

Chapter 1

Fostering Creative Talents for an “Innovation– Oriented Nation”

ABSTRACT

This book starts with an overall background of rapid progress of economic development in recent China under a shift from ‘Made in China’ to ‘Created in China’. Such a background shapes the starting point of this book and reflects a question: Why should we focus on the topic of creativity and innovation in Chinese universities? This chapter interprets the meaning of a political goal of ‘innovation-oriented nation’, the link between creativity and innovation, and the barriers of traditional culture to develop innovation capability in China. All these points underpin why Chinese universities should put creativity on the top of the agenda. This will lay basis in later chapters that address problem-based learning (PBL) as a good strategy of facilitating creativity among young Chinese talents.

INTRODUCTION

It is well known that innovation has been the focus of global competition, it becomes increasingly important in driving national economic development. This has been particularly evidenced by China’s trajectory over the past decades: the nation firstly developed itself from a rural, agricultural society to an urban, industrial one, and then changed the society from a command

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economy to a market-based one. After its two historic transformations, China now becomes one of global leaders of economic innovation and going on its way of developing an 'innovation-oriented nation' towards a modern, harmonious, and creative society.

In 2010, China became the second largest sovereign economy in the world. It has put in place plans to develop nine strategic emerging industries including next generation information technologies, high-end equipment, new materials, bio-industry, new energy vehicles, new energy, energy conservation and environmental protection, digital creativity and related service industry. According to the report provided by McKinsey Global Institute in 2017, China has one of the most active digital-investment and start-up ecosystems in the world, has the potential to set the world's digital frontier in coming decades. The value of China's e-commerce transactions is today estimated to be larger than the value of those of France, Germany, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States combined (MGI, 2017). China has contributed almost two billion USD to the development of ICT infrastructure between 2010 and 2014, outspending traditional donors like UN agencies, EU institutions and Germany. Between 2012 and 2015, Chinese firms participated in merely 7 percent of world-wide undersea cable projects, this ratio is estimated to increase to 20 percent between 2016 and 2019. All the data has shown China's economy has already been a leading global force.

However, any technology innovation is not possible without policy support. Along with the period of rapid growth, the Chinese government has attached great importance to the core position of innovation in making policies. In 1992, China officially established the strategic emerging industries after its reform and opening up. After that the nation started to explore deeper into technology-driven governance. In 2006, the government declared its intention to transform China into 'an innovative society' by 2020 and a world leader in science and technology by 2050. The strong focus on innovation is reflected in the government's continuously increasing technology investment and supporting policy. In 1998, China officially adopted the concept of the National Innovation System; thereafter, the design and implementation of science and technology (S&T) policies has focused more on accelerating the progress of S&T and strengthening technical innovation and high-tech industrialization. In 2006, 'innovation-oriented nation' became an officially recognized national strategy of China, after decades of active engagement in the world's economic system and the successful establishment of China's competitive advantages in primary industries and manufacturing (Zhou, et al., 2017). In May 2015, China's government officially announced the Made

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