

## **REVIEW**

of **Mariana Havran,**

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of the **thesis**

**The Development of Cooperation and Academic Exchanges between  
Ukrainian and Chinese Universities (the Beginning of the 21st Century)**

written by

**Wang Yixuan**

submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
in the specialty 011 Educational, pedagogical sciences

### **1. Topicality of the performed work and its connection with the relevant plans of the branches of science**

Today, globalisation processes have a direct impact on the rapid development of science, technology and the internationalisation of higher education, and promote international educational cooperation and academic mobility, improving R&D performance and expanding professional horizons. All the changes and innovations that take place in one country have a significant impact on other societies, that is why growing academic cooperation and exchanges can change the nature of international relations, strengthen cooperation between states, and contribute to the development of social, economic, and educational systems. At the same time, the competitive environment is growing both in the labour market and in higher education institutions, where highly qualified human resources and, accordingly, the most talented young people are the objects of competition.

In recent years, there has been increasingly close international cooperation between Ukrainian universities and higher education institutions of other countries, which contributes to the integration into the international educational and cultural environment, improvement of the national scientific potential, development of students' skills and competences, in particular, and competitiveness of higher education in Ukraine, in general. The Belt and Road Initiative, which aims to deepen China's internal economic integration and increase its competitiveness, establishes academic cooperation between Ukraine and China. These countries have many social and political, cultural and spiritual differences that can, on the hand, expand educational horizons, producing innovative ideas and teaching methods, developing new strategies and projects, and, on the other hand, create problems and obstacles in establishing such academic cooperation.

The relevance, timeliness, and appropriateness of Wang Yixuan's thesis is confirmed by the need to study the current state of academic cooperation between universities in Ukraine and China in order to develop further joint educational projects

and academic initiatives, improve curricula, accelerate scientific progress and the process of internationalisation and academic cooperation in Ukraine.

The topic of Wang Yixuan's thesis *The Development of Cooperation and Academic Exchanges between Ukrainian and Chinese Universities (the Beginning of the 21st Century)* corresponds to the topic of scientific work *Theoretical and Methodological Foundations of the Personal and Professional Development of a Modern Specialist in the Conditions of Integration into the International Educational Space* carried out at the Department of Pedagogics and Innovative Education at Lviv Polytechnic National University (number of state registration 0121U113179).

The topic of this thesis was approved (Minutes N 6/22 dated 01.02.2022) at the meetings of the Academic Council of the Institute of Jurisprudence, Psychology and Innovative Education of Lviv Polytechnic National University.

## **2. The most significant scientific results contained in the thesis**

Evaluating the most important achievements of the qualification research work submitted for our consideration, first of all, we would like to note those that are of great importance for the development of pedagogical theory and methodology, namely the content and scientific understanding of key concepts are clarified, the theoretical foundations for the development of cooperation and academic exchanges are substantiated, their features are highlighted in the context of cooperation between universities of Ukraine and China. Moreover, the developed proposals for improving further educational and scientific cooperation and academic exchanges between these countries are a significant contribution to the development of higher education in Ukraine and international scientific and educational activities of universities.

## **3. New facts obtained by the PhD candidate**

Analysing the results of Wang Yixuan's scientific research, we can state that most of the author's achievements have scientific novelty. *For the first time*, a comprehensive analysis of the development and implementation of cooperation and academic exchanges between Ukrainian and Chinese universities at the beginning of the 21st century has been carried out. The implementation of Ukrainian-Chinese cooperation and academic exchanges in universities has been characterised by comparing various disciplines in different fields of knowledge, as well as fundamental and applied research. The author has also suggested different ways to improve cooperation and academic exchanges in universities of Ukraine and China, among which the focus is on: creating various types of intermediary institutions involving scholars, diplomats and NGOs; building networking education between universities in different countries and regions; expanding long-term cooperation in the educational, cultural and social spheres; increasing the level and quality of teaching through new approaches to managing international activities in higher education institutions; improving educational programmes and services to attract talented young people inside and outside the country. *It has been clarified* the content of concepts "international education", "international educational exchange", "cultural diversity", "academic collaboration and research", "interdisciplinary cooperation", "globalization of education". The scientific comprehension of the concepts used in research papers on the internationalisation of higher education, academic cooperation development and academic exchanges in universities has been improved.

The thesis statements on the development of academic cooperation and exchanges between universities according to modern theories of higher education internationalization *gained further development*.

The materials presented in the publications of Chinese scholars on the problem of academic cooperation as well as innovative ideas and approaches used in the process of academic exchanges in a modern learning environment have been introduced into scientific discourse.

#### **4. The degree of validity of the scientific statements, conclusions and recommendations formulated in the thesis**

An analysis of the thesis content and publications that highlight the results of Wang Yixuan's research gives reasons for conclusion that presented scientific statements and findings are grounded and reliable. The need to conduct a study of cooperation and academic exchanges between universities in Ukraine and China has been due to a number of contradictions between: 1) the need to ensure effective academic cooperation and exchanges between universities in different countries and the initial stage of this process in Ukraine and China; 2) the need to organise academic cooperation and exchanges between universities in these countries and the discrete nature of its implementation; 3) the need to improve the development of academic cooperation and exchanges between universities in Ukraine and China and the insufficient level of studying its theoretical foundations and best practices. The use of a set of research methods, namely theoretical (analysis, synthesis, qualitative method, comparison, case method) and empirical methods (method of collecting research data and research literature), contributed to obtaining reasonable results and accomplishing the objectives.

The novelty and reliability of the general conclusions of the research work are ensured by the processing of a significant amount of scientific publications, legislative and regulatory documents, and effective implementation of the materials and research results in the learning process of the higher education institutions of Ukraine.

The thesis has been done at an appropriate scientific level. It clearly justifies the choice of the research topic, defines its object, subject, aim and objectives, and the content of the abstract highlights the essential aspects and main provisions of the thesis. The main scientific statements and results of the research paper have been widely approbated at scientific and practical international conferences and are fully covered in Wang Yixuan's scientific publications.

Therefore, the high scientific level of the thesis, its relevance, accomplishment, and practical significance are undeniable, which confirms the dissertator's thorough study of the problem under investigation, the scientific validity of the results of the given objectives and conclusions.

#### **5. Significance for science and practice of the author's obtained results**

The practical and theoretical significance of the research results lies in the fact that the main findings of the thesis are used and can be further implemented in higher education institutions of Ukraine, especially when teaching courses for PhD students ("Actual Problems of Theory and History of Pedagogical Science" and "Internationalisation of Education: Directions, Trends, "Perspectives") and master's ones ("Comparative Pedagogy"). The author's suggestions and determined ways to

foster cooperation and academic exchanges between Ukraine and China can be used by university authorities in order to improve the international activity management process. The results of the thesis can also be useful for scholars who study the issues of academic mobility and internationalisation of higher education. This is confirmed by the documents on the implementation of the main findings, conclusions and results of the research in Ukrainian universities, namely Vinnytsia Mykhailo Kotsiubynskyi State Pedagogical University, Stepan Gzhytskyi National University of Veterinary Medicine and Biotechnologies of Lviv, Lesya Ukrainka Volyn National University, and Lviv Polytechnic National University.

## **6. Recommendations for the use of the results and conclusions of the thesis**

Researchers can apply the main findings of the thesis to further studies on academic cooperation between universities in Ukraine and China. It is undoubtedly valuable for Ukrainian higher education to identify prospects for further developments, to expand academic exchanges between universities in these countries, to search for new international cooperation initiatives and projects, and to develop academic mobility programmes for students and teachers.

## **7. Evaluation of the content of the thesis and its completeness**

Wang Yixuan's thesis is a complete academic paper with a clear structure and sequence content of scientific statements, which correspond to the purpose and logical solution of the research objectives. The work consists of two abstracts in English and Ukrainian languages, a list of the author's publications, an introduction, three chapters, conclusions to the chapters, general conclusions, a list of references, and appendices. The content of the work, which is additionally visualised with figures and appendices, clear conclusions and generalisations demonstrate the high degree of validity of the scientific findings and the quality of the research.

The first chapter, *Cooperation and Academic Exchanges of University Teachers and Students as a Scientific and Pedagogical Problem*, highlights the content of international education and globalisation of education concepts in the context of previous scientific research. The concept of international educational exchanges, which is an inevitable trend in the educational environment, has been analysed, and the significance of interdisciplinary cooperation has been substantiated. The importance of the theoretical foundations in the study of cooperation and academic exchanges between Ukraine and China, as well as the current state of cooperation and exchanges between these countries to promote academic development, innovation and global cooperation have been presented. The researcher also clearly describes the research methods used to conduct a comprehensive analysis of academic cooperation and exchanges between teachers and students from Ukraine and China, taking into account the results of scientific research in the fields of pedagogy, educational policy, philosophy, sociology, and history.

The second chapter, *Peculiarities of Cooperation and Academic Exchanges Development in the Discourse of Ukrainian-Chinese Experience*, substantiates the socio-economic and cultural aspects of academic exchanges and cooperation between universities in Ukraine and China; it also highlights the legal framework for such academic cooperation. Wang Yixuan focuses on the framework agreement on educational cooperation and other legal documents that provide a clear legal framework

for the scope, procedures, and smooth implementation of educational cooperation and exchange programmes in Ukraine and China. She concludes in this chapter that Ukraine and China are constantly updating and improving educational cooperation and academic exchanges in compliance with their respective laws and regulations.

The third chapter, *The Implementation of Cooperation and Academic Exchanges between Ukrainian and Chinese Universities*, presents the specifics of organising educational exchange programmes for university teachers and students. The five ways of organising educational exchange programmes between universities and colleges of these countries have been analysed. At the same time, it also characterises the scope and main features of scientific cooperation and exchanges between Ukrainian and Chinese universities. The author presents proposals for improving such academic cooperation, focusing her attention on the need to promote national educational cooperation and development, academic exchanges, and mutual learning between civilisations.

In the general conclusions, Wang Yixuan was able to clearly present the results obtained, confirming that the defined objectives were achieved.

#### **8. Discussion points, recommendations and comments on the content of the thesis**

In general, while highly appreciating the scientific and practical significance of the obtained results, there are still some discussion points and suggestions to the content of the work:

1. In the first chapter, clarifying the essence of the concepts of “international education”, “international educational exchanges”, “interdisciplinary cooperation”, “globalisation of education”, it would be worthwhile to give a comparative table of definitions of domestic and foreign scholars who have had the significant achievements in the formation of the conceptual and categorical apparatus of this problem.

2. The author frequently mentions the Confucius Institute in Ukraine as a centre for the promotion of the Chinese language and culture, but she does not sufficiently cover the issue of Ukrainian studies in Chinese universities or the general interest in Ukrainian language and culture in order to expand not only trade and economic relations but also cultural and academic cooperation.

3. In our opinion, the dissertator does not sufficiently substantiate and confirm the idea about fields of science and disciplines in Ukrainian universities as the most popular and promising for building academic exchange programmes and future cooperation. It would be advisable to confirm this information with specific quantitative indicators.

4. In the third chapter, when analysing Ukrainian universities that have established cooperation with the Chinese side, Wang Yixuan mentions Lviv Polytechnic National University in only one paragraph. In our opinion, it would be interesting and appropriate to provide more information about the main activities of the Centre for China-Ukraine Cooperation at Lviv Polytechnic National University.

5. The linguistic and stylistic design of the thesis corresponds to the peculiarities of the academic style, but there are certain punctuation and spelling mistakes.

#### **9. Completeness coverage of results in publications**

The main statements and results of the thesis are sufficiently fully presented in 11 publications of the author (including 9 single publications): 2 chapters in collective monographs, 4 articles in journals included into the list of specialized scientific

publications of Ukraine, 5 papers certifying the approbation of the thesis materials at international scientific and practical conferences.

## 10. Conclusion

To sum up, the reviewed Wang Yixuan's thesis on the topic "The Development of Cooperation and Academic Exchanges between Ukrainian and Chinese Universities (the beginning of the 21st century)" is an independent and complete academic paper. It has solved a number of scientific problems and obtained the findings containing scientific novelty, theoretical and practical value for pedagogical science and practice.

We affirm that the thesis deserves a positive assessment and meets the requirements of the Order On Approval of Requirements for Thesis Formatting (as amended) No. 40 of 12 January 2017 by the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, and the Procedure for Awarding the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy and Cancellation of the Decision of a One-time Specialised Academic Council of a Higher Education Institution or Research Institution to Award the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 44 of 12 January 2022). Its author Yixuan Wang deserves the award of the scientific degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the specialty 011 Educational, pedagogical sciences, field of knowledge 01 Education/Pedagogy.

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