

Stay Local, Go Global: A Preliminary Analysis of Chinese-Foreign Higher Education Partnerships in Guangdong, China*

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As China moves toward a market system after the “reforms and opening-up” policy since the late 1970s, internationalization is receiving widespread attention at many academic institutions in mainland China. Today, there are 70 Sino-Foreign joint institutions (namely, “Chinese-Foreign Higher Education Partnership”) presently operating within the Chinese nation. Despite the fact that the majority of these joint institutions have been developed since the 1990s, surprisingly little work has been published that addresses its physical distribution in China, and the prospects and challenges faced by the faculty and institutions on an operational level. What are the incentives of adopting both Western and Chinese elements in higher education? How do we ensure the higher education models developed in the West can also work well in mainland China? In order to answer the aforementioned questions, the purpose of this paper is therefore threefold: (a) to navigate the current development of internationalization in China; (b) to compare conventional Chinese curriculum with the “hybrid” Chinese-Foreign education model in present Guangdong province, China; and (c) to delineate the prospects and challenges of developing the internalize Chinese-Foreign higher education in contemporary China.

Keywords: internationalization, higher education, Chinese-Foreign higher education institutions, higher education models, universities in Guangdong province, China

Introduction: The Distribution of Chinese-Foreign Higher Education Partnerships in Mainland China

The Chinese-Foreign Higher Education Partnership—commonly known as “中外高校合作办学” in

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Mandarin—has been a popular trend of internationalization in mainland China since the 1990s. Today, there are at least 70 Chinese-Foreign higher education institutions and 1,091 joint-venture undergraduate programs presently operating within 28 Chinese provinces and municipalities in China. Both Jiangsu and Shanghai have established the highest number of internationalized Chinese-Foreign higher education institutions (15.7%) within China, following by Liaoning (11.4%), Guangdong (10%), Shandong (7.1%), Zhejiang (7.1%), Chongqing (5.7%), Sichuan (4.3%), Beijing (4.3%), Jilin (4.3%), Tianjin (2.9%), Shanxi (1.4%), Hebei (1.4%), Hunan (1.4%), and Hubei (1.4%), as shown in Figure 1. As of July 11, 2019, China had 2,688 higher education institutions (including all public and private colleges and universities), which means that the numbers of these Chinese-Foreign higher education institutions are equivalent to 2.6% out of the total of higher education institutions in China today (Ministry of Education [MOE] of the People’s Republic of China, 2019).

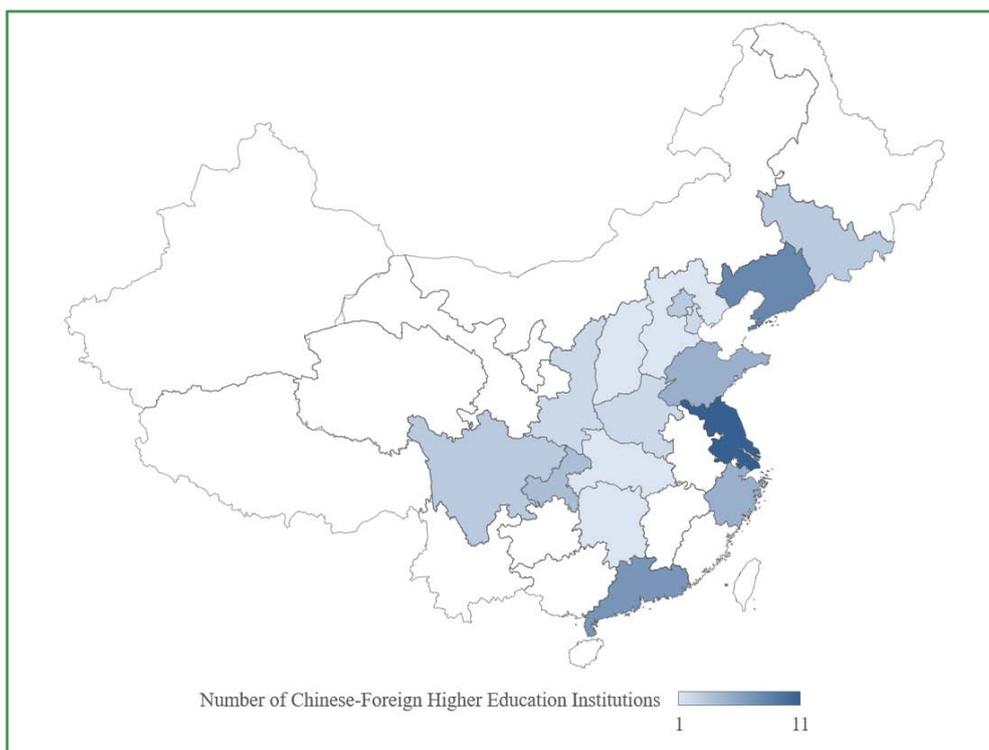


Figure 1. The distribution of Chinese-Foreign higher education partnerships in China, 2019 (Source: Data from the MOE’s database, 2019).

Interestingly, there are more than 80% of undergraduate programs developed not in the first-tier international shipping and trading cities (i.e., Shanghai, Beijing, Shenzhen, and Guangzhou), but in the fast-growing second-tier cities, such as Suzhou and Nanjing in Jiangsu province, Ningbo and Hangzhou in Zhejiang province, and Zhuhai in Guangdong province, etc (as shown in Table 1). In many instances, the majority of these joint institutions and programs are predominated by the Anglo-Saxon countries, which include United Kingdom (29%) and United States of America (17.4%); followed by the European countries, such as France (10%) and Germany (10%). Despite the Chinese government does not create or publish any official definition for the term “internationalization”, this term has been regarded frequently as an expansion of institutional mission through a process of international and intercultural integration into teaching, research, and service functions of the university (Zhang, 2016; Knight, 2003). English-speaking learning environment and

Western training services are thus being created on Chinese campuses to address opportunities that range from international business to environmental engineering. While some universities have adopted American higher education system by offering a long list of general education courses to encourage critical inquiry and creativity (Beck, 2012, p. 134; Ennew & Yang, 2009, p. 22).

According to the MOE's database on "Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools", the most popular undergraduate subject offered by the present internationalized Chinese-foreign partnerships is engineering (41%), as shown in Figure 2. This figure also tells us that the second most popular subject is business and management (17.3%), following by the subject of economics (10.5%), fashion design (9.6%), sciences (7%), art (5%), medical science (3.5%), education (2%), military (1.6%), law (1.1%), agriculture (1.1%), and history (0.2%). In some regards, the rapid growth of Chinese internationalization in higher education may relate to the socio-economic development in China and the Chinese parents' preferences and desires to seek greater international learning opportunities for their children without leaving China. What are the incentives of adopting both Western and Chinese elements in higher education? How do we ensure the higher education models developed in the West can also work well in mainland China? In order to answer the aforementioned issues, the following section is written to compare curricula differences between the internationalize Chinese-Foreign higher education model and the conventional Chinese higher education model.

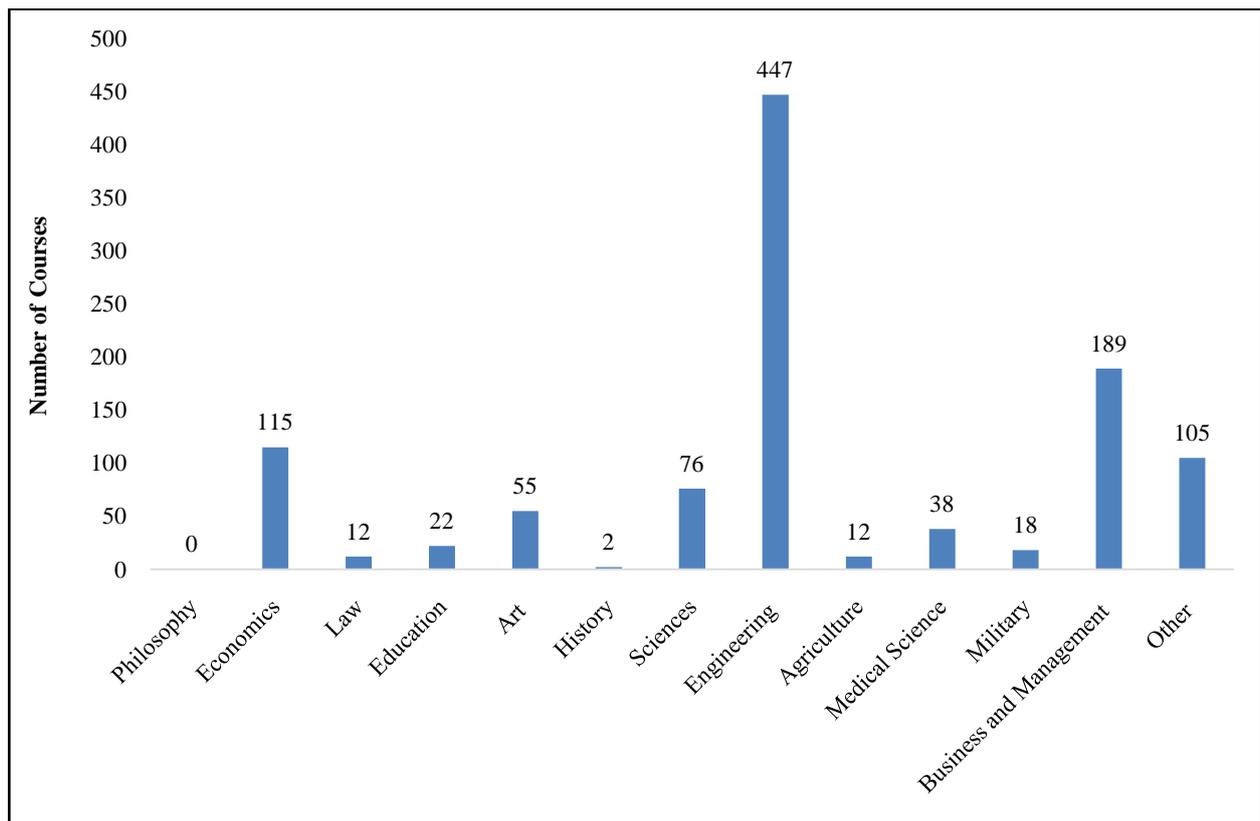


Figure 2. The undergraduate courses offered by the Chinese-Foreign higher education partnerships between 1991 and 2019 (Source: Compiled by authors from the database of MOE).

Table 1

The Distribution of Chinese-Foreign Higher Education Partnerships in Mainland China, 1991-2019

Locations	Jointly established Chinese-Foreign higher education institutions		Joint venture Chinese-Foreign undergraduate programs		Total of courses (%)
	Number of institution(s)*	Number of course offered	Number of program(s)	Number of course offered	
Jiangsu	11	66	83	83	149 (13.7)
Shanghai**	11	39	59	59	98 (9.0)
Shandong	5	22	69	69	91 (8.3)
Henan	2	10	79	79	89 (8.2)
Zhejiang	5	44	30	30	74 (6.8)
Heilongjiang	0	0	71	71	71 (6.5)
Jilin	3	22	47	47	69 (6.3)
Guangdong	7	46	11	11	57 (5.2)
Hubei	1	3	50	50	53 (4.9)
Beijing**	3	13	32	32	45 (4.1)
Liaoning	8	19	25	25	44 (4.0)
Chongqing**	4	20	16	16	36 (3.3)
Hebei	1	6	22	22	28 (2.6)
Tianjin**	2	3	24	24	27 (2.5)
Hunan	1	4	23	23	27 (2.5)
Sichuan	3	10	12	12	22 (2.0)
Fujian	0	0	17	17	17 (1.6)
Jiangxi	0	0	17	17	17 (1.6)
Guangxi	0	0	15	15	15 (1.4)
Shaanxi	2	5	10	10	15 (1.4)
Anhui	0	0	13	13	13 (1.2)
Yunnan	0	0	10	10	10 (0.9)
Shanxi	1	6	2	2	8 (0.8)
Inner Mongolia	0	0	7	7	7 (0.7)
Guizhou	0	0	4	4	4 (0.4)
Hainan	0	0	3	3	3 (0.3)
Gansu	0	0	1	1	1 (0.1)
Xinjiang	0	0	1	1	1 (0.1)
Total	70	338	753	753	1,091 (100)

Source: Compiled by authors from the database of MOE, People's Republic of China.

Notes. * Data of the following institutions are not included in the MOE's database due to unknown reasons. These institutions include College of Global Talents of Zhuhai's Beijing Institute of Technology (formerly known as "Sino-US College"), The Hopkins-Nanjing Center, National University of Singapore (NUS)-Suzhou Research Institute, Oxford Suzhou Centre for Advanced Research (OSCAR), China Europe International Business School (CEIBS), and Oklahoma City University-Tianjin University of Finance and Economics; ** Four municipalities of the People's Republic of China; and the remaining locations are Chinese provinces.

Chinese-Foreign vs. Conventional Higher Education Curriculum

Beijing Normal University-Hong Kong Baptist University, United International College (UIC) is the first liberal arts college established in Guangdong province since 2005. As the first jointly found "hybrid" and "international" higher education institution in Guangdong, English is used as its medium of instruction while the Westernize Hong Kong's curriculum was imitated to accommodate students' learning needs within the

Chinese-speaking context. To better understand the incentives of adopting Chinese-Foreign higher education model in China, we compared the curricula differences between UIC and the Sun Yat-Sen University (SYSU), which is a top-tier conventional Chinese university of Guangdong. In the following section, this paper addresses the recent prospects and challenges faced by the Chinese-Foreign higher education partnerships in contemporary Guangdong province, China.

In analyzing the curricula differences between the “hybrid” Chinese-Foreign higher education model and the conventional school, it is observed that the major differences among these institutions have lied not just in its medium of instruction, but the curriculum structure of credit value and learning modules also has distinct part with regard to the study plan. The recent SYSU’s study plan shows that 34% out of the total credit hours are dedicated to non-major courses. This means that all the students are required to complete at least 33 credits under the category of “Public Compulsory Courses”, including two credits in “Chinese Language”, eight credits in “English”, four credits in “Physical Education”, and 19 more credits in courses related to contemporary Chinese law, military, politics, and cultural ideologies, as shown in the following Table 2.

Table 2

The Structure of Public Compulsory Courses at SYSU, 2018

Course types	Course titles	Total credits	
Public compulsory courses	College English	8	
	Physical Education	4	
	Moral Character Cultivation and the Basis of Law	3	
	Contemporary History of China	2	
	Type A	Introduction of Mao Zedong’s Thought (Maoism) and the Theoretical System of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics	6
		The Principles of Marxism	3
		Military Course	2+1
		Current Situation and Policy	2
	Type B	College Chinese	2

Source: Compiled by authors from the data of SYSU’s study plan of international relations, 2015-cohort.

In addition to compulsory courses, all students are required to complete 16 more credits for the general education courses. Table 3 reveals that there are two sub-divisions of general education courses at SYSU, namely, “Core General Education Course” and “Normal General Education Courses”, of which each student must take six to eight general education courses related to humanities, Chinese classical readings, economics, and entrepreneurship.

Table 3

The Structure of General Education Courses at SYSU, 2018

Course types	Course titles	Credit hours	
General education courses	Core general education courses	Chinese civilization	2
		Foundation of humanities and Reading on classics	2
		Global perspectives	2
		Technology, economics, and society	2
	Normal general education courses	Interdisciplinary	8
		Entrepreneurship and innovation	

Source: Compiled by authors from the data of SYSU’s study plan of international relations, 2015-cohort.

At UIC, however, students are required to complete 72 credits or 55% out of the total credit hours for their non-major courses, which is about 21% higher than SYSU. As shown in the following Figures 3 and 4, each student at UIC must complete 48 credit hours or 19 general education courses with respect to English language, music, numeracy, information technology, business, science, foreign languages, history, philosophy, law, government and society, religion, media, physical and emotional health, and whole person education before the graduation. In contrast to SYSU, the Chinese-Foreign higher education institution, i.e., UIC, places greater emphasis on intercultural and global dimension in its curriculum design. Unlike students at SYSU, students at UIC generally have a freedom to choose their free elective courses, while Chinese ideological courses (i.e., Marxism and Maoism) are tentatively not including in the Chinese-Foreign institutional curriculum.

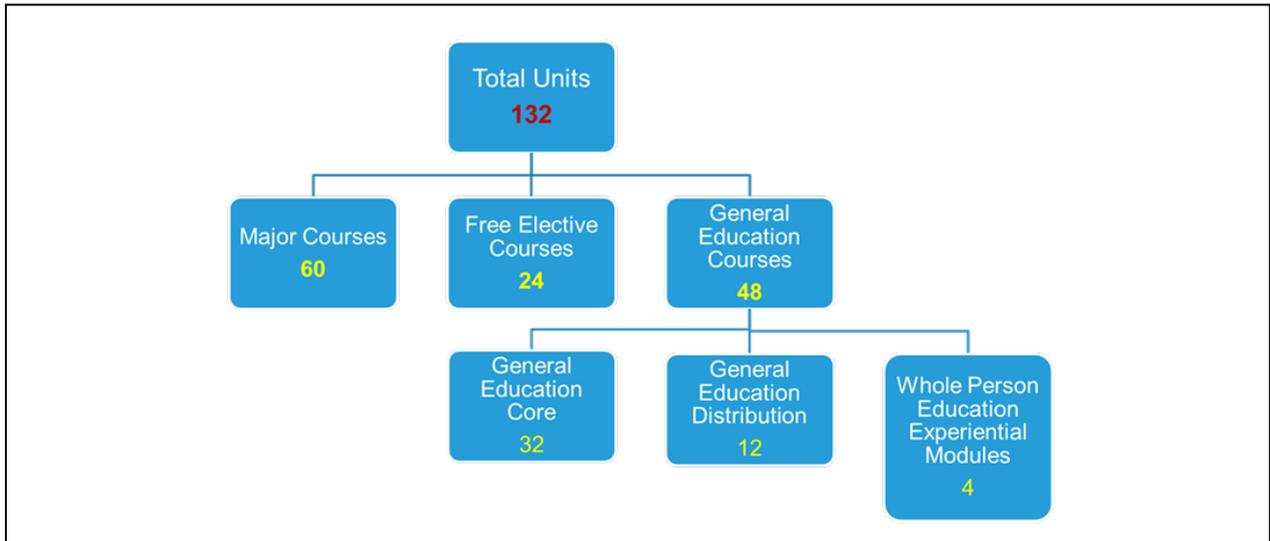


Figure 3. The structure of UIC's undergraduate curriculum (Source: Data from UIC's database).

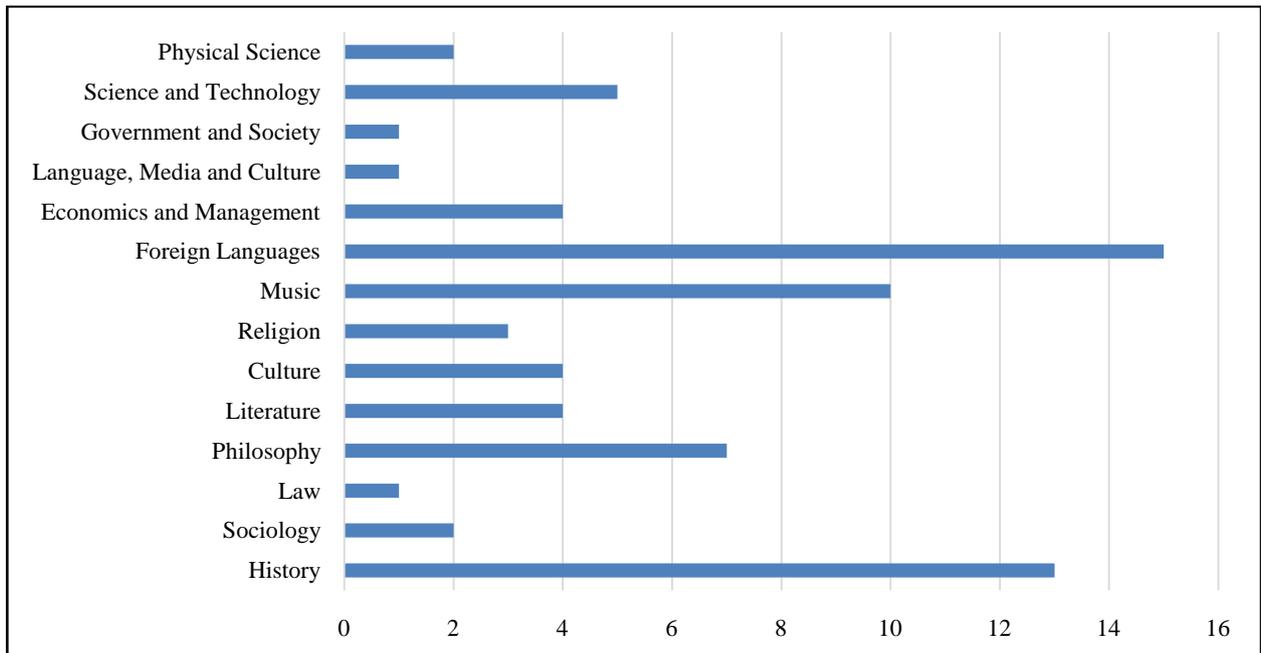


Figure 4. The number of general education courses offered at UIC, 2018 (Source: Data from UIC's database).

Recent Prospects and Challenges

In 2018, there are 249,573 Bachelor's degree holders graduated from 51 universities in Guangdong province (MOE, 2019). Among these universities, 49 of them are the public Chinese universities, while there are only two Chinese-Foreign higher education institutions produced employable graduates for jobs in and outside Guangdong province. The institutions are Beijing Normal University-Hong Kong Baptist University, UIC and the Chinese University of Hong Kong at Shenzhen (CUHK, Shenzhen)¹. According to a local economic database, the provincial average salaries for a fresh graduate of CUHK, Shenzhen and UIC has been ranked respectively as the Top one and Top six, out of 51 universities within Guangdong province. As shown in the following Table 4, fresh graduates of UIC receive \$11,000 dollars; while CUHK, Shenzhen (as an institution which having their first generation of fresh graduates since the establishment in 2014) has achieved the highest annual paycheck up to \$20,000 dollars within the Guangdong region.

If we compare the average annual salaries between the two different models, \$8,812 dollars for fresh graduates from 49 conventional Chinese universities and \$15,571 dollars from two Chinese-Foreign universities, it is apparent that the latter model produces students for better wages in the job market upon their completion. In addition, the annual salary's ranking showing in Table 4 might have reflected the qualities and students' personality characteristics with reference to the education models. Nevertheless, future studies are needed to address the degree to which employers thought about the model of higher education, and which one is better in preparing students for the work situation in and outside Guangdong province.

Table 4

The Average Annual Salary of Fresh Graduates in Guangdong Province, 2018

Rank	Institution	Annual salary (¥)	Annual salary ** (\$)
1	The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shenzhen*	137,500	20,006
2	SYSU	103,104	15,002
3	Southern University of Science and Technology	94,368	13,731
4	South China University of Technology	88,452	12,870
5	Jinan University	83,412	12,136
6	Beijing Normal University-Hong Kong Baptist University, UIC*	76,536	11,136
7	Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts	75,954	11,051
8	South China Normal University	75,374	10,967
9	Shenzhen University	71,268	10,369
10	Guangdong University of Foreign Studies	69,828	10,160
11	Guangzhou Sport University	69,552	10,120
12	Xinghai Conservatory of Music	69,023	10,043
13	Guangzhou University	68,954	10,033
14	Guangdong University of Finance	68,328	9,942
15	Guangzhou College of South China University of Technology	66,859	9,728
16	South China Agricultural University	65,897	9,588
17	Beijing Normal University, Zhuhai	65,796	9,573
18	Guangdong University of Education	65,544	9,537
19	Guangdong University of Technology	63,828	9,287

¹There are seven Chinese-Foreign institutions can be found in Guangdong province today. The other five institutions, however, are all newly established Chinese-Foreign universities since 2015, and the first-generation of undergraduates are still completing their bachelor's degree studies.

(Table 4 to be continued)

20	Guangdong Pharmaceutical University	63,612	9,256
21	Shantou University	62,220	9,053
22	Zhuhai College of Jilin University	60,742	8,838
23	Beijing Institute of Technology, Zhuhai	60,036	8,735
24	Foshan University	59,856	8,709
25	Jiaying University	59,376	8,639
26	Guangzhou Medical University	58,944	8,576
27	University of Electronic Science and Technology of China, Zhongshan Institute	57,668	8,391
28	Dongguan University of Technology	57,608	8,382
29	Shaoguan University	57,540	8,372
30	Guangzhou University of Chinese Medicine	56,571	8,231
31	Lingnan Normal University	56,170	8,173
32	City College of Dongguan University of Technology	54,598	7,944
33	Zhongkai University of Agriculture and Engineering	54,587	7,942
34	Neusoft Institute Guangdong	54,337	7,906
35	Huali College Guangdong University of Technology	54,324	7,904
36	Huizhou University	53,724	7,817
37	Xinhua College of SYSU	53,208	7,742
38	Zhaoqing University	52,848	7,689
39	Southern Medical University	52,836	7,688
40	Guangdong Peizheng College	50,796	7,391
41	Guangdong University of Petrochemical Technology	50,751	7,384
42	Wuyi University	49,368	7,183
43	Guangdong University of Science and Technology	49,044	7,136
44	Guangzhou College of Commerce	48,480	7,054
45	Hanshan Normal University	47,916	6,972
46	Guangdong Ocean University Cunjin College	47,532	6,916
47	Huashang College, Guangdong University of Finance & Economics	46,656	6,788
48	Nanfeng College of SYSU	44,724	6,507
49	Zhujiang College of South China Agricultural University	43,824	6,376
50	Guangdong Baiyun University	43,500	6,329
51	Guangdong Polytechnic College	38,568	5,612

Source: Data compiled by authors from <http://21jingji.com>, literally “economic network of the 21st century”.

Notes. * Chinese-Foreign higher education institution; ** The average annual salaries in CNY were converted to USD according to the international exchange rate 1: 0.1455 on July 12, 2019.

Graduates from Chinese-Foreign universities also show higher motivations to attain postgraduate education outside China. Table 5 indicates that among 51 universities in Guangdong, UIC has ranked as the first in 2018 for having the highest percentage of graduates that go on further their studies in the overseas countries. Particularly, overseas countries, such as United Kingdom, United States, Canada, Australia, and Singapore reign as the most popular study abroad destinations; and some graduates go on pursue their master’s degree in universities located in Hong Kong (Special Administrative Region of China). Graduates from UIC comprise the largest proportions of study abroad in 2018 (68%), while among the students graduated from the conventional Chinese universities their percentage of further education is 13% in average. In this light, it is clear that the Chinese-Foreign higher education model may provide local Chinese students a better chance to further their postgraduate studies abroad after acquiring international academic trainings and English speaking skills in China.

Table 5

The Best Ranking Universities in Further Education in Guangdong, 2018

Rank	Institutions	Percentage (%)
1	Beijing Normal University-Hong Kong Baptist University, UIC	68
2	Southern University of Science and Technology	33
3	SYSU	18
4	Guangdong University of Foreign Studies	15
5	Jinan University	14
6	South China University of Technology	12
7	Shenzhen University	12
8	South China Normal University	6
9	Shantou University	5
10	Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts	5

Source: Compiled by authors from the official website of each institution.

Despite the prospective chances for getting better salary and postgraduate learning opportunities, many of the Chinese-Foreign higher education partnerships are facing diverse challenges in mainland China. According to the standard measurement of *Higher Education Act* and *Measures on China-Foreign Higher Education Partnerships*, China's MOE has conducted three major terminations since 2010. The latest termination was adopted in June 2018, of which 229 joint-venture Chinese-Foreign undergraduate programs and four Chinese-Foreign higher education institutions had been terminated in perpetuity due to the following reasons: (a) poor quality in teaching; (b) skyrocketing fees; and (c) poor teaching outcomes, such as low rate of job employment and fail to attain further education opportunities among the graduates (Redden, 2018). Table 6 reveals the name and location of the terminated Chinese-Foreign universities in 2018.

Table 6

List of Terminated Chinese-Foreign Higher Education Institutions since June 2018

Locations	Institutions	Partnership	Year of establishment
Langfang City, Hebei Province	University of International Business and Economics, Fort Hays State University	USA	2001
Qinhuangdao City, Hebei Province	Hebei Normal University of Science & Technology, Medicine Hat College	Canada	2002
Xi'an City, Shaanxi Province	XJTU-HKUST Joint School of Sustainable Development at Xi'an Jiaotong University	Hong Kong	2014
Taiyuan City, Shanxi Province	Shanxi Agricultural University-Anhalt University of Applied Sciences	Germany	2002

Source: Compiled by authors from the MOE's database.

Figure 5 indicates that there are 160 Chinese-Foreign undergraduate programs or 70% out of the total termination are located in northern China, while 74 or 32% of undergraduate programs had ceased in operation in southern China in June 2018. In Guangdong province, there were four joint venture Chinese-Foreign undergraduate programs had been terminated, including the "Program on Economics and Finance" organized by Peking University-Hong Kong University, "Program on International Accounting Business" organized by Guangzhou University-James Cook University of Australia, "Program on International Trade" by SYSU-Jean Moulin University Lyon 3, and the "Program on Senior Management, Logistics and Supply Management" by Tsinghua University-Chinese University of Hong Kong. Interestingly, these terminated programs were business

and economic-oriented subjects, and these are the subjects being accused of cooperating with diploma mills since the first termination in 2010 (Wang, 2018).

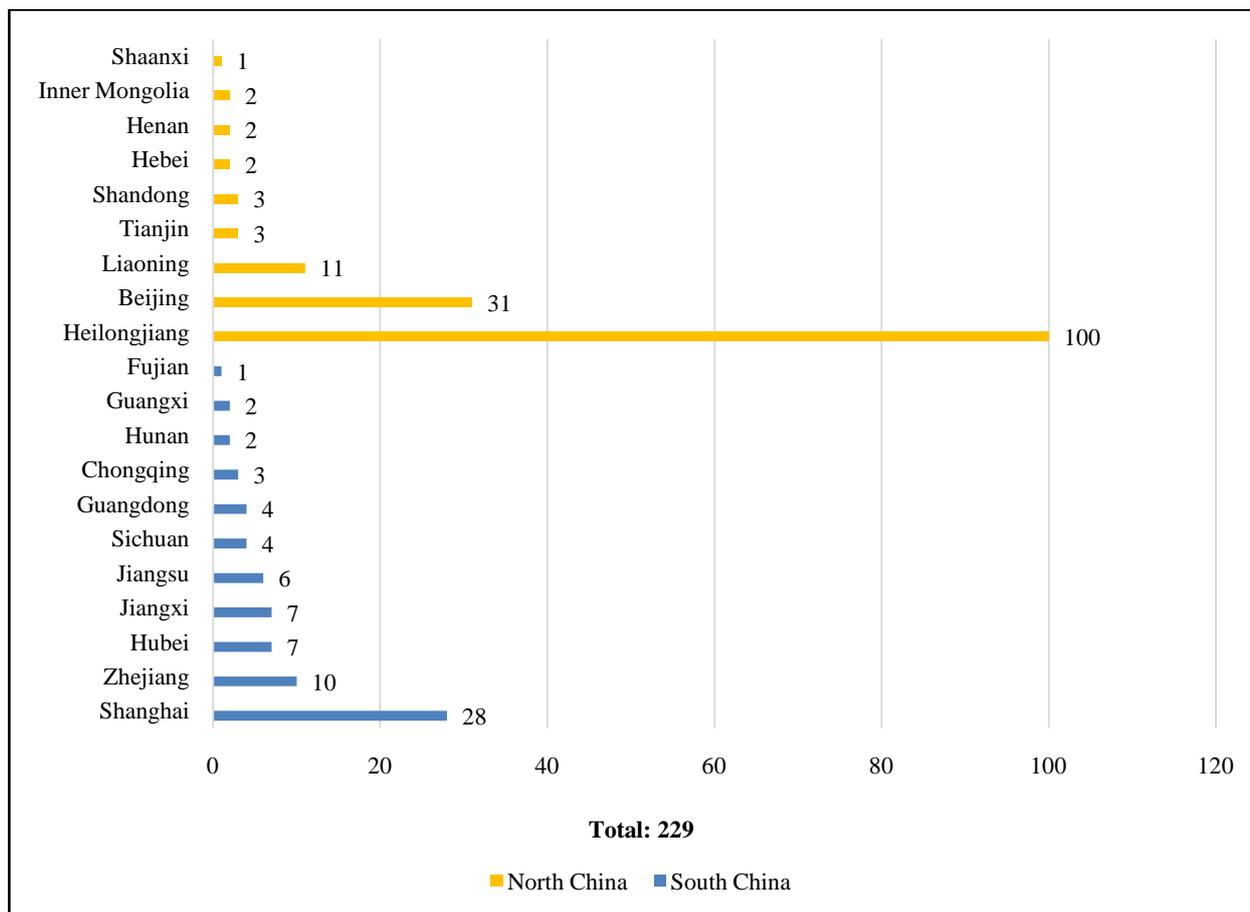


Figure 5. The number of terminated China-Foreign undergraduate programs in mainland China, 2018 (Source: Compiled by authors from the MOE's database).

Note. The northern and southern part of China is usually determined based on the Qinling Huaihe Line 34°N.

Concluding Remarks

The numbers of Chinese-Foreign undergraduate programs, colleges, and universities have greatly increased across many provinces in mainland China over the past two decades. This implies that in China there has been a growing importance of English as the medium of distribution and instruction of knowledge in the internationalization of curricula in higher education institutions. Although the graduates from these internationalize Chinese-Foreign universities are more likely to attain better wages and postgraduate learning opportunities in the overseas countries, but the driving forces behind the development of Chinese-Foreign higher education partnerships lies not only in such incentives. The regular terminations towards the Chinese-Foreign higher education partnerships clearly indicate that there are pressing problems within the “hybrid” Chinese-Foreign education model, and the terminations also evoke Chinese-Foreign higher education partnerships should avoid diploma mills but carry out quality teaching strategies to make notable shifts in student performance. Meanwhile, further research and pedagogical studies are also necessary to address advantages of covering both multi-linguistic and intercultural dimension in higher education institution, and

how well it can be a mechanism for facilitating the internationalization and quality teaching of the higher education system in China.

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