

What international experiences can be regarded as best practices for China's recent reform in building universities of applied sciences?

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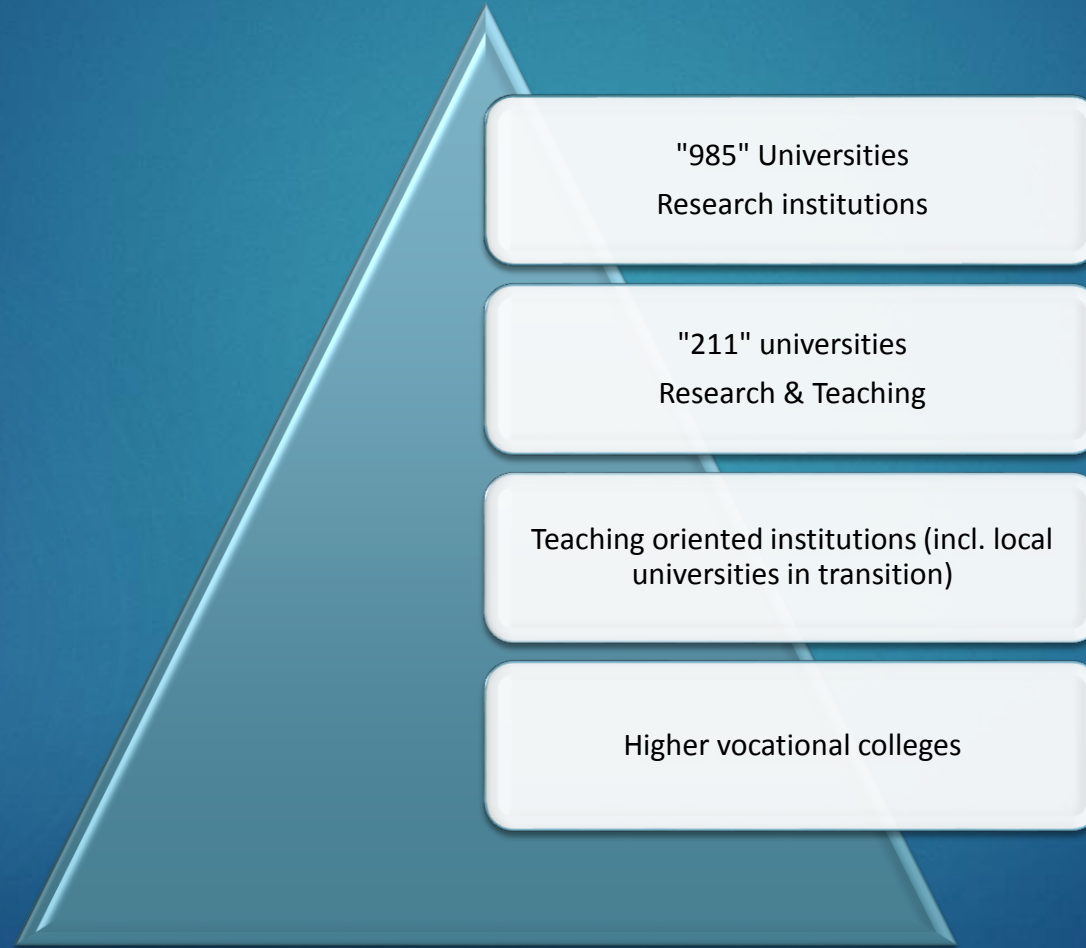
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Toward China's universities of applied sciences

- ▶ Transforming “newly established” regional higher education institutions (HEIs) to provide applied technological and vocation education, instead of academic education
- ▶ The new type of institutions are comparable to **universities of applied sciences** (UASs) in Europe

Pyramid of Chinese high education institutions



Challenges in developing higher vocational institutions in China

- ▶ There is no equal status between UASs and traditional (research) universities.
- ▶ There is a tendency of academic drift.
- ▶ There is a lack of trust and effective collaboration between university and industry.
- ▶ There are shortage of qualified teachers to impart practical vocational skills to students.
- ▶ Students in higher vocational colleges can hardly move to other type of HEIs to study.

Challenges for the universities in transformation

- ▶ How to ensure the equal status of UASs to traditional academic universities?
- ▶ How a UASs is different to a traditional university?
- ▶ What are appropriate mechanisms of governance and funding of UASs?
- ▶ How to get support and earn trust from the industry?
- ▶ How to provide free channels for students to pursue higher degrees in vocational education system and shift between UASs and universities?
- ▶ What are the requirement and qualification for teachers in UASs and how to adapt current teachers to the new requirement?
- ▶ How to restructure the existent curriculum and adapt them for the new missions?

What international experiences are relevant to China?

- ▶ How to understand different models of UASs.
- ▶ What are not relevant to China?
- ▶ What more fit the Chinese context?

The variety of skill formation systems in advanced industrial democracies

		Involvement of firms in initial vocational training	
		Low	high
Public commitment to vocational training	low	Liberal skill formation system (U.S.)	Segmentalist skill formation system (Japan)
	High	Statist skill formation system (Sweden, France, Finland)	Collective skill formation system (Germany, Dutch)

The Finnish model as the most relevant one to China, because of

- ▶ Similar skill formation system:
 - ▶ **High government's commitment:** Public policy-makers are much more committed to supporting vocational education and training as a viable alternative to academic higher education, in order to promote the integration of young people with weak academic qualifications into education and employment.
 - ▶ **Limited industry's involvement:** The involvement of employers in the process of skill formation is limited, even though policymakers try to integrate school-based and workplace-based training.

China and Finland are comparable

- ▶ **Strong government coordination:** Similar governance system in higher education where the state has a strong coordination role;
- ▶ **Economic transformation as a background:** The economic environment and the structure of industry in the 1990s in Finland is similar to the current situation in China. The establishment of UAS in both countries is for meeting the demands arising from the transformation towards a knowledge-based economy that requires not only knowledge producers but also technical talents with both hand-on skills for enhancing the ability to innovate in the production process and to develop expertise in their working life.
- ▶ **The experiences and lessons of how to learn from others:** The success of Finnish UASs is a result of Finland's learning from other European countries and creative adaptation of other's experiences into a Finnish model. This is exactly what China want to develop.

What Finnish experience?


- ▶ Equal legal status and social recognition
- ▶ Different missions
- ▶ Values appreciated by employers
- ▶ Student mobility between systems
- ▶ Upgrading the UASs sector to offer higher level diplomas
- ▶ Strong regional development role
- ▶ Institutionalised university and industry collaboration

Suggestions for Chinese HE transformation based on Finnish experiences

- ▶ To establish a separate law for UASs and higher vocational colleges.
- ▶ To make explicit the differences of the missions between universities and UASs.
- ▶ To allow UASs to offer MA degrees (recruiting students with work experience?).
- ▶ To allow higher vocational colleges to upgrade to UASs once certain conditions are met.
- ▶ To create the system that enables student mobility between academic universities and applied sciences institutions.
- ▶ To build trust by first benefiting the industry without much cost from them, but expect their more commitment once they realise the values the UASs.
- ▶ To utilise universities and industry to train teachers (Not only the UASs's responsibility for staff development).
- ▶ The curriculum change or adaptation is not merely content, but more importantly the structure and the system.
- ▶ To enhance the capacity through cooperation with foreign (e.g. Finnish) UASs.

What China must be cautious when learning from Finland?

- ▶ Finnish UASs were established through merging some secondary vocational schools
- ▶ Institutional commitment is the key to successful transformation in Finland.
- ▶ Some China's problems are deeply rooted in the Confucian tradition which values theoretical knowledge rather than vocational skills.
- ▶ The regional economic development is more balanced in Finland compared to that in China.
- ▶ In Finland, there were years of preparation and learning from other countries before Finland launched the reform of establishing the UASs sector.
- ▶ Free education system in Finland.
- ▶ Small country.

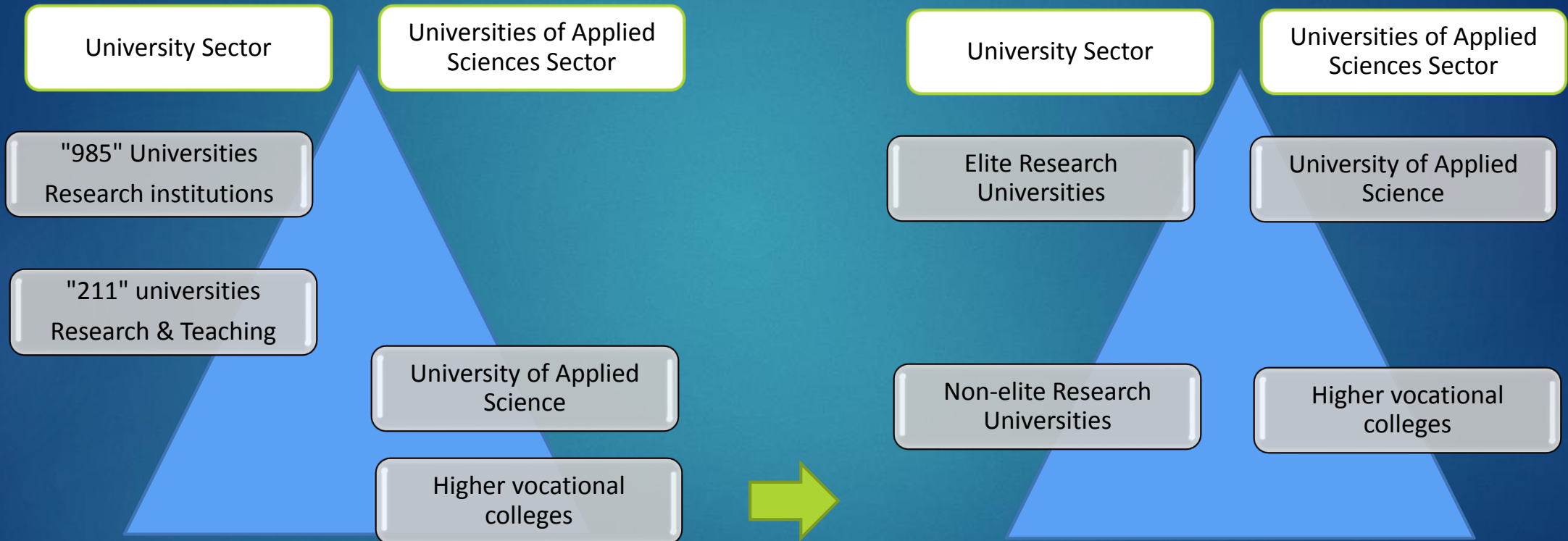


What we speculate the future
Chinese higher education system

We are seemingly heading for



Our suggestions





► Thanks for your attention!

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