

Delivering world-class education

China draws up plan to emerge as global leader in the university sector and increase soft power

By LI JIANZHONG

The Ministry of Education and other government departments have jointly issued a plan to build world-class universities and disciplines, which is of great significance to realize the Chinese Dream and increase China's soft power.

China's bid to create world-class universities started in 1995 with the 211 Project. The project was launched to raise the educational standards of about 100 universities. In 1998, it was followed by the 985 Project, which selected 39 universities from those included in the 211 Project to be China's key universities to develop.

With sustained government investment and the efforts of the universities concerned, the two projects have made remarkable achievements in recent years, raising the international status of Chinese mainland universities.

The new so-called Double World-Class plan aims to raise the status of Chinese universities and disci-

plines, which will provide strong support to achieve the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

China has 2,880 colleges and universities, and 37 million enrolled college students. The plan aims to help more Chinese mainland universities, besides Peking University and Tsinghua University, squeeze into the ranks of the top 100 universities worldwide.

High standards

According to the *Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2018*, there are 43 universities in the United States among the top 100 international universities, which indicates the US is still a strong higher education power.

Even some countries whose higher education scale and economic volume is smaller than China's have more universities in the rankings. For example, the United Kingdom has 12 universities on the list, Germany has nine and Australia six.

Among the 137 universities in the new plan, 42 universities are to be established as world-class institu-

tions, while 95 universities on the list are to develop world-class disciplines.

The Chinese government is increasing investment to promote the development of these universities and disciplines.

But, besides China, emerging economies like India, Russia and Vietnam are also implementing plans aimed at raising the standards of their universities.

As the world's second-largest economy, China has stronger economic strength to support the development of world-class universities and disciplines.

According to the plan, the central government will allocate funds for these goals, as well as the relevant infrastructure to support them.

Furthermore, universities will gain strong motivation to improve the quality and standards of their education. Universities should first accept domestic evaluation by taking China's actual situation into consideration.

President Xi Jinping has pointed out that China's world-class univer-

sities should have Chinese characteristics.

Du Yubo, former vice-minister of education, has said that China's higher education development should be closely connected with the actual objective and direction of China's development.

He said that the universities should serve the public, reform and opening-up, and socialist modernization construction. They should also help consolidate and develop the socialist system with Chinese characteristics.

The universities should also accept international reviews based on quantitative assessment criteria, such as academic performance, research and studies, paper citations and their degree of internationalization.

Dynamic development

The construction of top universities and disciplines should be dynamic and performance-oriented. The new plan to develop these should be based on the results of assessments every five years.

In addition, the internation-

alization pace of China's higher education is to be accelerated. The universities included in the new plan will be motivated to attract more excellent overseas professors, scientific researchers and students, and to conduct communication and exchanges with high-level foreign universities, such as exchange students, visiting scholars, mutual credit recognition and joint talent cultivation.

Meanwhile, universities on the list will actively deepen academic exchanges and scientific research cooperation with world-class foreign universities and academic institutions.

They are also expected to deeply participate in major regional and international scientific research projects in order to attain international influence.

Thus, by the middle of this century, China is expected to be a power in higher education.

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