2014.

**Zhang, B.** (2012). Negotiating gender and rural identity: Stories of five girls in rural China. Canadian Committee of Graduate Students in Education, CSSE Annual Conference 2012. Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, ON, May 27 – May 30, 2012.

Blachford, D. & **Zhang, B.** (2012). Rethinking the dynamics of brain circulation: The case of Chinese-Canadian academics. Comparative and International Education Society of Canada, CSSE Annual Conference 2012. Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, ON, May 27 – May 30, 2012.

**Zhang, B.** (2011). Barriers, constraints and emotional costs to be successful: Understanding girls' education in rural China. Canadian Association for the Study of Women and Education, CSSE Annual Conference 2011. UNB/St. Thomas University, Fredericton, ON, May 28 – June 1, 2011.

**Zhang, B.** (2011). The experiences of ethnic minority females in China in an age of globalization: An ethnographic case study. Canadian Committee of Graduate Students in Education, CSSE Annual Conference 2011. UNB/St. Thomas University, Fredericton, ON, May 28 – June 1, 2011.