

Beijing Normal University



# Newsletter

Winter 2021 / Issue 9

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**Organized by:**

Office of International Exchange & Cooperation, Beijing Normal University

**Co-organized by:**

News Center, Beijing Normal University

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Winter 2021 / Issue 9

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## Newsletter Online

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# China Education Reform & Development Forum was Held in BNU to Explore Education Modernization in China

Article Source: China Institute of Education and Social Development | Release Date: 2021-12-15

Sponsored by the China Institute of Education and Social Development(CIESD) of Beijing Normal University (BNU), a high-end national think tank, and organized by China Education Policy Research Institute, the 2021 China Education Reform & Development Forum was held at BNU on December 10 and 11. Guided by Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era and with the theme of Building an Education Power: the Chinese Path to Education Modernization", the forum implements the principle of the Sixth Plenary Session of the 19th CPC Central Committee and discusses new situations, new experiences and new paths in accelerating the building of a strong country in education.

Present at the forum are the following leaders: Professor Cai Dafeng, Vice Chairman of the



Standing Committee of National People's Congress (NPC), Chairman of the Central Committee of the China Association for Promoting Democracy (CAPD), and Chairman of the Board of Directors of CIESD of BNU, Mr. Sun Yao, Vice Minister of the Ministry of Education(MOE), Mr. Liu Changya, Director-General of the Department of Development & Planning of MOE, Mr. Wang Daquan, Deputy Director-General of the Department of Policies and

Regulations of MOE, Mr. Song Lei, Deputy Director General of the Department of Teacher Education of MOE, Professor Cheng Jianping, Chairman of the University Council of BNU and President of CIESD. Mr. Gu Mingyuan, Senior Professor of BNU, Professor Zhong Binglin, Honorary Dean of the Institute for Higher Education, Faculty of Education, BNU; Mr. Zhu Yongxin, Vice Chairman of the Central Committee of CAPD

and Standing Member and Deputy Secretary-General of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference; Ms. Pang Lijuan, Member of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, Deputy Director of the Standing Committee of the Beijing Municipal People's Congress and Vice Chairperson of the CAPD Central Committee; Professor Wang Dinghua, Chairman of the University Council of Beijing Foreign Studies University, Professor Meng Fanhua, Chairman of University Council of Capital Normal University; Meng Fanhua. Mr. Zhang Li, Secretary-General of the National Advisory Committee on Education, Mr. Li Yi, Deputy Secretary of Education Committee of the CPC Beijing Municipal Committee, Mr. Ni Minjing, Deputy Director of Shanghai Municipal Education Commission, and Professor Yuan Zhenguo, Dean of Faculty of Education of East China Normal University. The meeting was moderated by Professor Zhou Zuoyu, Vice President of BNU.



In his speech, Mr. Cai Dafeng pointed out that the Institute is the fruit of sincere cooperation between BNU and the CAPD Central Committee. The main objective of this forum is

to study and implement the spirit of the Sixth Plenary Session of the 19th CPC Central Committee and General Secretary Xi Jinping's important speech on education, and jointly explore the road to the modernization of Chinese education. In order to modernize Chinese education, we must adhere to the overall leadership of the Party in education, implement the decisions of the CPC Central Committee on education reform and development, accurately understand the connotation and characteristics of modernization, understand China's development stage, basic contradictions, and goals, adhere to the people-oriented principle, give full play to the advantages of the political system, enhance cultural confidence, and deepen education reform. We must implement the new development concept in line with the new development stage, build a new development pattern, promote high-quality development and the modernization of education with higher standards, better promote the all-round and common development



of people, and better support the healthy development of economy and society so that education can become the most creative part of the new development pattern.

Mr. Sun Yao pointed out that since the 18th Party Congress, the CPC Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping as the core has attached great importance to the development of education. In particular, the 19th Party Congress clearly proposed that building a strong nation in education is a fundamental project for the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, so we must prioritize the development of education, deepen education reform and accelerate education modernization. General Secretary Xi Jinping systematically expounded the major theoretical and practical issues on education modernization at the National Education Conference. The CPC Canal Committee and the State Council issued *China's Education Modernization 2035*, and the General Council of the State Office issued *the Implementation Plan for Accelerating Education Modernization (2018-2022)*, which drew a grand blueprint for accelerating education modernization and building an education power in the new era. He stressed that education modernization with Chinese characteristics means that we must adhere to the principles such as the Party's overall leadership in education, the people-centered approach, common prosperity, and education serving the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. Education modernization must be based on national conditions and we should actively absorb and draw on advanced international experience, constantly deepening reform and advances with the times.



In his welcome speech, Professor Cheng Jianping pointed out that with the theme of Building an Education Power: the Chinese Path to Education Modernization", this forum, reflects the distinctive orientation of the times, and has great theoretical and practical significance. Standing at the major historical intersection of the "Two Hundred Years" goal, BNU has given full play to its advantages in theoretical innovation and special disciplines, accelerated the construction of a new type of think tank with Chinese characteristics, and continuously improved its capabilities to serve major national strategies. In recent years, the university has paid more attention to the important mission of educational think tanks to serve national strategies, further clarified the development orientation of think tanks, strived to integrate think tank construction and university development, and promoted the resonance and parallel progress of university think tanks with social development and discipline construction. We have further enhanced the academic influence of BNU, strengthened joint research across disciplines, specialties, and faculties; further

enhanced decision-making influence, and focused on the hot and difficult key issues and the "urgent, difficult and worrying" issues of the people; further improve social influence and correctly guide the social opinion. We hope that all the experts will conduct in-depth discussions, make suggestions, and produce a series of high-level and important opinions so as to gather strength and contribute wisdom for China to promote education modernization and build a strong education country.



In the theme forum, four experts, including Gu Mingyuan, Zhu Yongxin, Zhang Li, and Yuan Zhengguo, gave speeches entitled "Teach Every Lesson Well & Teach Every Student Well", "Deal with the Five Pairs of 'Double Reduction' Relationship to Promote High-quality Development of Education", "A New Journey of Education Modernization in the New Era" and "Building a High-Quality Education System". The theme forum was moderated by Song Shanping, executive director of CIESD.

In the afternoon of December 11, two sub-forums on theoretical research and practical exploration



of building a strong modernized education country were held by

Wang Daquan, Deputy Director General of the Department of Policies and Regulations of the Ministry of Education, Song Lei, Deputy Director General of the Department of Teachers Education of the Ministry of Education, Li Yi, Deputy Secretary of the Education Work Committee of the Beijing Municipal Committee, Ni Mingjing, Deputy Director of the Shanghai Municipal Education Commission, Gao Shuguo, Deputy Secretary General of the Secretariat of the Chinese Society of Education, Yu Yongping, Director of the Institute of Preschool Education of Nanjing Normal University, and Wu Zhihui, Dean of Graduate School of Northeast Normal University, Xu Guoqing, Director of Institute of Vocational and Adult Education of East China Normal University, Wang Shuifa, Deputy Director of Shenzhen Education Bureau, Du Quanping, Director of Weifang Education Bureau, Xu Xili, Director of Tiantai County Education Bureau of Zhejiang Province, Tang Jiangpeng, Principal of Xishan Senior High School of Jiangsu Province and 12 experts delivered wonderful speeches online and offline respectively.

At the closing ceremony on the morning of December 12, four experts including Zhong Binglin, Wang Dinghua, Meng Fanhua, and Du Yohong, gave speeches entitled "Promoting High-Quality Development of Higher Education", "Strengthening



in the Context of 'Double Reduction'", "A Few Thoughts on the Mobility Policy of Principals and Teachers in the Context of 'Double Reduction'" and "Education Investment and High-quality Development of Education".

Global Education Governance", and "Promoting Higher Education

In addition, more than 300 leaders, experts, and scholars from related fields attended the forum online.

# 2021 International Conference on Artificial Intelligence & Big Data in Education was Held in BNU with the Theme of AI +Education: Together for Shared Prosperity

Article Source: iFLYTEK | Release Date: 2021-12-17



To respond to the new trend of education transformation, accurately understand the revolutionary impact of technology empowerment on education and promote the rapid development and application of smart education research in China, 2021 International Conference on Artificial Intelligence & Big Data in Education (2021 AIDE) with the Theme of AI +Education: Together for Shared Prosperity

was held in Beijing on December 16, 2021. Approved by the Ministry of Education (MOE), the conference was jointly organized by Beijing Normal University, National Center for Educational Technology (NCET), China Education Association for International Exchange (CEAIE), and iFLYTEK both online and offline.

Liu Limin, former Vice Minister of MOE and President of CEAIE, Zhu Zhiwen, former

Vice Minister of MOE and President of Chinese Society of Education, Lv Yugang, Director General of the Department of Basic Education of MOE, Li Ping, Deputy Secretary of the Party Committee of NCET, and Shahbaz Khan, Representative of UNESCO China, attended the opening ceremony and delivered important speeches. The opening ceremony was moderated by Zhou Zuoyu, Vice President of Beijing Normal University.

Dong Qi, President of Beijing Normal University, Zhang Jun, Academician of the Chinese Academy of Engineering and President of Beijing Institute of Technology, Xie Weihe, former Vice President of Tsinghua University, Deputy Director of the University Council and Senior Professor of Liberal Arts, Wu Xiaoru, President of iFLYTEK, Andreas Schleicher, Director General of Education and Skills of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and initiator and director of the PISA project, attended the plenary forum and delivered speeches. The main forum was hosted by Wang Yongli, Vice President and Secretary-General of CEAIE.

Present at the conference were also senior experts, scholars, administrators, and front-line educators from the education sector. The online live streaming attracted more than 10 million viewers in real-time.

Opening Ceremony: Standing at the frontline of education and responding to the concerns of the times



In his welcome speech, Liu Limin, former Vice Minister of MOE and President of CEAIE, said that based on successfully achieving "access to education", China is accelerating the construction of a high-quality education system that meets people's aspirations for "good education". Facing the new development journey and goals, only those who take the initiative to seek changes will advance, only those who reform and innovate will be strong, and only those who are open and cooperative will win. "We should be more proactive in strengthening exchanges and cooperation with other countries,

deepening collaboration and innovation in smart education, promoting joint training of high-end talents in artificial intelligence, strengthening intellectual property protection, and sharing the dividends of smart education development with other countries."



Zhu Zhiwen, the former Vice Minister of MOE and president of the Chinese Society of Education, pointed out in his speech that with the changes of demand and supply, the impact of AI on education will not only be limited to the technical level, but also gradually penetrate to the conceptual and institutional level which is a profound change with a long duration and great impact. This requires us to first understand the relationship between change and stability, so we need to reform as well as inherit and always adhere to the true nature of education. Secondly, we need to balance the relationship between building hardware and application. It is important to construct AI hardware facilities, but what is more important is to apply AI technology to the education and teaching process. In addition, teachers and students are the two core elements of education



and the school is the main place of educational activities, so we should properly handle the relationship between teachers and students.



Lv Yugang, Director General of the Department of Basic Education of China's MOE, said in his speech that education informatization is the basic connotation and distinctive feature of education modernization and that it is the strategic support and powerful engine for building a strong country in education. Accelerating the pace of digital transformation and intelligent upgrading of education and further improving the level of education informatization is an urgent need to build a high-quality and balanced basic public education service system, bridge the regional urban-rural efficiency gap and achieve high-quality development of basic education. Making full use of technology empowerment and accelerating the deep integration of AI and education will have a revolutionary impact on teachers' optimization of teaching, innovation in education, and

accurate analysis of learning, as well as on students' personalized learning and reduction of excessive academic burden.



Li Ping, deputy secretary of the Party Committee of NCET, pointed out that the development of human society and cyberspace and physical space has already begun, and that AI, as an important driving force of the new round of technological revolution and industrial change, will give rise to new industries and new spiritual growth points. AI is also the key area of scientific and technological competition among countries in the future. In recent years, NCET has launched a series of AI courses for primary and secondary schools and released a framework for AI technology and engineering literacy for primary and secondary schools. The AI education system for primary and secondary schools of NCET will also be officially released at the sub-forum *NCET AI Education System Development and Teaching Practice Innovation*.

In his speech, Shahbaz Khan, representative of UNESCO China,

suggested that AI-driven digital learning is not only a high-bandwidth transmission path to rapidly deliver traditional forms



of knowledge, but also gradually becoming a humanistic code. To this end, UNESCO has launched a number of initiatives. China will be a very strong partner in the pursuit of the UN's Sustainable Development Goal 4 (ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all).

Plenary forum: In-depth analysis of AI + education

The education sector has been faced with opportunities and challenges in recent years. China launched the "double reduction" policy, and the high-quality development of education has become the main direction of education reform. This makes it more necessary for AI, big data, and other technologies to play a role in improving quality and efficiency and further stimulating the huge potential of technology to promote educational changes.

In the main forum with the theme



of *AI + Education: Together for Shared Prosperity*, Dong Qi, President of Beijing Normal University, delivered a presentation entitled *Brain Intelligence Development Research to Help Build a Public Service System for Students' Mental Health with Chinese Characteristics*. He shared the contents and application prospects of the research on children and adolescents' brain intelligence development in the major science and technology project *2030 National Brain Science and Brain Research*, taking into account the new challenges and tasks facing Chinese students' mental health. He pointed out that one of the core objectives of the project is to explore the laws of the brain and intellectual development and reveal the scientific principles and methods for promoting students' mental health and preventing mental problems. Through the analysis of the laws of brain structure and function development of children and adolescents and the mechanism of individual differentiation, his team is carrying out researches on the development of a comprehensive assessment and early

warning system for brain intelligence growth and on the development of mental health promotion and intervention techniques and methods based on the laws of brain intelligence development. The project will contribute to the establishment of a public service system for student mental health with Chinese characteristics and to the mental health of hundreds of millions of children and adolescents.



Zhou Zuoyu, Vice President of Beijing Normal University, presided over the opening ceremony.

Zhang Jun, an academician of the Chinese Academy of Engineering and president of Beijing Institute of Technology (BIT), shared a presentation entitled *Smart Education*



from the Perspective of "Internet+" by taking the practice of smart education of BIT as an example and explaining the role played by the new cloud-based smart education technology in liberating space and knowledge. He introduced many practical achievements of BIT. For example, BIT is the first Chinese university to have built a smart, interactive, and immersive learning platform for political science courses. It has deepened the classroom revolution, integrated new elements to build a new paradigm of smart education, and created a new smart education system with unlimited time and space, independent learning, resource sharing, multi-dimensional evaluation, and international outlook. Through the practice of smart education, information technology is integrated into the whole process of education and teaching, and information system becomes a new tool for talent cultivation.

Xie Wei, former vice president of Tsinghua University, delivered a keynote report entitled *The Risk of Self-identification in the Internet Society*. He proposed that the fundamental task of education is "self-identification", that is, to help and guide people to answer the



question of "who am I?". With the rise of the network society, especially the emergence of virtual space, the mechanism of realizing self-identity will face great risks. Starting from the specific issue of self-identification, he discussed the impact of information technology, including the development of artificial intelligence, the Internet, and big data, on the basic issues of education. He proposed a concept of transforming from "division" and "conflict" to "union".



With the theme of *Artificial Intelligence Helps to Self-improvement*, Wu Xiaoru, President of iFLYTEK, introduced amid the educational challenges posed by China's policy of "double reduction", how the company's smart education solution can strengthen process-oriented evaluation through deeply integrating smart technologies into the teaching

reform so as to promote learning and teaching with evaluation, thus significantly reducing inefficient and ineffective learning time and homework time. The technology can also be applied to physical education, calligraphy, and music teaching and has produced a beneficial impact. Secondly, smart technologies can support teaching and learning. For example, AI can provide whole-process support for the creation of scenarios, independent inquiry, and collaborative learning in the context of the "three new" teaching reforms so as to cultivate students' abilities and literacy, solve the problem of graded homework and provide support for schools to improve after-school services. In addition, new education infrastructure can be built to improve the efficiency of education.



Andreas Schleicher, Director General of Education and Skills of OECD, gave a keynote presentation entitled *Beyond Academic Learning: First Results of the OECD Social and Emotional Skills Survey*. He suggested that "technology offers the possibility to combine learning and assessment in a way that makes learning more sophisticated, adaptive and interactive.

At the same time, we realize that it is important to expand assessment beyond the accumulation of subject knowledge." A month ago, PISA launched the Social-Emotional Learning Assessment for Students, and research shows that these skills are highly predictive of the labor market and social success.



Wang Yongli, Vice President and Secretary General of CEAIE, moderated the forum.

This three-day conference consists of one main forum and 17 sub-forums, covering topics such as brain intelligence development, education monitoring and assessment, intelligent assessment of mental health, AI and regional governance, AI and language education, AI innovative education, etc. More than 100 education experts and industry elites from home and abroad were invited to share the latest research findings and technology practices. The conference is a high-end and open academic exchange platform to further promote the deep integration and of AI, big data and education, and explore new ideas in guiding the development of future education.

# Unveiling Ceremony of Beijing Normal University School of Future Design and the International Frontier Forum on Design Education was Held at BNU Zhuhai

Article Source: BNU Zhuhai | Release Date: 2021-12-09

On December 6, the Unveiling Ceremony of Beijing Normal University School of Future Design (SFD) and the International Frontier Forum on Design Education was successfully held at Zhuhai. Sun Hongpei, Vice Chairman of the University Council of Beijing Normal University (BNU), Wang Shoujun, Vice President of BNU and Director of the Administrative Committee

of BNU Zhuhai, Zheng Guomin, Assistant to the BNU President and Provost of BNU Zhuhai, Dai Wei, Deputy Director and Secretary General of the Administrative Committee of BNU Zhuhai attended the ceremony. Present at the ceremony were also leaders, professors, and entrepreneurs from Central Academy of Fine Arts, China Academy of Art, Tongji University, and over 30 Chinese



universities and companies. Wei Wei, Chairperson of the University Council of BNU Zhuhai, presided over the ceremony.

At the ceremony, Wang Shoujun read out the approval of the establishment of the School of Future Design and gave opening remarks. Wang Shoujun introduced the significance of establishing the School of Future Design in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area from the strategic perspective of the university. He stated the establishment of the School was a crucial initiative of Beijing Normal University to focus on the frontier of design discipline development, accelerate



the interdisciplinary emerging, and serve national strategic demands as well as local economic and social development. He expressed his expectations and hoped the School of Future Design Institute could give full play to the advantages of the Greater Bay Area, innovate talent training mode and cultivate high-level innovative design talents.



Sun Hongpei, Vice Chairman of the University Council of Beijing Normal University, awarded the Appointment Certificate to Gao Peng, Dean of the School of Future Design.



Gao Peng, Dean of the School of Future Design, introduced the construction and development of the School. He stated that grounded at the cross-disciplinary research in arts, technology, and education, SFD covers three research directions

- Design and Future Production and Lifestyle, Art and Technology, Design and Education. By gathering a group of excellent scholars and experts in the design industry, SFD aims to cultivate students into leading design professionals with innovative design thinking and the courage to face the challenges in the future.



Zheng Guomin announced the member list of SFD First Academic Committee, appointing Tan Ping as the Chair of the Academic Committee and Wang Min, Xu Ping, Tony Brown, Li Qi, and Miriam Mirolla as members of the Academic Committee.



SFD Academic Committee member Wang Min said, "Beijing Normal University is a leading university of national education with impressive achievements. In this beautiful

campus at Zhuhai, the School of Future Design will explore not only designs for the future but also design education practices facing the future. We believe that the School of Future Design will have a great impact on China's education and contribute to the development of national education."

Royal College of Art, UK, Politecnico di Milano, Italy, and University for the Creative Arts, UK extended their congratulations to the School of Future Design online and expected to establish deep and broad international cooperation with Beijing Normal University School of Future Design.



At the end of the ceremony, a piece of good news was released by the School of Design: in early December, a cooperation agreement was signed by Beijing Normal

University School of Future Design and Beijing National Sportswear Ltd. Company aiming to build a Joint Design Laboratory. "Beijing Normal University-TEAM CHINA" co-branded clothing accessories will be released during the 120th-anniversary celebration of the Beijing Normal University, boosting national brand development and telling China's stories.

The International Frontier Forum on Design Education, jointly organized by Beijing Normal University School of Future Design and Royal College of Art, UK successfully opened after

the unveiling ceremony, lasting for five days. Leaders and guests from sister universities including Central Academy of Fine Arts, China Academy of Arts, and Tongji University as well as representatives from enterprises attended the forum. Naren Barfield, Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost, Paul Anderson, Dean of the School of Design, Royal College of Art, Gao Peng, Dean of the School of Future Design, Wang Min, Xu Ping, and Tony Brown, members of the SFD Academic Committee made keynote speeches on "What is the future for Design School?" at the



forum. Beijing Normal University School of Future Design hopes to strengthen the connections and exchanges between experts and scholars on design education through a series of academic activities with international influence and contribute to the development of China's design education.

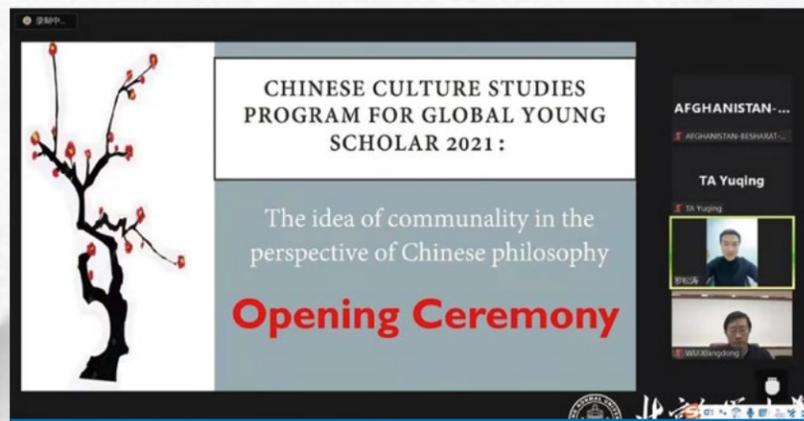


# "Chinese Culture Studies Program for Global Young Scholar 2021" was Held at BNU

Article Source: School of Philosophy | Release Date: 2021-12-08

On November 29, the opening ceremony of "Chinese Culture Studies Program for Global Young Scholar 2021" was held online. The theme of this year's study is "the idea of communality in the perspective of Chinese philosophy". The conference aims to help students understand the wisdom of Oriental philosophy, broaden their academic horizons, improve their academic level, promote their understanding of Chinese traditional culture and contemporary China, and cultivate young leaders interested in Sinological research or Sino-foreign exchanges. The event was hosted by International Confucian Association and Beijing Normal University and undertaken by the Center for Studies of Value and Culture in BNU and the School of Philosophy of BNU.

Li Cunshan, vice president and director of the academic committee



of International Confucian Association, Xiao Kai, Deputy Secretary General of the Liaison Committee of International Confucian Association, Wu Xiangdong, director of Center for Studies of Value and Culture and Dean of School of Philosophy of BNU, and many other guests attended the opening ceremony of the seminar.

At the opening ceremony, Fawad Ullah from Pakistan spoke as a

student representative. He said that since the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the importance of the Chinese language and culture has been increasing all over the world because learning the Chinese language and culture has increasingly become a world academic trend. During his study at BNU, he learned a very important concept "community" in the Chinese context. Through the guidance of the teacher of the Institute of Chinese Philosophy in the School of Philosophy,

he gradually realized that the traditional Chinese thoughts of Confucianism and Taoism were not just a popular concept, but had a profound connotation of internal philosophy. He believes that today's world is facing many challenges such as global warming, and much of the wisdom of Chinese sages can be used for reference by today's world.

The lecturers of this program are composed of 7 well-known scholars from 6 universities around the world: Anle Zhe, Professor of Peking University, Liu Xiaogan, Professor of Beijing Normal University, Luo Yana, Professor of Ljubljana University, Mei Qianli, Professor of Sun Yat-sen University, Bei Danning, Professor of Shandong

University, Peng Guoxiang, Professor of Zhejiang University, and Dr. David Bartosch, Professor of Beijing Normal University at Zhuhai. At the same time, Jiang Limei, associate professor of Center for Studies of Value and Culture in BNU, and Dr. Cui Xiaojiao and Zhu Lei served as academic tutors to organize students to have online discussions. Nearly 80 young scholars from 34 countries and regions participated in the seminar online.

The seven scholars will give lectures on the four sub-themes of "what is the 'community'," physical and mental cultivation and self-identity ", " family harmony and social communication "and" nation-state and great harmony in

the world ", To fully demonstrate the philosophical core of Oriental civilization, especially the broad spirit of Confucianism. After the lecture, students will discuss in groups under the guidance of academic tutors, and complete thesis writing based on full communication.

This five-day program will show the philosophical core of Chinese culture and its broad and profound wisdom crystallization through professional lectures, group discussions, student debates, and other forms of curriculum activities, and jointly start a cultural and academic journey through rich and diverse curriculum activities such as cultural experience and achievement display.



# 2021 Sino-Russian Teacher Education Forum & Working Meeting of China-Russia Alliance of Normal Universities was Held

Article Source: Office of International Exchange & Cooperation | Release Date: 2021-12-07

Sponsored by the China-Russia Alliance of Normal Universities and organized by Central China Normal University (CCNU), the 2021 Sino-Russian Teacher Education Forum was held online with the theme of "Teacher Education Reform and Innovation under the Background of Artificial Intelligence" on December 2, 2021. Zhou Zuoyu, Vice President of Beijing Normal University, and Alexei Lubkov, President of Moscow State Pedagogical University, delivered speeches on behalf of the bilateral secretariats of the alliance at the opening ceremony. Fang Jun, Deputy Director-General of the Department of International Cooperation and Exchange of the Ministry of Education, and Zhao Lingyun, Chairman of University Council of CCNU, attended and delivered speeches. Leaders, experts, and scholars from 21 member universities of the Alliance for Education, as well as those in charge of international exchange, attended the meeting.



Zhou Zuoyu pointed out in his speech that 2021 is the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the China-Russia Treaty of Good-Neighbourliness and Friendly Cooperation, and that the comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership between China and Russia is advancing to wider fields and deeper levels. Education is an important part of Sino-Russian exchanges and plays a key role in consolidating the foundation of people-to-people and cultural exchanges. He said that in the last seven years since its establishment, the Alliance has launched many influential brand activities, such as Russian Language Competition entitled "Run to Russia", the Chinese Language Competition entitled "Run to Beijing" and the Russian-Chinese Teachers' Education Forum, etc. Even during the pandemic,

the Alliance has actively carried out the dialogue in the cloud and built platforms for teachers and students at universities in both countries, which has added vitality to the development of international education.

In his speech, Fang Jun pointed out that the Chinese Government attaches great importance to teacher education and hoped that member universities of the Alliance on both sides would carry out more extensive cooperation in the future. He expressed his gratitude to the secretariats of the alliance and the organizers for holding the event and encouraged the participating experts to share their wisdom and discuss the new model of teacher education in the era of artificial intelligence.



In the keynote speech session, Chen Li, Vice President of Beijing Normal University and Professor of Faculty of Education, gave a report on the theme of "Trends of Internet-driven Innovation and Development of Education". Chen Li analyzed the disruptive characteristics of the new generation of information technology with the Internet as the core and elaborated eight trends of Internet-driven educational innovation in China, namely, the emergence of new school forms, the promotion of independent learning, the innovation of teaching organization, the new platform-based public service model, the professional development model of teachers based on online peer support, the data-driven process monitoring and precise services, the development of online industries, and the innovation of online education theories.

Yelena Borisovna Puchkova, professor of Moscow State Pedagogical University, and Sanni Liu, professor of the Department of Artificial Intelligence Education at CCNU, gave keynote presentations on AI and teacher education respectively. After that, experts including the Rector of Nizhny Novgorod State Pedagogical University Stobnyakov and Rector of Naberezhny Cherny State Pedagogical

University Gali Akberova discussed "Development of Teacher Education during the Pandemic" and "AI and Teacher Education" respectively, the two main themes of the conference.



On the same day, the Chinese universities of the Alliance held a meeting and approved the application of South China Normal University to join the Alliance. Members decided that Shaanxi Normal University will be the next rotating university, and discussed the topics of "Innovative forms of exchange and cooperation to promote education internationalization" and "Cultivation model of versatile Russian language talents in the framework of new liberal arts". In the evening of the same day, Beijing Normal University and Moscow State Pedagogical University held a working meeting of the bilateral secretariats of the alliance for this

year, in which they exchanged views on the achievements and challenges of the alliance, communicated their next work plans and determined the work arrangements for 2022.

Sponsored by Beijing Normal University and Moscow State Pedagogical University, China-Russia Alliance of Normal Universities was established in 2014 with 21 member universities: East China Normal University, Northeast Normal University, Central China

Normal University, Shaanxi Normal University, Southwest University, Jiangsu Normal University, Jiangxi Normal University, South China Normal University, Herzen State Pedagogical University, Armavir State Pedagogical University, Blagoveshchensk State Pedagogical University, Moscow City Pedagogical University, Naberezhny-Cherny State Pedagogical University, Minin-Nizhny Novgorod State Pedagogical University, Novosibirsk State Pedagogical University, Tomsk State Pedagogical University, Chechen State Pedagogical University, South Urals State Pedagogical University of Humanities and Yaroslavl State Pedagogical University.

# Education Open Talks | Gender Equality in Rural Education

Article Source: Faculty of Education | Release Date: 2021-12-03

In 2021, under the UNESCO's "Futures of Education" global initiative, the UNESCO International Rural Education Research and Training Center (the "UNESCO INRULED") launched a series of dialogues on the "Futures of Education and Rural Revitalization Education", aiming to call on experts from all over the world to discuss rural education adaptation and the measures and mechanisms for future-oriented education.

"Gender Equality in Rural Education" is the second session of the dialogue series. When we envision the future of education and advocate a new social contract for education, how should the gender perspective be placed? This is the theme of the second session in the "Futures of Education and Rural Revitalization Education" dialogue series by UNESCO INRULED. Gender equality is a key factor in achieving the UN's 2030 Sustainable Development



Goals (SDGs). It is one of UNESCO's global priorities and is vital to the future of sustainable development. As a member of UNESCO, UNESCO INRULED focuses on rural education and is committed to eliminating discrimination, marginalization, and exclusion, ensuring gender equality and the rights of all people. Therefore, UNESCO INRULED invited experts to discuss the topic of "Gender Equality in Rural Education". The host of this dialogue is Professor Zhang Lili from the Department of Education of Beijing Normal University. She

is the Chief Expert in "Gender Equality and Women Leadership" of the UNESCO INRULED. The participating guests are Professor Han Jialing (Visiting Professor of the Institute of Economic and Social Research of Jinan University, Researcher at the Beijing Academy of Social Sciences), Ms. Li Hongyan (National Program Officer of the Education Section in UNESCO Beijing Office), and Dr. Guo Xin (Lower and Middle School Division Head at Whittle School, Shenzhen). The dialogue of these four experts was around three topics.

## "Gender Equality" and "Gender Equity" in Education: Significance and Challenges

"Gender equality" and "gender equity" sound like synonyms, but they bear different meanings. Ms. Li Hongyan introduced that when discussing *gender equality*, we are pointing to "a state of affairs" and "the results in terms of inputs, outputs or even outcomes". While *gender equity* is a process emphasizing how to meet the demands of different individuals to obtain a corresponding degree of development. Therefore, gender equity is a process and the strategy to achieve the result of *gender equality*.

Gender equality has a crucial role in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. SDG4 is to "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all". For this goal, gender equality, as a specific goal, is important in building an inclusive learning environment. UNESCO has also formulated the *Strategy for Gender Equality in and through Education (2019-2025)*. The strategic vision is to achieve gender equality in global education and to achieve gender equality through education. To achieve this vision, UNESCO has set two strategic objectives and three thematic priorities.

Promoting gender equality in education includes three aspects.

First, gender equality in education

usually refers to equality of access to education. Both girls and boys can receive education on an equal basis.

Second, gender equality in education needs to reflect gender equality in education content, teaching process, teaching content, environment, and teaching practice. Girls and boys are equally integrated and participate in the learning process equally.

Third, by achieving gender equality through education, girls and boys obtain equal achievements and opportunities through education, enjoy life, and realize their potentials.

However, gender equality in global education still faces serious challenges. According to UNESCO's *2020 Global Education Monitoring Report*, although the number of girls enrolled in primary and secondary schools has reached 180 million globally, and the female enrolment has risen three times at the tertiary level, the discrepancy and inequality still exist. Of all primary-school-age children who are still not enrolled in school, three-quarters are girls; two-thirds of the illiterate are women worldwide. In addition, female education took a hit, owing to the COVID-19. Coupled with the impacts of multiple factors such as domestic violence, early marriage, and pregnancy, women's educational opportunities and outcomes are greatly restricted.

Since the 1980s, China has continuously adjusted the policies and gained experience in coping with the challenges of poor students dropping out of school, the high dropout rate of girls, and the lack of qualified teachers. China has made significant progress in protecting the right to education of girls and women. However, Professor Han Jialing pointed out that many problems under the nowadays social environment context, such as urbanization, industrialization, declining birth rate, and large-scale migration of rural population, have brought new challenges and problems to the promotion of gender equality and girls' education. The ongoing issues of disadvantaged groups in the education system, such as left-behind children, migrant children, and boarding school children, call for continuous attention and discussion. Social development could reduce the number of these disadvantaged groups, but the issue behind cannot be eliminated. Among all these problems, the mental health of left-behind children, gender-based violence, and safety guarantees are particularly worthy of in-depth discussion.

As one of the essential roles in education, teachers not only undertake the responsibility of knowledge delivery but are also a symbol of education culture and social norms, playing a considerable

part in promoting gender equality. However, teachers' development faces many difficulties worldwide, not only in China.

Professor Han Jialing said that the conditions confronted by rural teachers are particularly harsh. In addition to limited living conditions, they also have to care for the boarding students. Most female teachers must take burdens of parenting and their own family, leading to great troubles to their work and life. There are invisible obstacles for female teachers' career promotion.

Ms. Li Hongyan specified that more than 65% of rural primary school teachers worldwide are female, and the number remains around more than 50% on the secondary school

level. But at the tertiary level, the proportion of female teachers is less than 50%. The inaccessibility of leadership positions in the education system for females directly manifests the lack of female role models. It is also one of the challenges in female leadership cultivation. To ensure that girls and boys have equal opportunities and obtain better education through schools, it is necessary to ensure equal support for teachers. The training and support for rural students, especially female students, can only be guaranteed when teachers' psychological, social, and emotional development is sustainable.

Regarding the dilemma of fostering female leadership and its reasons, Dr. Guo Xin took the Southwest

Basic Education Project (SBEP) as an example. From the perspective of the stereotypes faced by women in family and work, she analyzed the bottlenecks of female leadership in the public field, support system, and mental pressure. When discussing gender equality and female leadership cultivation, we should transcend the dispersion between individuals, family, and work, so that women can see themselves as individuals interconnected with each other and the society and realize that "I have leadership." Only when some energy and initiative are released from women and opportunities are provided, can women develop rapidly. At the same time, if we can look beyond numbers and take a deeper look at social causes, that is where our hope lies in changing leaders in the future.

in 2050 depends on how we negotiate the establishment of this social contract and promote the participation of various sectors.

Professor Zhang Lili reviewed the latest *Outline of Women's Development in China (2021-2030)* and the *Outline on the Development of Chinese Children (2021-2030)* in China. Both outlines emphasize that schools and society should promote gender equality education. These are essential guidelines for China's future development, and they are in line with UNESCO's

new commitment to education for girls and women. In the past decade, the National Working Committee on Children and Women (NWCCW) under the State Council has promoted the pilot work of "Gender Equality in Schools", which has indeed promoted gender equity in schools and has an extraordinary legacy. However, there is still a lack of qualified teachers with a gender-sensitive perspective. This requires us to offer more courses related to gender and female, strengthen teacher training, and work together to integrate school

education, family education, and community education. This further echoes the importance of establishing a social contract.

Although the dialogue on "Gender Equality in Rural Education" has come to an end, many issues are still worth discussing. Achieving substantive equality from statistics-based gender equality, "equality beyond numbers", requires attention to all aspects of education and society, a combination of top-down and bottom-up approaches, and the need to attract more people to participate in dialogue and take action.

### Reimagining our futures together: A new social contract for education

UNESCO released a new report *Reimagining Our Futures Together: A New Social Contract for Education* this year, proposing the concept of the *social contract*. When it comes to family education and school education, Dr. Guo Xin presented the concept of education as a social contract beyond family, school, and education itself, emphasizing the integrity of society. This means that when addressing gender equality, we should not only refer to the responsibilities of individual

groups such as male or female, parents, or schools but also promote changes in society's attitudes and actions. Only when everyone works together, pursues common goals, and takes effort together can we truly learn and develop.

Ms. Li Hongyan believes that the new report embodies the universal value of care and emphasizes the idea of reciprocity and solidarity based on human rights protection. For everyone, education is an

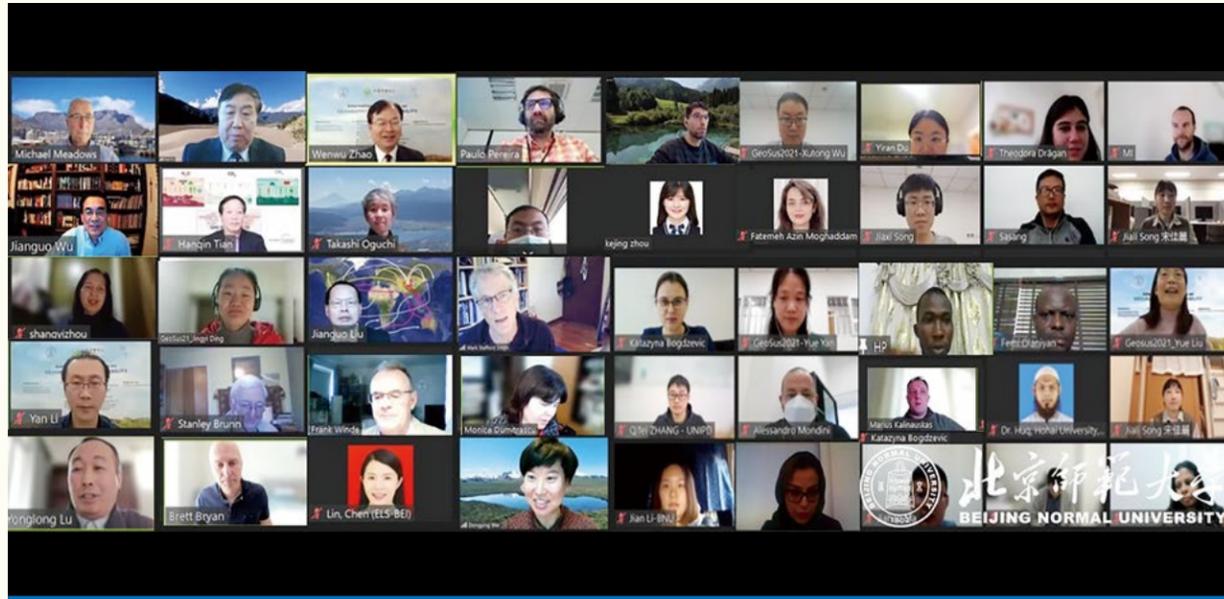
indispensable human right. This right should also be based on the principles of non-discrimination, social justice, respect for life, respect for equal values, respect for human dignity, and cultural diversity. As for achieving fairer quality education through establishing a new social contract, there are five key areas, including pedagogy, teacher development, school protection and reform, and shaping the family and the (out-of-school) environment. What education will look like

## International Workshop on Geography and Sustainability 2021 Held

Article Source: Faculty of Geographical Science | Release Date: 2021-11-29

The International Workshop on Geography and Sustainability 2021 has been held from November 23 to 24, 2021. The workshop theme is "Geography of the Anthropocene: Transforming our world for sustainable development", which aims to present the latest research progress on geography and sustainability, provide a valuable contribution to transforming our world for sustainable development. The





workshop was organized by the Faculty of Geographical Science at Beijing Normal University and Geographical Society of China, collaborated with IGU Commission on Geography for Future Earth, IGU Commission on Agricultural Geography and Land Engineering, IGU Commission on Geoheritage, IGU Commission on Hazard and Risk, IGU Commission on Land Degradation and Desertification, IGU Commission on Land Use and Land Cover Change, IGU Commission on Water Sustainability, IGU Modeling Geographical Systems Commission, IGU Young, and Early Career Geographers Working Group on Geography and Sustainability.

The workshop was freely open to all international audiences through live streaming and attracted more than 500 attendants from 40 countries. The workshop had 11 keynote speeches, which focus on the key research areas on promoting geography for sustainability. With a scientific session for young and early-career researchers, the topics of the 10-panel sessions include land-use change, urbanization, agricultural geography, land degradation, water resources, disaster risk reduction, geographic modeling, heritage park, and geography education. Around 100 oral presentations have been delivered during the two days' workshop. Prof. Bojie Fu and Prof. Michael Meadows co-chaired this

workshop, gave welcome/closing remarks during the opening/closing ceremony. Prof. Monica Dumitraşcu, Prof. Frank Winde, Prof. Takashi Oguchi, Prof. Paulo Pereira, Prof. Min Chen, Prof. Matija Zorn, Prof. Yuheng Li, Prof. Dongying We, Prof. Yan Li, Prof. Wenwu Zhao, Dr. Gabriela Morosanu, Dr. Xutong Wu chaired these sessions. The workshop was supported by the official journal of the IGU Commission on Geography for sustainability, which is titled Geography and Sustainability. The workshop will be organized continually, and provide an international platform for communication on promoting sustainable development through an integrated geography perspective.

# BNU Attends the 7<sup>th</sup> CCHEIC Conference & Leads the Academic Network for Education

Article Source: Office of International Exchange & Cooperation | Release Date: 2021-12-06

On December 2, the 7<sup>th</sup> Conference of China-CEEC Higher Education Institutions Consortium (CCHEIC) was held in Beijing. With the theme of "Promoting the Sustainable Development of Higher Education Cooperation between China and Central & Eastern European countries", nearly 500 participants from China and CEE countries

attended the conference on-site or online. As a member of the Consortium, Beijing Normal University participated in the conference both online and offline.

In order to implement the initiative of making CCHEIC bigger and stronger, promote the sharing of resources, and give full play to the advantages of university disciplines,

CCHEIC has established 10 academic networks in economics, law, education, literature, history, science, engineering, medicine, agriculture, and life science, and applied technology, which is led by 10 universities in China respectively. Among them, the Academic Network for Education is led by Beijing Normal University and planned and managed by



推动中国—中东欧国家教育合作的可持续发展

Promoting the Sustainable Development of Education Cooperation between China and Central & Eastern European Countries

中国—中东欧国家高校联合会第七次会议  
The 7th Meeting of China-CEEIC Higher Education Institutions Consortium

2021年12月2日 中国·北京  
Beijing · China 2 December 2021

the Faculty of Education of the university.

Professor Zhou Zuoyu, Vice President of Beijing Normal University, delivered a speech via video at the meeting. He said that Beijing Normal University, as the coordinator of Academic Network for Education, will rely on the platform of CCHEIC to explore innovative modes of international cooperation, strengthen academic exchanges and cooperation between universities and research institutions of China and Central and Eastern European countries (CEECs) in the field of education, promote the sharing of high-quality educational resources, deepen the practical cooperation between the countries in educational theory research and educational practice, and contribute to the promotion of education theory research and innovation. The Academic Network for Education will promote international joint research and joint publication, carry out student exchanges



and mutual visits, strengthen exchanges and training for professional development of principals and teachers of primary and secondary schools in China and CEECs, and jointly promote the development of educational disciplines and educational undertakings in each country.

During this meeting, 10 Academic Networks of CCHEIC were also established. Professor Liu Limin, President of China Education Association for International Exchange (CEAIE), awarded plaques to the leading universities. Professor Yu Kai, Vice Dean of Faculty of Education of Beijing Normal

University, received the plaque of "CCHEIC Academic Network for Education" on behalf of the university. The Academic Network for Education was officially launched. In the future, Beijing Normal University will carry out relevant work according to the work plan.

Established in September 2014, CCHEIC is a multi-lateral cooperation platform within the framework of China-CEEIC Education Policy Dialogue to carry out the spirit of the Bucharest Guidelines for Cooperation between China and Central and Eastern European Countries jointly issued by China and 16 CEECs in November 2013. The Secretariat in China is located in CEAIE while the Secretariat in CEECs is located in different universities on a rotation basis. The Third Secretariat is located now at the Transylvania University of Brasov in Romania (2020-2022). As of November 2021, CCHEIC has 259 members.



## TV Drama Written by BNU Prof. Liang Zhenhua Won the ABU Award

Article Source: School of Chinese Language and Literature | Release Date: 2021-11-26



On the evening of November 17<sup>th</sup>, the Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union (ABU) Award, the most prestigious media award in the Asia-Pacific region, held its ceremony. China's anti-pandemic TV drama With You won the highest honor in the TV drama category, overcoming KBS's Youth of May, MBC's Kairos, and SBS's Penthouse season 3. This is the first time in nearly a decade the ABU Award has been awarded to a Chinese TV drama.

With You won the ABU Award

With You is a TV drama deployed

by National Radio and Television Administration, PRC, which was produced for 7 months and reported the times soon after the 2020 pandemic outbreak in Wuhan, China. The 10-unit TV drama is based on real stories from all walks of life and tells the story of ordinary people who came forward and participated in the national fight against the pandemic.

Prof. Liang Zhenhua served as the scriptwriter of the first unit Inflection of Life, and the co-directors were Zhang Li and Han Xiaojun. The unit focuses on Wuhan Jinyintan Hospital during the first covid-19 outbreak and

tells the true story of medical workers such as Director Zhang Dingyu who was suffering from ALS but still overcame all the difficulties and fought against the pandemic in the front line, reflecting the crunch in the immediate and initial fight against covid-19.

On September 29, 2020, With You premiered on six Satellite TVs and three major streaming platforms in China. As of the ending, the arrival rate of the drama was 15.326%, the average comprehensive audience rating per episode reached 1.045%, the rating on Douban was 8.8 out of 10, and related Weibo topics received 1.58 billion views. Since then, the show has been broadcast in more than 200 countries and regions on Tencent WeTV, iQIYI International, Youku, MGTV Overseas, the YouTube official channel of Youhug Media, Disney's Chinese channels, and other



platforms. It provides subtitles in Thai, Indonesian, English, Chinese Traditional, and Chinese Simplified, and has received a warm response in nations like Mongolia and Iran.

“It’s a story of love, bravery, sacrifice, and humanity which resonates with everyone on earth under the pandemic. It is a well-scripted, wonderfully performed, and moving drama.” Commented the ABU Juries.



## The 1st Oxford-BNU Creative Writing Award Unveiled

Article Source: Office of International Exchange & Cooperation, International Center for Writing |  
Release Date: 2021-12-09

On November 25 and 26, the first Oxford-BNU Creative Writing Award, jointly organized by the International Center for Writing of Beijing Normal University, Regent's Park College of Oxford University, and the Oxford Prospects and Global Development Institute (OPGDI), was unveiled. The award was proposed by Dr. Mo Yan, Nobel Laureate in Literature and Director of the International Writing Center of Beijing Normal University, and Robert Ellis, Principal of Regent's Park College, Oxford University,

The winning entries of this award were announced by BNU and Oxford University respectively. BNU announced the Chinese award-winning



works on November 25, and Oxford University held an offline awarding ceremony at Regent Park College of Oxford University on November 26. The work “Six-Legged Horse” created by Jiao Dian, a doctoral student at the School of Chinese Language and Literature of BNU, and the work “Girl, Woman, River” created by Megan Chester, a Master’s degree student of Creative Writing at Somerville College of Oxford University won the gold medals.

The competition for a short story attracted 70 entries from undergraduates and postgraduates from right across the University’s colleges and disciplines. The competition entitled BNU-Oxford 'Perfect World' Young Literary Stars was launched simultaneously at Beijing Normal University and Oxford University in June 2021, attracting nearly 100 undergraduate and postgraduate students from various colleges and disciplines at leading Chinese universities and Oxford University. The event has attracted strong attention from the literary community and related professional fields in universities and has sparked heated discussions on topics such as literacy education and the discovery of new literary talent. Literature extends the horizon of real-life, and real life provides materials for literature. In these turbulent times, the recognition of our shared humanity through literary creation – even whilst being written with different languages – is more valuable than ever. The competition aims to identify new talent in literary writing in Chinese and British universities and to encourage the young generation of writers to develop a broad international perspective.

Through their works, students with different cultural backgrounds and unique life experiences present us with a blossoming literary garden.

At the award ceremony at Oxford University, OPGDI’s Director, Dr. Shidong Wang, recalled the Award’s origins in a conversation with 2012 Nobel Prize winner in Literature Mo Yan during his June 2019 visit to Oxford, when he opened Mo Yan International Writing Centre and became a Regent’s Park College Honorary Fellow. Those conversations led to this parallel competition taking place in two languages and two countries.



Dr. Mo Yan extended his congratulations via video to the 22 shortlisted Oxford authors and said he was “Confident this Award will nourish the field of literary creation’ with ‘excellent works produced to enrich our world’s literary treasure house.”

The judges on the UK side are judging panel chair Boyd Tonkin (FRSL and chair of the judging panel of the Man Booker International Prize 2016), Liz Trubridge – Executive Producer of Downton Abbey, and Lynn Robson and Davis Bunn (both of Regent’s Park College). Speaking collectively for the judges, chair Boyd Tonkin praised the competition shortlist for fiction which ‘roamed so freely around



different genres, voices, and registers.’ The authors, he said ‘were bold. They were inventive. They took risks. They bent rules. They showed that fiction, even short fiction, really is a garden where a hundred flowers can bloom.’

Zhang Qinghua, Executive Director of the International Writing Center at Beijing Normal University, said the competition aims to implement the cooperation agreement between Beijing Normal University and Oxford University, discover new talents in literary writing in universities in China and the UK, and encourage the young generation of writers to develop a broad international perspective. He hopes that this award will be a useful promotion for the growth of writing enthusiasts among young students in China and the UK. The Center will recommend more literary talents in the future with the support of the university and work closely with Regent's Park College, Oxford University to promote cultural exchanges between China and the UK.

Beijing Normal University and Oxford University have maintained a good cooperative relationship for a long time, and have carried out in-depth cooperation in the fields of international talent training, academic research, and cultural exchange. Both universities have published news about the award on their official websites, producing a profound international impact.

# BNU International Students Participated in the Beijing Sister City Youth Communication Camp

Article Source: Office of International Exchange and Cooperation | Release Date: 2021-12-10

On the eve of the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics, the 2021 “Youth•Olympic” Beijing Sister City Youth Online Dialogue & “Embracing Future” International Youth Communication Camp was held in Beijing from November 27 to 29. The event was guided by the publicity department of the Beijing Winter Olympic Organizing Committee, co-sponsored by the China Communist Youth League Beijing Committee, the Office of Foreign Affairs Committee of the Beijing Municipal People's Government, the Beijing People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries, Beijing Association for Science and Technology, and the Zhangjiakou Municipal Government. A total of 240 Chinese and international youth



from 59 countries participated, and four international students from BNU took part in the event as youth representatives. With the theme of “Youth • Olympic”, the event aims to continue to build a platform for dialogue and participation in global governance,

guide young people from all countries to establish a global governance concept of negotiation and sharing, carry out the idea of a Community of Shared Future for Mankind, and contribute thoughts of the young to the building of a better Home Earth in virtue of the Winter Olympics and the new Olympic motto “Together”.

Through a series of youth dialogues, field visits, ice and snow experiences, culture appreciation, youth party, and other activities, the BNU international students got closer to the Winter Olympics and knew more about China. They had an in-depth exchange of ideas and build an extensive friendship.



## Passion for the Winter Olympics



With the full expectation of snow sports, the students experienced characteristic winter sports in indoor ski resorts, and feel the winter Olympic enthusiasm in a

pleasant atmosphere.

In Beijing Winter Olympic Organizing Committee, Shougang Park, and Intel Olympic Experience Center,

the students got familiar with the preparation progress and the venue facilities of the Winter Olympic and understood the urban development plan of the deputy municipal center.

## The beauty of cultural communication

In the “YOUNG Neighborhood” International Carnival Market and other Olympic artistic activities, the students experienced the Movable Type, Han clothing, and the production of the Beijing Opera facial mask and the brooch.

At the exchange camp party, Choi Yumin, a BNU student from Korea, and Lily Pan, a BNUer from Myanmar, spoke as student representatives. They shared their learning and life experience in



China, and that the visit and exchange activities inspired them to better understand the spirit of the Beijing Winter Olympics and Paralympic Games. Lily also sang

a beautiful Chinese song for the audience.

Lily said, “I learned to ski, felt the bravery of the ice athletes, and

understand the mutual solidarity between friends.”

“I would like to appeal: In the context of globalization today and during the epidemic, all countries should trust and unite with each other. And the Winter Olympics provide a perfect chance for us to build trust. The meaning of sports is to realize the dream, and the significance of the Olympic Games is to let the world come together and unite. I think that’s one of the reasons why the IOC has added Together to the Olympic spirit of higher, faster and stronger”, said Yumin.



# BNU Achieved the Best Result in History in the 44<sup>th</sup> ICPC World Finals

Article Source: Provost's Office and Academic Affairs (Graduate School) | Release Date: 2021-11-15

Recently, the 44<sup>th</sup> ICPC world finals were held in Moscow. International Collegiate Programming Contest (ICPC) is recognized as the largest and highest-level international college student programming competition in the world. Affected by the pandemic, the finals are divided into online and offline tracks. All domestic colleges and universities choose to participate online. The participating teams are selected from more than 56000 contestants from more than 3400 universities in 111 countries around the world. Each team is composed of three people, who can solve a variety of complex programming problems within the specified 5 hours, and fully test their professional technology, innovative thinking, team spirit, and pressure resistance.

the result of 12<sup>th</sup> place, creating the best result of BNU in the ICPC world finals.

#	Who	Penalty	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
1	U Stara (Shou, Sha, Takara)	10 1499	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00
2	NUU (Liu, Ling, Zhang)	9 1365	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00
3	Tsinghua (Zhu, Yan, Wang)	8 1173	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00
4	Soochow (Mao, Leidi, Wang)	7 665	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00
5	NYCU (Yu, Sheng, Wu)	7 876	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00
6	Zhejiang U (Liu, Li, Zhang)	7 878	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00
7	Kyoto U (Kakino, Shimada, Utsunomiya)	7 892	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00
8	Fudan U (Gao, Wen, Wu)	7 1337	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00
9	SUAA (Zhong, Wu, Deng)	6 747	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00
10	Utrecht - Leiden (Speller, Hendriks, de Vries)	6 932	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00
11	SINUS (Huailin, Yaof, Samson)	6 979	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00
12	BNU (Li, Wu, Jianrong)	6 1142	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00
13	SUTU (Meng, Liu, Sun)	6 1223	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00
14	Hangzhou Dianzi U (CHEN, Zhu, Gu)	5 351	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00
15	Conestg (Chen, Liu, He)	5 489	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00

## The dream of a win-win development



In the forums themed “Youth and Olympic Technology” and “Youth and Olympic City Sustainable Development”, young people from all over the world have contributed their wisdom to the

Olympic science and technology development and the utilization of Olympic city heritage.

Under President Xi’s call for a Community of Shared Future for

Mankind, the students said that they would continue to learn from each other, enhance friendship and work together to meet the bright future of youth participation in global governance.



The representative team of Beijing Normal University is composed of students Wu Jianrong from School of Artificial Intelligence, Li Dingmao and Wu Songyuan from School of Mathematical Sciences, and is guided by teachers Feng Su and Xu Pengfei from School of Artificial Intelligence. A total of 56 teams participated in the world finals, which is the sixth time that the BNU team has advanced to the ICPC world finals. The BNU team played well in the competition and finally won the Top 25% High Honors Award in the online competition with

BNU students have participated in the ICPC competition since 2001. Over the past 20 years, BNU has attached great importance to promoting the cultivation of innovative information technology talents through programming competition, and continuously improved the competition and training mechanism in practice, so that the programming competition team can enter the ICPC World Finals many times in recent ten years. Feng Su, Professor of School of Artificial Intelligence, won the Honorary Coach Trophy awarded by ICPC Organizing Committee in the 2019 World Finals.

In recent years, the influence and scale of International Collegiate Programming Contest have been expanding, which has become one of the important symbols to measure the level of computer education and talent training in colleges and universities. In this competition, Beijing Normal University was once again shortlisted in the World Finals and finally ranked 12<sup>th</sup>, indicating that the school has considerable international competitiveness in this field.



# BNU Achievements Displayed on the 13<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan Science & Technology Innovation Exhibition

Editor: XU Zihan | Release Date: 2021-11-05

From October 21 to 27, the 13<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan Science & Technology Innovation Exhibition was held at the Beijing Exhibition Hall. With the theme of “Innovation-driven development towards a scientific and technological nation”, the exhibition set 12 areas, including introduction, centennial retrospect, basic research, high-tech, major projects, agricultural science and technology, and social development. On October 26, when visiting the Exhibition, Chinese President Xi Jinping noted that China had made significant scientific and technological



advances during the period. As China embarks on a new journey to build a modern socialist country in all respects, scientific and technological innovation will play a vital role in promoting the country's

overall development, he said.

The platform was developed by the National Field Science Observatory for Northeast Tiger and Leopard Biodiversity and the National Forestry and Grassland



Administration Key Laboratory for Northeast Tiger and Leopard National Park Conservation Ecology, together with tens of domestic high-tech companies. As the first real-time monitoring system in the world to achieve large-area coverage of biodiversity, the platform installed nearly 20,000 units of wireless infrared cameras and other field monitoring terminals, making possible the full coverage of the 141,000-Sq.km Northeast Tiger and Leopard National Park. This is a great leap from the traditional manpower, point-to-line protection to 24-hour full-scale precise conservation.



scientific platform and support system to serve the key demand of the national ecological civilization construction.

BNU-1 is China's first small satellite dedicated to polar remote sensing observation, designed by Beijing Normal University, China Great Wall Industry Co. Ltd., and Shenzhen Aerospace Dongfanghong Satellite Co. Ltd. As an important part of China's polar stereoscopic monitoring system, BNU-1 is mainly used for polar climate and environmental monitoring and is able to cover the poles within 5 days. Its unique in-orbit exposure technology can ensure the quality of the images obtained. Since its launch on September 12, 2019, it has been in good working order, successfully completing two Antarctic and one Arctic Greenland observation mission. The data has been developed into a double-level product system that is shared with users worldwide.



As of this September, the system has transmitted and identified more than 20,000 real-time surveillance images of tigers and leopards, and over 8 million other wildlife and human activities. At present, BNU's research on the biodiversity of the northeast tiger and leopard has formed a complete

# Theme Song “Snow Olympics” composed by Hu Shuai of BNU Staged on the Winter Olympics 100-day Countdown Performance

Editor: XU Zihan | Release Date: 2021-10-29



On the evening of October 26, the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics 100-day countdown performance was broadcast on CCTV Channel 1, 3, 5, and 16. At the theme event, well-known singers Zhou Shen (Charlie Zhou) and Zhou Bichang (BiBi Zhou) sang the song “Snow Olympics” together with Li Bingjie, Olympic swimming champion, and Yang Haoran, Olympic shooting champion.

Starting with “Snowflakes fly over the Great Wall, and the land is covered by snow,” this song well depicts the beautiful scenery of northern China in winter, enjoying the tenderness and the passion of ice and snow. The song is divided into two duets, with voices of men and women blending beautifully, showcasing the fighting spirit of the Winter Olympics athletes.

Composed by Hu Shuai, a teacher at the School of Arts & Communication, BNU, “Snow Olympics” is

one of the outstanding musical works of the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics and Winter Paralympic Games. The song stood out among 1,137 entries and was launched online on July 13th. In the music image design of the song, apart from the melodic theme of Chinese style and the rhythm inspired by winter sports, Hu especially arranged the song with elements of Guzheng (Chinese zither). The composition aimed to give full play to the language of Chinese national music against the world music context, and show the full beauty of the great harmony.

The 24th Winter Olympics will open on February 4, 2022, with the theme slogan “Together for a Shared Future.” The games will be held in Beijing and Zhangjiakou regions. Volunteers from Beijing Normal University have completed the “Experience Beijing” Speed Skating China Open and other Winter Olympics test activities and will contribute to the Winter Olympics and Paralympic Games in 2022.



Link: [https://share.api.weibo.cn/share/258562467.html?weibo\\_id=4696654265188505](https://share.api.weibo.cn/share/258562467.html?weibo_id=4696654265188505)

# BNU Faculty of Education Assisted Huawei in Developing Sign Language Services

Editor: CHEN Xinyang | Release Date: 2021-10-25



The Huawei Developer Conference - TOGETHER 2021 officially opened on October 22. In its keynote speech, Huawei officially released the new HMS core 6, opening 69 kits and 21738 APIs in seven fields to global developers, including 13 cross-operating-system capabilities. When developers develop applications based on different operating systems, they can integrate Huawei's innovative



mobile service capabilities, which ensures the consistency of the application experience.

It is worth mentioning that the HDC site realized the full sign language live broadcast of digital person for the first time, which is based on HMS Core 6's new open Huawei sign language service. It is based on Huawei's self-developed pre-training language model, machine translation algorithm, and multi-modal digital human action generation algorithm.

At the same time, it works with authoritative institutions such as the BNU Faculty of Education to integrate the knowledge of sign language linguistics to achieve coherent and natural sign language body posture, gesture movement, and expression



generation. The sign language accuracy rate exceeds 90%. Huawei announced that these abilities would be opened through a sign language kit to make communication barrier-free and make intelligent technology benefit everyone.



## BNU Alumni in Britain Held a Gathering for the First Time This Autumn

Article Source: BNU Alumni Association | Release Date: 2021-10-09

On September 25, BNU alumni held a long-awaited gathering in London. Alumni from London, Oxford, Birmingham, and Coventry gathered at Primrose Hill, the famous scenic spot in London, to enjoy the beautiful scenery and talk about their hometown.



The present alumni came from different grades of BNU, involving different majors such as Education, Geographical Remote Sensing, Biology, Economics, and Management. However, when it came to BNU, everyone has endless stories and boundless sentiments. They also talked about everyone's different professional fields and interests in particular, which attracted the applause and praise of alumni from time to time, and asked a succession of questions actively. The atmosphere was very electric.

Previously, under the guidance of the Beijing Normal University Alumni Association, BNU European Alumni

Association (BNUEAA) was approved and established on June 1, 2021. BNUEAA is a joint, non-profit social



organization voluntarily formed by the European alumni of BNU. Pan Zhongqian, an alumnus in Italy, served as the president, and the venue of the association was set up at the Hive Hotel in Rome, Italy.

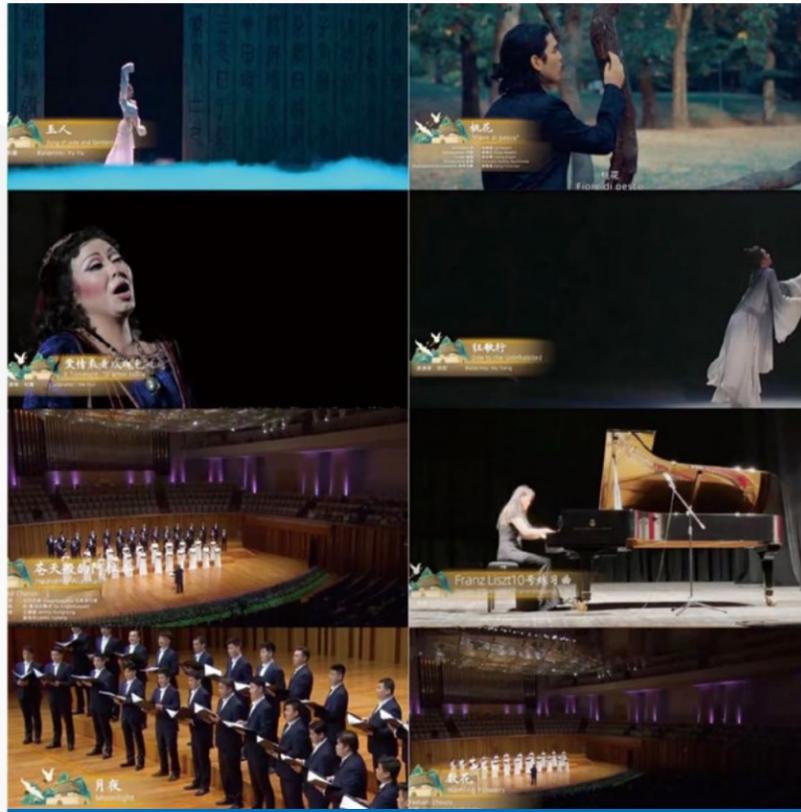
The association aims to unite the alumni of BNU in Europe, unite their strength, serve their growth, promote exchanges and enhance their cooperation. At the same time, the association is committed to building a bridge for China's EU educational exchanges and cooperation and making contributions to Chinese education going abroad. On June 27, 2021, the online inaugural meeting and the first member congress of BNUEAA were held. The meeting referred to the report on the preparatory work, fully considered the constitution of BNUEAA, and adopted the list of the first Council.



# Embassy of China in Italy Held Online Reception for China's National Day: BNU Confucius Institute Sent Blessings Online

Editor: XU Zihan | Release Date: 2021-09-30

On September 28, the Embassy of China in Italy held an online reception to celebrate the 72nd anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China. Chinese Ambassador to Italy Li



Junhua, Italian Senate Speaker Elisabetta Alberti Casellati, and Italian Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio delivered speeches. President of the Italian National Olympic Committee, Coordinator of the China-Italy

cultural mechanism, Vice President of Confederation of Italian Industry, President of Italy-China Foundation, Secretary-General of Association of Italia-China, former Head Coach of the China Men's National Football

Team, Presidents of the Model Confucius Institute at the University of Macerata, and representatives of overseas Chinese and international students in Italy sent their blessings online. Chinese and Italian artists also brought wonderful performances to celebrate China's National Day.



Jia Xinqi, the Chinese president of the Confucius Institute at the University of Macerata, professor of Beijing Normal University, said that during the pandemic, the Confucius Institute maintained teaching, and now routines are gradually being restored because of the strong support from the University of Macerata and the joint efforts of Chinese and

Italian students. The Chinese International Education Foundation, the Center for Language Education and Cooperation, Beijing Normal University, and the Chinese Embassy in Italy also gave the Institute great support. Having left China for nearly two years, Jia missed China very much and said "Happy birthday, China."



The Italian president of the Confucius Institute at Macerata University, Giorgio Trentin, recalled the tenth year since the establishment of the Institute and thanked the partner BNU. This year, the Institute has been named the Model Confucius Institute and has a beautiful new site, so as to better disseminate Chinese culture

and promote language education. Trentin hopes that the Institute will become a major cultural focus in Italy and throughout Europe. On the occasion of China's National Day and the tenth anniversary of the Institute, Trentin expressed sincere wishes to all Chinese.



Prof. Luigi Lacchè, Chairman of the Institute, sent his greetings from the new site Villa Lauri. He said, "We should carry forward the friendship that Matteo Ricci established with China centuries ago, and build a great bridge of friendship, cross-cultural conversation, and mutual respect for the two peoples."



# 2021 International Forum on AI and Education



Strategy on Technological Innovation in Education, Recommendation on the Ethics of AI, and the release of the global report Reimagining Our Futures Together: a new social contract for education.

The Forum is organized with support from the Interagency Working Group

on Artificial Intelligence established by the High-Level Committee on Programs (HLCP) of the United Nations (UN). The Working Group, co-led by UNESCO and ITU, and with 38 UN entities participating, focuses on delivering concrete outcomes on AI aimed at enhancing UN system-wide policy

coherence and programmatic coordination, and combining the ethical and technological lens of the UN. The HLCP has multiple workstreams focusing on ethics of AI, AI in education, AI procurement and deployment, AI and justice, Strategic foresight in AI, and AI readiness and AI research.

## 【 Five Sub-themes 】

- global governance and national policies on AI in education
- ensuring AI as a common good for achieving SDG 4
- mining data to enhance education management and learning assessment
- directing AI innovations at inclusion, equity, and gender equality in education
- promoting the use of AI in Africa: build the partnership

## 【 Background 】



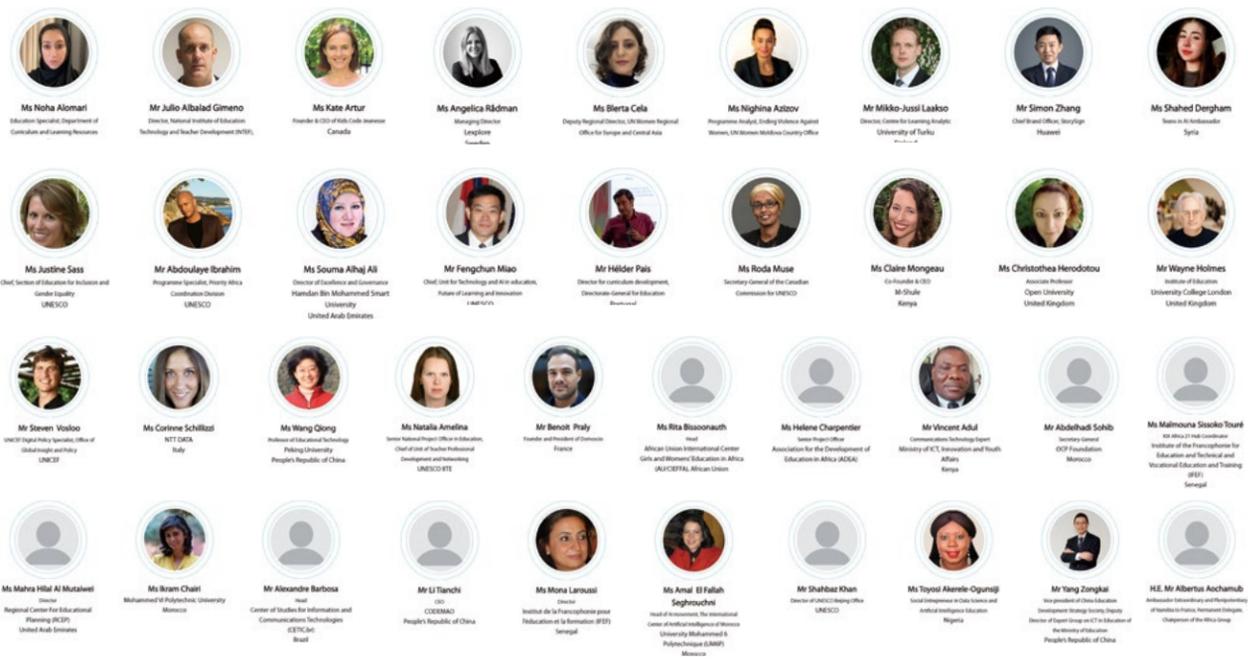
Following up on the implementation of the Beijing Consensus on AI and Education adopted at the International Conference on AI and Education (May 2019), UNESCO organized an International Forum on AI and the Futures of Education in December 2020 and consequently published AI and Education: Guidance for policy-makers

(April 2021). In addition, in September 2021, UNESCO launched the project on AI and the Futures of Learning to provide Member States with recommendations on AI-enabled futures of learning, ethical principles on the use of AI in education, and a guiding framework on AI competencies for school students. The 2021 International Forum

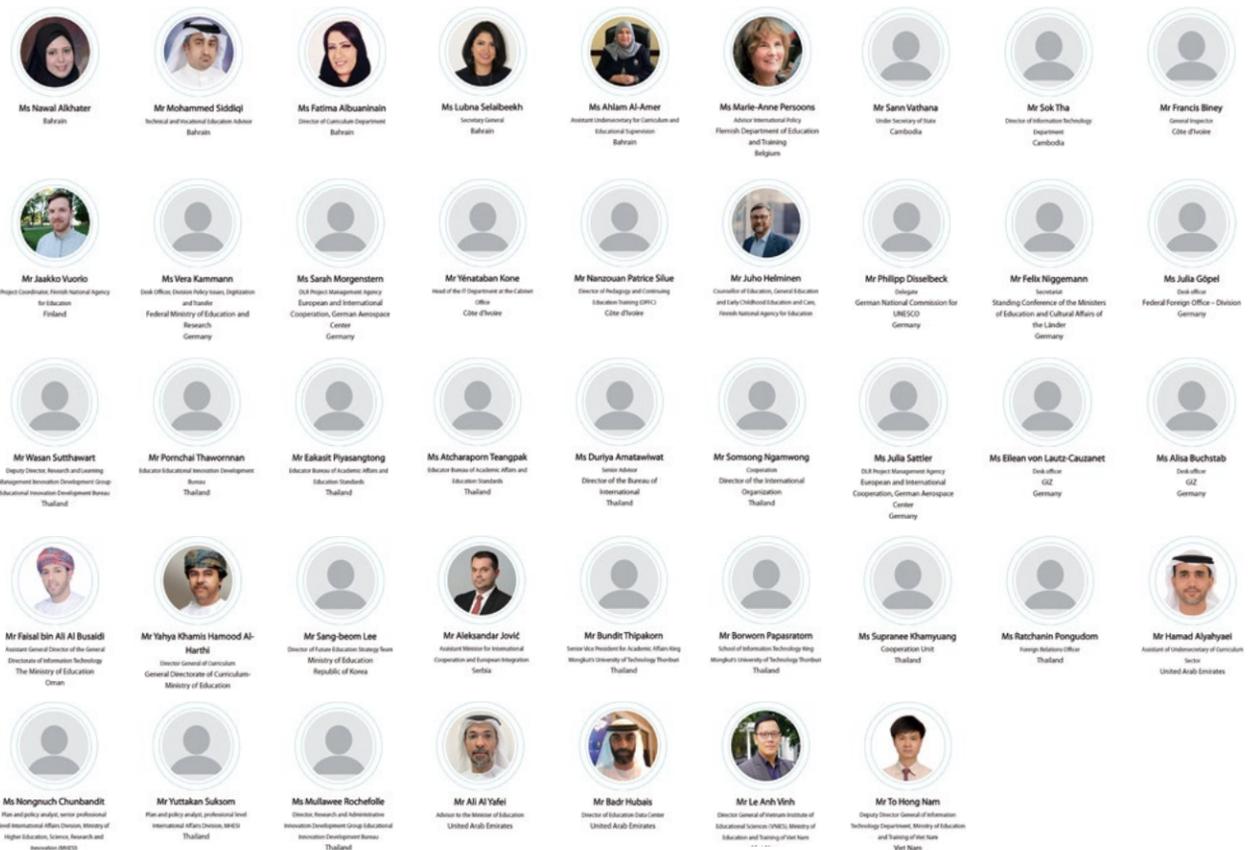
on Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Education is dedicated to deliberations on how AI governance and AI innovation networks can be enhanced to direct AI towards the common good for education and for humanity. Meanwhile, the 2021 International Forum built on the ongoing initiatives while contributing to the UNESCO

## 【 Speakers 】

 Assistant Director-General for Education UNESCO	 Assistant Director-General for Priority Africa and Island Education UNESCO	 Assistant Director-General for the Social and Human Sciences UNESCO	 Minister of Education, Youth and Sports Cambodia	 Minister of National Education and Literacy Cote d'Ivoire	 Deputy Minister of Education and Training Viet Nam	 Deputy Minister of the Public Education of Uzbekistan Uzbekistan	 Vice Minister of Education People's Republic of China	 Vice Minister of Education People's Republic of China
 President of the Commission of the Americas UNESCO	 Minister of Education People's Republic of China	 President of the Institute for Education, Science and Technology Serbia	 Minister of Education, Science and Sport Slovenia	 Vice President Ministry of Education Kingdom of Thailand	 Deputy Minister of Education Portugal	 Minister Ministry of Education Republic of Korea	 Parliamentary Secretary Ministry of Education and Professional Training Pakistan	 Minister for Education Reform Open Universities and Distance Learning Promotion State Ministry Sri Lanka
 Deputy Minister of Education, Science, Research and Technology Ministry of Education and Technical Education Egypt	 Minister of Higher Education, Science and Technology Mozambique	 President Chinese National Commission for UNESCO	 President Beijing Normal University People's Republic of China	 Vice President Beijing Normal University People's Republic of China	 President World Federation of Engineering Organizations (WFEO), the Executive Director of the Chinese Institute for	 Director Qingdao Municipal Education Bureau People's Republic of China	 Vice President Xinan Jiaotong University People's Republic of China	 Assistant Undersecretary for Higher Education Qatar
 Director General for Higher Education Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology Indonesia	 Secretary General Mexican National Commission for UNESCO	 Director General of Information, Communication and Information Systems Ministry of Higher Education Cuba	 Director Director, Future of Learning and Innovation UNESCO	 Director International Institute for Technology in Education, UNESCO IITE	 Director Priority Area Coordination Office UNESCO	 Professor Beijing Normal University People's Republic of China	 Director UNESCO International Centre for Higher Education Innovation (ICHEI)	 Commissioner for the Fourth Industrial Revolution, Founder and CEO of Africa Ben Grids South Africa



[ Governmental Representatives ]



[ Scene of the Event ]



The 2021 International Conference on Artificial Intelligence and Education, sponsored by the Ministry of Education of the People's

Republic of China, the China National Commission for UNESCO and UNESCO, and organized by Beijing Normal University and the UNESCO Institute for Information Technologies in Education, was held from December 7 to 8, 2021 in an offline and online format.

Lanka and Côte d'Ivoire, as well as representatives from international agencies, experts and academics, and private sector representatives attended the conference online. Chinese Minister of Education Huai Jinpeng attended the conference and delivered a speech. Chinese Vice Minister of Education and Director of China National Commission for UNESCO Tian Xuejun presided over the opening ceremony. Chinese



Conference President Mourão and Assistant Director-General for Education Giannini delivered online speeches. Representatives from nearly 50 countries, including the First Deputy Prime Minister of Serbia, ministers and deputy ministers from 15 countries including Sri

Lanka and Côte d'Ivoire, as well as representatives from international agencies, experts and academics, and private sector representatives attended the conference online. Chinese Minister of Education Huai Jinpeng attended the conference and delivered a speech. Chinese Vice Minister of Education and Director of China National Commission for UNESCO Tian Xuejun presided over the opening ceremony. Chinese

Vice Minister of Education Zhong Denghua delivered the keynote speech at the high-level meeting. Before the meeting, Huai Jinpeng had a cordial talk with Cheng Jianping, Chairman of University Council, BNU, and Dong Qi, President of BNU.

Huai Jinpeng pointed out that COVID-19 is an unprecedented global challenge that has put forward newer and higher requirements for the innovative development of education, especially the organic integration of education with new technologies such as artificial intelligence. To overcome this challenge, we should continue to take education as a fundamental project to achieve sustainable development, give full play to the important role of the new technological revolution, and promote education to benefit everyone in a more equitable and better manner.



Minister Huai said that the Chinese government has always placed education as a priority in economic and social development and insisted on fairness and inclusion, high-quality development, and reform and innovation. China is moving from a country with large human resources to a country with strong human resources. China will increase the supply of AI in education policies, promote the deep integration of AI and education, use AI to promote lifelong learning for all and devote itself to promoting digital transformation, smart upgrading,

and integration and innovation in education to accelerate the development of a high-quality education system.

Regarding global education cooperation, Huai Jinpeng proposed that countries should be aware of changes and adapt to the trend, establish the concept of promoting the development of education in the digital era with technological innovation, explore and innovate, make full use of technological empowerment, accelerate the deep integration of artificial intelligence and education and build an open, inclusive and resilient education system. We should focus on security and stability in education, coordinate the relationship between security and development, improve ethical safety rules and technology management methods in the application of AI technology in education and build a solid and secure foundation of the technological changes in education in the age of AI so that AI really promotes the development of education for the benefit of human society.

In the high-level dialogue, Vice Minister Zhong Denghua said that in recent years, the Chinese government attaches great importance to the integration and development of AI and education and has taken a series of measures to build a smart learning environment, explore smart education models, promote capacity building in teachers, and improve the capabilities of education governance. He pointed out that AI is currently an important



driving force of the new round of technological revolution and industrial change, and that the rapid development of AI technology has brought important opportunities and challenges to education. China's Ministry of Education is developing and will soon release the 14th Five-Year Plan for Education Informatization, which will promote the application of AI in education, continue to promote AI in the classroom, accelerate the promotion of intelligent education management services, pay great attention to the ethical and safety issues of AI education applications, vigorously promote the integration of AI and education, and support the development of a high-quality education system.

In his opening speech, Dong Qi made three suggestions to promote the innovative integration of AI technology and education, implement the UN Sustainable Development Goals, comprehensively improve the quality of education, and promote the overall healthy development of students: Firstly, the integration of education and AI should be student-oriented with the promotion of students' overall development as an important criterion to test the effectiveness of the integration. Secondly, to improve



the effectiveness of the integration of AI and education, it is urgent to strengthen the research on the law of students' brain development. Thirdly, education and AI should be integrated innovatively to better serve the development of students' mental health. He said that with the strong support of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Science and Technology, Beijing Normal University is organizing more than 1,700 researchers nationwide to conduct scientific research on brain intelligence development and effective learning and mental health development of Chinese children and adolescents to contribute to the healthy development of children and adolescents around the world.



In his closing summary, Vice Minister Tian Xuejun said that the discussions at this conference have resulted in

some important consensus: we should strengthen the policy guidance and promotion of the integration of AI and education, promote equity and inclusion in education with innovative applications of AI, and expand international cooperation to prevent the creation of a new digital divide. He proposed that we should hold on to the "golden key" of innovation so that AI can become an important driver of educational change, take the "steering wheel" of governance so that AI applications in education can travel on the track of healthy development and build the "overpass" of cooperation so that AI can become an important focus of international exchange and cooperation in education.



Zhou Zuoyu, Vice President of Beijing Normal University, said at the closing ceremony that Beijing Normal

University is willing to cooperate sincerely with the global education and science and technology communities and with all colleagues who care about the development of education to seize the development opportunities scientifically, actively deal with the risk challenges brought by AI, jointly promote AI for the healthy development of education and society, build a good, credible and reliable AI education application system, and contribute to the common welfare of humanity.



The closing ceremony was moderated by Qin Changwei, Secretary General of the China National Commission for UNESCO.

This conference is the first international conference in the field of AI since the adoption of UNESCO's Global Report on The Future of Education and other important documents such as the Recommendation on the Ethics of AI. It is the second time that Beijing Normal University hosted the International Conference on AI and Education by drawing on the successful experience of holding last year's conference with the theme of "Cultivating New Capabilities to Meet the Age of AI".

# Professor Wang Zikun, Our Beloved President

Article Source: *Guangming Daily* | Release Date: 2021-10-25

## Biography

Wang Zikun was born in 1929 in Ji An, Jiang Xi Province. As a mathematician and academician of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, he is one of the pioneers and trailblazers in probability theory in China. After graduating from the Department of Mathematics of Wuhan University with a bachelor's degree in 1952, he went on to study at the Department of Mathematics and Mechanics of Moscow University and was awarded a doctoral degree in 1958. He taught at Nankai University from 1952 to 1984 and became a professor at Beijing Normal University in 1984. He also served as the President of Beijing Normal

University and the Director of the Research Institute of Mathematics of Shantou University. Books authored by him include *The Basis of Probability Theory and Its Application*, *The Theory of Stochastic Processes*, *Birth and Death Processes and Markov Chains*, *Talks on Scientific Discovery*, and so on.

In June 1948, upon completing high school, 19-year-old Wang Zikun returned to his hometown, a village called Fengshu in Gujiang town, Ji An city of Jiangxi province, to pay tribute to the gods and ancestors while bidding farewell to his mother, since he was about to travel far to Changsha for the college entrance



examination, having no idea when he could be back to his loved ones again. It was indeed a journey far away from home, from Wuhan to Moscow before coming back to teach at Nankai University and then serve as the President of Beijing Normal University and the academician of the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

## A Difficult Journey: Preferring Probability Theory

At the age of 11, Wang Zikun's father died of illness, leaving behind a struggling family scraping by on a few acres of leased land. He could

only afford to go to Changsha to study thanks to his classmate Lu Runlin who covered travel expenses for him.

When he arrived in Changsha, there were only three months left before the college entrance examination. At Luling Primary

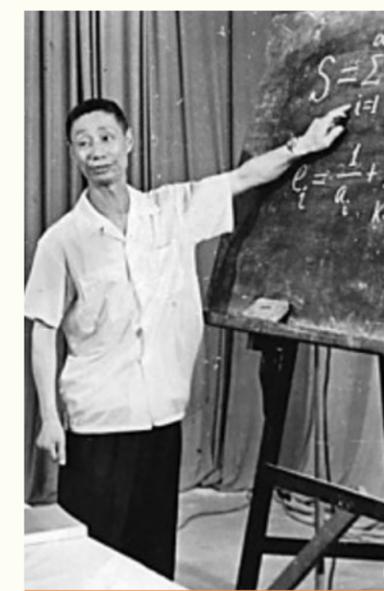
School run by people also from Jiangxi, Wang Zikun managed to land a temporary teaching position. The school had a dormitory and a cafeteria and he also got a paycheck for the first time in his life, which allowed him to support himself without having to borrow money from anyone.

Having been admitted to all of the five universities he had applied for, Wang Zikun chose the Mathematics Department of Wuhan University which came with a scholarship. In autumn that year, carrying a sleeping mat and a worn quilt on his back, he was the first student to get registered at Wuhan University. The student dormitory, a four-story building with four doorways and sixteen dorms, was built in the cherry garden on the mountainside. The dorms were named after the first 16 characters in the Thousand Character Classic (a famous literary classic in China) as follows: "Tiān dì xuán huáng, yǔ zhòu hóng huāng. Rì yuè yíng zè, chén xiù liè zhāng" (Heaven is dark, earth golden; the cosmos is vast and diffuse. Sun and moon wax and wane; the stars are fixed in their constellations.) Wang Zikun lived in "the dorm of zhòu". As winter approached, the dorm was damp and cold. A sweater once belonged to

his late father, and a pair of wide trousers were all he had to survive the harsh winter. If it was too cold to bear, he would either go out for a run or study on a bed covered by quilts. His hands and feet were always cold and he suffered from frostbite. Even today scars on his hands are visible.

With food and shelter, Wang Zikun could throw himself into learning, which pleased him more than anything else. Thanks to a classmate, he could help out in the library on Sunday, and afford a few bars of soap for laundry with the monthly salary. The rest of the money was saved up to buy a toothbrush and toothpaste, and even a towel.

In July 1950, Wang Zikun joined the Communist Party of China and served as a member of the Party branch of the School of Science and the Secretary of the Youth League branch of the Department of Mathematics. Conscientious and responsible as he was, he spared no efforts in accomplishing all the tasks assigned by the Party. After the founding of the People's Republic of China, the university decided to offer student aid to students from impoverished families. Back then there were a large number of poor students in



the department but only 25% of them were eligible for financial support, so the Party branch of the Department of Mathematics called on party members to voluntarily give up quota despite being poor themselves. With tears in his eyes, Wang Zikun said he was willing to give up the aid when he was the one who needed it the most. Everyone knew that he deserved it for he had no financial means whatsoever. After a few discussions, the Party branch decided to make an exception for Wang Zikun so that he could continue to receive student aid, for which he felt grateful his entire life.

After graduating from Wuhan University in July 1952, Wang

Zikun was assigned to the Chinese Academy of Sciences for postgraduate studies. He and 30 classmates went from Wuhan University to Beijing. As the train charged forward at a dizzying speed, those vigorous and vibrant young students sang loud songs all along the way, spicing up the whole carriage where fellow passengers could not help but sing along. It was when they arrived in Beijing that they found out the previous arrangement had been changed with Wang Zikun being assigned to Nankai University as a teaching assistant and the rest being reassigned as well.

After he became a university teacher, Wang Zikun was keenly aware of his inadequate knowledge, and often read books from the library in his spare time. At first, he just read whatever books were available with no specific goals in mind. The Dean of the department, Zeng Dinghe, was impressed by his eagerness to learn and asked Wang Zikun to join him in translating the textbook *A Course in Calculus of Variation* co-authored by two Soviet academicians Ruschernek and Lavrinchev. Wang Zikun had never been acquainted with the *Calculus of Variation*, so he had to start from scratch. Two years later, Zeng Dinghe told him that the

book had been published by Higher Education Press and gave him 300 yuan as a translation fee which was by no means a small sum in the 1950s. Later Wang Zikun went home to visit his mother during the summer vacation and bought a farm cow for the family.

Ever since he started to receive paychecks in August 1952, Wang Zikun had sent money to his family every month and kept doing so to show his gratitude to his brother and sister-in-law even after his mother passed away. Every single month for nearly 50 years, he would send the money one or two days after receiving a paycheck, until his brother and sister-in-law both passed away.

In 1954, the university offered an opportunity for Wang Zikun to go to the Soviet Union for postgraduate studies. He had to learn Russian first at the Beijing Russian Language Training School on Shifuma Street (now Xinwenhua Street). This was not difficult for him, but what bothered him was he had no idea what branch of mathematics to pursue in the Soviet Union. He went to Guan Zhaozhi, a researcher at the Institute of Mathematics of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, for advice. Mr. Guan suggested that he study

probability theory because of its extensive application. In addition, very few people at that time specialized in it. Later, Wang Zikun made up his mind when he was told that probability theory was one of the least developed branches of mathematics in China that urgently needed to be studied and promoted.

The decision had been made, but what exactly was probability theory? Wang Zikun was completely clueless since he had never heard of such a term before. Luckily, as someone who frequented the bookstore, Wang Zikun stumbled upon a book entitled *A course in probability theory* written by a Soviet mathematician Gnedenko and translated by Ding Shoutian. As if discovering a goldmine, Wang Zikun bought the book immediately. But because the school prohibited students from reading any books other than Russian ones, every day after class, he had to run to the farmland three or four miles northwest of Shifuma Street to study. The holidays, of course, were a golden time for studying. He read the book earnestly, filling the margins with tons of notes and questions. This textbook marked the starting point of his academic career.

## A Diligent Student in the Soviet Union: No More Drums and Musical Instruments

On August 28, 1955, Wang Zikun set off again. Departing from Qianmen Railway Station in Beijing, he passed through the vast and extensive Siberia and finally arrived in Moscow on September 8.

At that time, the Department of Mathematics and Mechanics of Moscow University was home to many world-renowned top mathematicians. One of them was Kolmogorov, Wang Zikun's supervisor, who established the axiom structure of probability theory. His graduate student Dobrushin, a man in his early 30s, smart and capable with excellent academic performance, became Wang Zikun's actual teacher. When Dobrushin asked Wang Zikun if he had studied probability theory before, the latter gave an affirmative answer right away for he would probably have to go to undergraduate schools or be sent back to China had he answered otherwise. Dobruszyn then asked which textbook he used. When Wang Zikun told him that it was *A course in probability theory* by professor Gnedenko from Moscow University, he nodded in satisfaction. Later Wang Zikun confessed that he hadn't studied probability theory at university but rather taught himself in three months.

Although he was a top student in China, Wang Zikun felt

overwhelmed with pressure when he first arrived at Moscow University. Compared with his classmates who had systematically studied probability theory in the third year of university and even worked on some papers before going to graduate school, Wang Zikun had never received such comprehensive and in-depth academic training. Given such a low starting point and inadequate academic training, coupled with the fact that Russian was not his mother tongue, catching up with the rest meant that he had to accomplish in three years what others spent five years doing. Having believed that he was rather mediocre, or a bit above average at the most, there was no other way but to work extremely hard. When he was a young student, he liked playing balls, chess, and huqin (a spike fiddle popularly used in Chinese music). He once even played accompaniment on stage. But he gave up all these hobbies, determined not to play drum and huqin anymore for the rest of his life. What's more, he had never participated in any trips to the Volga River organized for Chinese students abroad every summer.

Of all the must-read books recommended by the supervisor, the hardest nut to crack is the

bulky *Stochastic Processes* written by an American mathematician Joseph L. Doob. The previous books on stochastic processes were too intuitive without sufficient theoretical basis, and Doob was the first one to discuss stochastic processes on the basis of measurement theory. But because of its groundbreaking nature, the book obviously didn't aim to explain everything from the ground up and to make matters worse, the author downplayed all arguments and conclusions he deemed unnecessary and simple, leaving plenty of gaps to be filled by readers themselves, so much so that even the Soviets considered it too esoteric to be comprehensible. Wang Zikun was a slow reader when he started, deciphering one page a day at the most. But he continued to make progress after reading 50 pages, and the more he read, the more he was able to relate to the author, and the faster he got. When he finished the whole book, he wrote down these words on the title page of the book in pretty and neat handwriting:

“ Faith and sincerity can make the seas run dry and rocks crumble - by Wang Zikun in Moscow University at the end of 1956. ”

In the summer of 1957, Wang Zikun began to work on his thesis. Dobruschen asked him to consider the classification of birth and death processes and suggested a simple process to reach approximation. Because he didn't even know the meaning of the argument, what he was supposed to look for, or how it was done, the progress was painfully slow at first. After he gradually got on the right track, however, he proceeded so fast in the last two or three months that even Dobruschen was a little surprised. It took him quite a long time to figure out how to understand the process from infinity to finite and its transition due to the adoption of approximation. He racked his brains and searched for answers relentlessly as if possessed by the devil. Then suddenly one day, in his sleep, he had an epiphany and everything just fell into place.

There are two categories of

mathematics research: one is to explore profound problems and discover the underlying connections between mathematical objects; the other is to develop logical proofs step by step based on precise requirements. For the first type of work, although deliberate contemplation is a necessity, inspiration and intuition seem to play a more important role. Just as electrons suddenly move to a higher energy state when properly stimulated, people will also find themselves in an elevated state when fully immersed in solving a problem, outperforming any previous record. Lao Tzu, the first philosopher of Chinese Daoism, once said, "The Tao that can be told is not the eternal Tao". Likewise, in scientific research, such an aha moment defies any explanation.

Wang Zikun's thesis was entitled Classification of All Birth and

Death Processes, in which he proposed a new method in construction theory of Markov processes -the limit transition construction method of process orbits. It identifies all birth and death processes with the constructive process and has great significance in probability. The master of probability theory William Feller also considered the same problem before by applying an analytical approach to find out part of the birth and death processes. Wang Zikun's thesis was quoted and applauded by probability experts like Duncan and Yuzskiewicz. The latter said:

“ Feller constructed multiple extensions of the birth and death processes, and Wang Zikun identified all extensions. ”

### Every Second Counts: Some Battles Are Worth Fighting

Three years of study in the Soviet Union earned Wang Zikun a doctoral degree as planned. In July 1958, he left for China. On the train from Moscow to Beijing, Wang Zikun read about queuing

theory. Little did he know that what he learned turned out to be useful when he was asked to interpret for Polish mathematician Lukashevich who gave lectures on queuing theory and mathematical

statistics in Beijing at the invitation of the Institute of Mathematics of the Chinese Academy of Sciences. Wang Zikun studied the handouts before each lecture and then interpreted them

for the Polish expert in the classes. It worked quite well and the whole process lasted for about half a year, during which the famous mathematician Hua Luogeng also sat in, and asked Wang Zikun to join him when hosting Lukashevich in a roast duck restaurant.

In August that same year, Wang Zikun found himself back at Nankai University to work in the Teaching and Research Section of Probability Theory. Although a doctoral degree was quite remarkable in the 1950s and 1960s, Wang Zikun always treated others with humility and respect, be they professors, lecturers, workers, administrators, or students in his class.

As soon as he got back to Nankai, Wang Zikun raced against the clock to scale new heights in science. Rong Guotuan, a Chinese table tennis player once famously said: "There are only but a few fights in life!" But Wang Zikun believed that you've got to fight a few battles in life. Deeply impressed by the Soviet mathematicians and their researches, Wang Zikun hoped that he could also become an accomplished mathematician one day and build a world-class research team of probability theory at Nankai University.

Wang Zikun put together a Chinese version of his postgraduate thesis

and then wrote a nearly 50-page long paper entitled *Structure of Birth and Death Processes*, which was published in *Advances in Mathematics* in 1962. Immediately afterward, based on the construction theory of birth and death processes, he applied difference and recursion methods to deduce the functional distribution of birth and death processes and proposed the application of this distribution in queuing theory, epidemiology, and other fields. Due to the pioneering work of Wang Zikun, the study of construction theory has become one of the important characteristics of researches on Markov processes in China.

In 1962, he published another interdisciplinary paper *Introduction to Random Functional Analysis in Advances in Mathematics*. This was the first systematic research on random functional analysis in China in which Wang Zikun worked out the limit theorem of random elements in the generalized function space, inspiring a lot of follow-up work of many domestic scholars. He also conducted researches on the generality of Markov processes, such as the relationship between zero-one law, recurrence, Martin boundary and excess function, and so on. These researches were all published in *Acta Mathematica Sinica*.

In 1956, Nankai University

introduced a five-year academic system, allowing students from grade 1956 and subsequent grades to specialize in different disciplines at the end of the third year. Wang Zikun taught Stochastic Processes in 1960 to students of grade 1956 and 1957 majoring in probability theory, and his lectures attracted many teachers from Nankai and other schools as well. Yang Xiangqun from the fifth grade, and Wu Rong and Zhao Zhaoyan from the fourth grade also joined the classes. Someone reminded Wang Zikun to compile the lectures into a book, so he started writing while giving lectures. Before starting a new chapter, Wang Zikun made sure that he knew exactly what to write about. All theoretical proofs had to be developed around the final main theorem with intelligible and explicit language. The handouts also included his own research findings, ideas, and experiences, making them easily accessible. He taught the same course for three consecutive years before the Science Press decided to publish those handouts. In December 1965, the first edition of *Theory of Stochastic Processes* came out, and 40,000 more copies were printed in 1978. Such an amount was quite rare for a science book. It later entered many universities and research institutes as a textbook or reference book.

After the initial success, Wang Zikun didn't stop there and continued to write another two books: *The Basis of Probability Theory and Its Application and Birth and Death Processes and Markov Chains*. But unfortunately, the imminent Cultural Revolution made it impossible for the books to be published. It was not until 1976 that *The Basis of Probability Theory and Its Application* went to press for the first time, and nearly 100,000 copies were printed for the third time in 1985. *Birth and Death Processes and Markov Chains* is a monograph with more than 10,000 copies being printed. After the reform and opening up, the three books authored by Wang Zikun have become the trilogy of probability theory for college students and graduate students in China: *The Basis of Probability Theory and Its Application* serves as an introductory book; *Theory of Stochastic Processes* offers a more specialized perspective, and *Birth and Death Processes and Markov Chains* provides the first step toward scientific research. To this very day, these three books are still deemed masterpieces.

In October 1960, the Department of Mathematics held a symposium in a small auditorium with a capacity of 300 people. Hu Guoding, who also went to study in the Soviet Union, talked about his secretive missions before the founding of the People's Republic

of China, and Wang Zikun gave a speech on methods of self-studying mathematics. Students from mathematics and other departments filled every single seat in the auditorium, and even the aisles and doorways were fully packed with people eager to be inspired. Wang Zikun told the students that firm determination is necessary for pursuing knowledge, and quoted from Canglang Shihua, an ancient Chinese poetry theory and poetic aesthetics work written by a literary scholar of Song Dynasty Yan Yu: "What beginners need are integrity and ambition". He also inspired the students using the great poet Li Bai's line: "The roc flutters with the wind and soars high into the heaven". Then, to encourage them to take actions after setting a goal, Wang Zikun mentioned the famous words by Liu Yong, a poet in the Song dynasty:

“ My clothes hang loose on my emaciated body, but regrets I have none, for I languish and suffer for her willingly.” Half a century later, when his students Yang Xiangqun and Wu Rong talked about that spectacular speech, they blurted out the quote “My clothes hang loose on my emaciated body, but regrets I have none. ”

The six and a half years from 1959 to the first half of 1965 proved to be extremely precious for Wang Zikun, during which he worked around the clock to conduct researches and academic studies. He completed 13 academic papers, authored two textbooks for professional courses and one monograph, and translated one or two courses for undergraduate students every year and presides over one or two seminars of considerable size.

When Wang Zikun first went back to China, the real estate department of Nankai University placed him in No. 2 of Room 106 in the North Village of teaching staff apartments. With only 9 square meters in size and two large windows on the north side, the room was close to the boiler room in the North Village. Lights had to be kept on even in the daytime due to a lack of sunlight, but the upside was that the wind was also kept out, so at least it was not cold anymore. There was no other furniture except for a single bed and a chair. The staff member who showed him the way felt sorry and promised a nicer place when possible. But Wang Zikun didn't mind at all, saying that any place would be fine for him. He lived there for 19 years.

Back then every household in the building cooked with a stove. But Wang Zikun thought that cooking

was a waste of time, so he went to the cafeteria every day instead. Unlike most people who would get to the cafeteria early and wait in line for more delicious food, Wang Zikun hated to waste time waiting and would rather be the last one to arrive and do with whatever food was left. In those years, he was often seen riding a broken, rusty bicycle on his way to the water room, with two old thermoses in bamboo shells swinging back and forth on the bike. The neighbors teased him: "It's hard to find another bicycle around here as old and torn as yours." Wang Zikun responded with a smile: "You know what's best about this broken bicycle? No one dares to steal it!"

When the Cultural Revolution started, the dormitory in North Village stopped providing heating and the boiler room was demolished. The two large windows of Wang Zikun's room faced a desolate reed pond. Because the windows only had one layer of glass, the room became intolerably cold as the north wind rages in winter. The temperature was so low that the face towel froze into hard lumps and water in the teacup turned into ice cubes. Every morning Wang Zikun would wake up to find a layer of frost on his quilt. His fingers and the back of his hands were covered with frostbite. However, it was in this very room, sitting at a small desk in spring, summer, and

autumn, and curling up under the quilts in winter, Wang Zikun worked tirelessly day and night and finished what later became the popular science book: *Talks on Scientific Discovery*.

In 1977, *Nankai University Journal* began to publish *Talks on Scientific Discovery* in installments from the 4th issue. This was the first batch of popular science articles breaking free from the stifling atmosphere of the Cultural Revolution. *Nankai Journal* became the most sought-after magazine for a while with the number of subscriptions soaring from 10,000 to 50,000. Shanghai Science and Technology Press edited and published all the articles in early 1978. This 100-page short book of more than 70,000 characters touched upon one to two hundred Chinese and foreign scientists, and more than one hundred ancient and modern scientific discoveries. However, it was not a biography of scientists, nor a documentary of scientific discoveries. By offering an overview of the gains and losses of numerous scientists in their innovative endeavors, it was a broad discussion of the general laws of scientific discoveries both at home and abroad, as well as a general conclusion of the qualities of the successful scientists, namely virtue, vision, talent, and expertise. After this book was published, thousands of letters flew in like snowflakes

from numerous readers including students in middle school and colleges, university teachers, and scientific and technical personnel. Even the historian Mr. Gu Jiegang wrote to ask for a copy.

In October 1977, Wang Zikun returned to Tianjin from Beijing. The minute he walked into the dormitory to unpack, his friend rushed over and told him: "You are about to be promoted to professor!" This was the first evaluation of professional titles since 1963. In November, the Tianjin Municipal Government took the lead in the whole country and held a meeting with 10,000 participants at the Tianjin Gymnasium, announcing that Wang Zikun of Nankai University and He Jiali of Tianjin University were awarded professorship.

After that, Wang Zikun's fame snowballed. But he was kind-hearted like always, rarely turning down anyone asking for help. When he was transferred away from Nankai, he returned his apartment to the University right away. His student Chen Dianfa once found a letter written in pencil while sorting out his books and letters. A primary school student, in his childish handwriting, asked Grandpa Wang to help him draw up a study plan, to whom Wang Zikun kindly wrote back and gave some suggestions.

## President of Normal University: Serving Others with Devotion and Impartiality

Since the death of the historian Chen Yuan in 1971, the position of the President of Beijing Normal University remained vacant until thirteen years later in 1984 when Wang Zikun was appointed to the post.

After teaching at Nankai University for 32 years, although feeling a bit reluctant to leave, he had to take on a new role: the President of Beijing Normal University. It was such a prestigious higher institution with a time-honored history that he felt intimidated and ignorant at first. But he decided to take the offer because of two reasons: First, there was a term limit for his presidency. Second, his wife Tan Deling had been working at Beijing Normal University for many years, and it would be nice to close the geographical gap. Wang Zikun was convinced that he could gain support and understanding of the faculty and the students with utmost devotion and absolute impartiality. Therefore, with those principles in mind, he stepped into the leadership role he had basically no relevant experience in.

Wang Zikun conscientiously fulfilled his duties as a president. He divided every day into 4 different time slots: early

morning, morning, afternoon, and evening. The first two slots were dedicated to working and handling school affairs, while mornings and evenings were for reading and studying. The same routine was observed on weekdays and through holidays.

The main building of the Normal University was an 8-story building shaped like a matchbox, and Wang Zikun's office was in the southeast corner of the third floor. The cleaners of that building would always find a small pile of melon-seed shells in the president's wastebasket. It took them a long time to figure out that the president studied in the office every night and snacked on melon seeds when hungry. Shortly after 5 a.m, long before everyone else arrived, the president had already begun working at his desk and would be back again at 8 a.m. after going home to grab a bite at 7:30. It was beyond them how on earth this man, appearing weak and thin gathered the energy and physical strength for such intense workload.

Wang Zikun had a lot of respect for the elderly staff at the university. At that time, there were two members of the Chinese Academy of Sciences (renamed

academicians after 1993), biologist Wang Kunren and geographer Zhou Tingru, as well as many well-known liberal arts scholars such as Zhong Jingwen, Qi Gong, Tao Dayong, and Bai Shouyi. Wang Zikun often paid them visits and listened to their opinions on school development. His proposal that assistants should be made available to these aging professors was discussed and adopted at the University office meeting. But one of the senior professors, Mr. Qi, who had always kept a low profile, said that he didn't need an assistant because he believed that young people should work hard given the circumstances, instead of running errands for him. Since Mr. Qi engaged in more social activities than others, Hou Gang, the head of the president's office, was assigned to handle Mr. Qi's affairs. Hou Gang continued to help Mr. Qi until the latter passed away, turning a temporary responsibility into a 20-year commitment.

Wang Zikun has always treated the faculty and staff of the University with humility and kindness. When he was first appointed to the job, he didn't know the teachers of the Mathematics Department very well, but he never missed a single

annual Spring Festival tea party organized by the department. Every Spring Festival, he would visit the staff in the boiler room and canteen, as well as the drivers and the students, to extend his cordial greetings. Many years later, the faculty of the Normal University still

referred Wang Zikun as "our beloved president". The fond memories of the president riding a dilapidated bicycle and getting off to say hello to anyone who greeted him still remain fresh in many people's minds.

After stepping down as the

president in the late 1980s, Wang Zikun found himself back to his beloved study again. In 1991, he was elected as a member of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and became the second academician in the field of probability statistics after the pioneer Mr. Xu Baolu.

## From south to north: Never Giving Up Learning and Education

In early 1993, Wang Zikun bought a copy of *Digest News* at a newsstand and took interest in a job advertisement from Shantou University. He thought that it wasn't a bad idea to work in a different place for a while, so he wrote a tentative letter. The president of Shantou University and the Dean of the Mathematics Department rushed to Beijing right away, extending an enthusiastic and earnest invitation to him in person.

Wang Zikun joined the faculty at Shantou University in March that year, where he continued to live by the ancient motto of "When being entrusted by others, one must dutifully fulfill his obligations". After working in Shantou for ten months, he would return to Beijing during the winter and summer vacations each year. His student Zhang

Xinsheng followed him to work at Shantou University. When Zhang Xinsheng first arrived, he had not received the key to the dormitory and was going to stay in the hotel when Wang Zikun invited him to stay in the teacher's dorm. Zhang Xinsheng knew some basic recipes and offered to cook something nice for his teacher. But Wang Zikun said that a treat once a week was enough to make him happy. One of Wang Zikun's favorite dishes was stir-fried water spinach mixed with peppers, so the two often prepared this dish together.

Although Wang Zikun seemed gentle and quiet on the outside, he was actually ambitious on the inside. The first thing he accomplished in Shantou was to build a mathematics research institute. With funding offered by Li Ka-shing and good campus

facilities, Wang Zikun believed that first-class mathematicians would accept the offer to conduct research and bring their graduate students to work here as well. His well-thought-out proposal was backed by university leaders, and academicians Lu Qikeng and Ding Xiaqi from the Institute of Mathematics and Computing of the Chinese Academy of Sciences were both invited to Shantou University. In 1994, the Institute of Mathematics of Shantou University held a meeting attended by both the academicians who have already worked there and other prominent scholars like Wu Wenjun and Jiang Boju. It was indeed an unprecedentedly grand occasion.

During his time at Shantou University, Wang Zikun spent a lot of time in the library as

he always did, doing scientific researches and writing articles day and night. He not only followed closely the latest developments in mathematics but also took interest in a wide range of subjects and read articles on physics and biology with great eagerness. In 1994, upon the request of the Department of Mathematics and Physics of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, he wrote an article named *Today's Mathematics and Its Applications* in which he elaborated on the relationship between mathematics and national prosperity from an overarching perspective. He also explained in the article the role of mathematics in military, astronomy, petroleum, manufacturing, life science, macro and microeconomics; detailed the contributions of Chinese mathematicians in the field of applied mathematics and called upon everyone to make China a top performer in mathematics. The article enjoys extensive influence in the field of mathematics, science, and technology.

In 1999, Wang Zikun left Shantou and went back to teach at Beijing Normal University.

He continued to preside over the seminars where he always spoke for the first hour. His students Li Zenghu, Hong Wenming, and Zhang Mei began to supervise students in master's and doctoral programs in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, who were all members of Wang Zikun's seminars. The seminars evolved from discussions of cutting-edge literature to selective readings of some monographs in a more systematic way. At 80, Wang Zikun was still able to raise some mathematical questions in the seminars. He often went to the library on his own, spending a lot of time consulting a variety of sources, in order to give such enlightening presentations on the history of mathematics, the mathematical theory of Brownian motion, and so on. A few years ago, Wang Zikun, who was nearly ninety years old, could no longer give a complete presentation in the seminar, but he would still join his students on time every Tuesday afternoon, sitting in the middle of the first row with an open book and listening attentively to his student's presentations on the reading experience. He was no longer at the forefront of science,

but sometimes he would make one or two comments, or point out some problems in formula writing or other aspects. Teachers and students at Beijing Normal University could still catch a glimpse of the old president riding a low 24-inch bicycle, slowly moving along the campus path. Sometimes his wife Tan Deling, holding a cane, watched him go away and disappear into the distance. Students passing by would stop to check whether everything was OK, but she always shook her hand and say,

“ It's okay, it's okay, he just went to the bookstore, again. ”

It wasn't until January last year that 91-year-old Wang Zikun and his wife left Beijing Normal University and moved into a retirement community in the suburbs of Beijing.

The original article was published in *Guangming Daily* on October 25, 2021. The author is Zhang Yingbo, a professor at the School of Mathematical Sciences, Beijing Normal University.

Link to the original article:

[https://epaper.gmw.cn/gmrb/html/2021-10/25/nw.D110000gmrb\\_20211025\\_1-16.htm](https://epaper.gmw.cn/gmrb/html/2021-10/25/nw.D110000gmrb_20211025_1-16.htm)

## Promoting Patriotism in Art Education: Xiao Xiangrong, the Most Beautiful Professor in China

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Xiao Xiangrong is Dean of the School of Arts & Communication, Dean of the Department of Dance, and Director of Art and Technology Innovation Centre of Beijing Normal University. He has been one of the core directors of major cultural projects of the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Culture, and the Publicity Department of

the Communist Party of China (CPC) many times. He has served as the chief director of the square activities to celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the CPC, the chief director of the mass parade to celebrate the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China, the chief director of the gala to celebrate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Macau's return to the motherland, and the director of the opening and closing ceremonies of the 29<sup>th</sup> Beijing Olympic and Paralympic Games. He was awarded the title of "Excellent Communist Party Member of Beijing Universities" in 2020, "Top 10 Newsmaker in Education of the Capital" in 2021, and "Most Beautiful Teacher" in 2021.

In June 2020, Xiao Xiangrong, who had been a party member for 21 years, was awarded "Excellent Communist Party Member in Beijing Universities", and his personal motto is: "Classrooms are the important battlefield for a teacher who is committed to teaching. The sea of art is endless and the artist must have firm faith and keep his or her mission in mind when telling stories of the homeland to others." These words are also a true reflection of his life experience. Whether he is teaching in the classroom or working off-campus, he always rushes to the frontline, fulfills his duty, adheres to the principles, unites people's hearts, carries forward the team spirit, spreads the true beauty of art education, and tells the stories of the motherland to the outside world.

### Teaching Students at the Right Pace

The autumn breeze is rising again, and the ginkgoes are yellow.

In the dance classroom of the Art Building, Xiao Xiangrong's class

"Group Dance Creation" was started with the theme of "Autumn". Students sat on the floor and shared their amazing ideas about the concept of "autumn": from colors to smells to

touch, from leaves to fruit to sweaters, from landscape to camera to poetry ..... The first step in choreographing a group dance, namely selecting imagery and developing ideas began to take shape.

This year is his 21<sup>st</sup> year in the dance department of BNU, and this semester, he teaches three courses as usual: one optional course entitled Introduction to Art and two required courses of Group Dance Choreography and Aesthetic Creation of Dances.

In the eyes of the students, Xiao Xiangrong is undoubtedly a strict teacher. When he was a teenager, he began to be addicted to dance. Years of experience have made Xiao Xiangrong understand that artistic creation is a continuous process of competition with oneself, and the creation of artistic works requires a variety of factors such as talent, perception, hard work, and opportunities. He also brings this "competition" into the classroom, asking students to watch and learn as they go and making them the center of the classroom. Xiao Xiangrong never lectures step by step according to a set of fixed teaching materials, but "stimulates" students by asking questions and setting time-limited creative tasks so that they can continuously think about the issues, find solutions, and finally capture the flashes of inspiration. His training method has both the "intensity" of thinking and the "length" of time. As the students recall, the longest dance choreography class they attended was from 6:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m.

Xiao Xiangrong is strict in teaching, but not old-fashioned and he advocates the concept of open education. In the classroom, he likes to see some students who dare to



challenge him, which makes the class more challenging and reminds teachers to keep up with the times and grow together with students. He believes that a teacher should not have a sense of superiority, but rather "assume the role of an observer", and be able to "capture, organize and understand the direction in which students are going". This can truly reflect a teacher's competence. In the process of choreographing a dance, at the beginning the students' ideas are only embryonic, so Xiao Xiangrong patiently observes them and occasionally humorously makes fun of them, providing them with targeted advice in a relaxed and democratic atmosphere. After Xiao Xiangrong's guidance, the works have been greatly refined in terms of artistic connotation and expression, and students often marvel at his ability to "change something from mediocre to first-rate".

After class, Xiao Xiangrong is regarded as a close friend by his students who can share their joys, pains, and difficulties with him and

he also cares about the growth of the students in a special way. In summer, Xiao Xiangrong prepares small electric fans and quick-drying towels for students in rehearsal to relieve the heat. When students have difficulties in life, he will unconditionally try to help them. No matter it is a rehearsal, stage walk, or performance, everyone seems to be comfortable and relieved as long as he is present.

For 21 years he has stayed on the frontline of teaching, serving as the leader of the dance discipline and leading it to the international stage. He has established dance university alliances in Europe, Australia, the United States, and the Asia-Pacific region, and built such landmark platforms in the industry as the International Creative Dance Symposium and the China Laban Research Center. Committed to creative education and creative talent cultivation, he is always at the forefront of art practice and academic theory and shares the most vivid cases of his practices and the up-to-date content of world trends with his students.

## When the Nation Needs him, He is Always on Call to Accomplish the Mission

Xiao Xiangrong often says,

“ I was born in the 1970s, grew up in the wave of reform and opening up, and I am honored to serve the country and the society with my specialization after I became an adult. ”

He is always full of gratitude to the Party, the people, and the society, so he is devoted to his work and ready to contribute to society.

In 2019, Xiao Xiangrong accepted two arduous and honorable tasks assigned by the Central Government: to be the chief director of the mass parade for the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the PRC and the chief director of the cultural gala celebrating the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Macau's return to the motherland.

As a member of the Party, he started work from the preparation of the mass parade, so he spent the longest time and became the most devoted person in the process. In the 11-month work cycle, Tiananmen Square was his permanent place. He visited this vast public stage frequently and intensively, trying to present a mass parade with both

political connotation and artistic beauty. During the training period, Xiao Xiangrong traveled a total of more than 200 kilometers every day, moving around multiple sites to carry out his work, uniting different departments and teams from various universities, state-owned enterprises, and the news media, and hearing different views and opinions of people from all walks of life.

Xiao Xiangrong's principle is to strive for excellence in all matters. In order to accurately demonstrate the great achievements since the founding of the PRC and the spirit of the people in the new era, and to implement General Secretary Xi Jinping's creative requirements of "freedom, vividness, joy, and liveliness", he worked with each formation and devoted himself to the work of copywriting planning, colorful car design, staff arrangement, and dance choreography. He led the Beijing director team and all the creators, organized more than 200 meetings, revised the text in a total of 1 million words, produced more than 100 pages of scripts, plans for more than 70 groups of colorful cars, arrangements of more than 100,000 sets of costumes, 100,000 props, and finally developed and presented a new style of the mass parade in the new era.

“ You should be the storyteller of your own stories. ”

so the Chinese stories should be told by the masses. Xiao Xiangrong believes that "these large-scale parades at the national level cannot be accomplished independently by one or two persons, but are created for the common dream of all Chinese people and require the efforts of the masses." With the theme of "Building the Chinese Dream with One Heart", the mass parade is divided into three chapters, namely, "Founding of the Nation", "Reform and Opening Up" and "Great Rejuvenation". 36 formations, 70 groups of colorful cars, and more than 100,000 people walked through Tiananmen Square, demonstrating to the world the new appearance of China today.

Just after the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration, he began to work on the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the cultural gala celebrating Macau's return to the motherland. He rushed to the worksite in Macau, build a workbench on the site below the stage, maintained direct contact with the actors and various technical staff, and worked nearly 20 hours a day in front of the

stage. During the period, due to the unexpected situation in Hong Kong, he led the production teams to work around the clock to quickly adjust the direction of artistic creation in response to the policy requirements issued by the central government in order to highlight the "one country, two systems"

under the return of the Macau ceremony. The theme of the evening was outstanding and brilliant, which was fully recognized by the leaders of the Central Government and the Macao community, and had a profound impact on the Macao community.

In Xiao Xiangrong's opinion, every

large-scale national artistic creation he participates in is an important highlight in his life, through which he sees the changes in the world, the country, and the people from the perspective of an artist. The sounds, lights, and shadows on the stage and the movement of the performers are his heartfelt odes.

## Beautify People with Beauty and Educate People with Beauty

This year, Xiao Xiangrong once again was given the important task of being the chief director of the activities on Tiananmen Square, the core scriptwriter and executive director of the cultural performance "The Great Journey" to celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China.

This time, he and his team specially set up a session in which youth representatives delivered congratulatory messages to the Party on the square during the event. On July 1, more than 1,000 representatives of the Communist Youth League and the Young Pioneers came to Tiananmen Square and, with their young and determined voices, shouted out the youthful vow of "The Party can rest assured that we shall make China stronger", demonstrating to the people of China and the world the lofty ideals of future pillars of the country.

Xiao Xiangrong believes that "if they understand these words from the bottom of their hearts, they will be able to express these feelings sincerely. Therefore, in addition to setting up a specially dedicated writing team, the first draft of the congratulatory messages was carefully completed. The director team also invited expert teachers to provide guidance, and through watching "red revolutionary movies" and listening to stories of Party history, the student representatives deepened their understanding and knowledge of the Party. The desired artistic effect was achieved due to their natural and sincere performance and the harmony between voices and emotions.

The emotional education brought by the artworks is like sparks of fire igniting the love for the Party among Chinese children and the founding fathers' spirit of party

building could be passed on from generation to generation. In an interview with Guangming Daily, Xiao Xiangrong said frankly,

“This celebration of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China is also a party history education class, and we value this process very much, which is equivalent to a vivid class. We have influenced these 1,000-plus children through such education, and these 1,000-plus individuals will then go on to influence more people.”

As an educator, Xiao Xiangrong feels that it is worth all the effort he puts in to awaken people's common

emotions and memories so as to unite and motivate them.

Of course, this is not the only lesson Xiao Xiangrong brought to the event. While the scientists and researchers wrote their papers on the land of the country, Xiao Xiangrong moved the artistic creation class to the rehearsal site on the frontline.

In the rehearsal process of "The Great Journey", Xiao Xiangrong and the team faced the challenge of condensing a century of Party history into a performance with a time limit, which required them to deeply understand the historical development of the Party and express the "grand epic" with precise artistic language. After repeated deliberations on the stage plan, the creative team decided to fully integrate the screen image and stage performance, so that the screen could present the long history changes in a short time, and complete the grand historical narrative together with the singing and dancing on stage. Under the leadership and guidance of Xiao Xiangrong, three graduate students participated in the choreography together and witnessed the process of artistic production from scratch and

the rebirth from numerous failures. They felt the power and changes of the motherland and grew up to be independent "directors" in practice. They were praised by the professional teachers of the same group.

On the occasion of the 37<sup>th</sup> Teacher's Day, Xiao Xiang was awarded the title of "the Most Beautiful Teacher" in China. He stood at the center of the stage after years of working behind the scenes and spoke his mind to educators nationwide, "We not only need some artists with superb skills but also need to make all the Chinese people beautiful. They have a heart for beauty, they have a desire for beauty, and they have a free expression of beauty. I think this is what art educators in the new era should do." Under Xiao Xiangrong's influence, many of his students have also devoted themselves to education, bringing the beauty of art to all corners of the country.

Spreading education of beauty to more people is Xiao Xiangrong's aspiration, which also echoes his original intention of joining the Party.

In 1999, the young Xiao Xiangrong was approved to become a Party

member after an act of courage. Looking back on his original intention of joining the Party, he said,

“Our Party is an advanced organization with the mission of contributing to the wellbeing of the majority of people at all times. It is the noblest goal that a young man should believe in and pursue, and we all aspired to be a Party member at that time.”

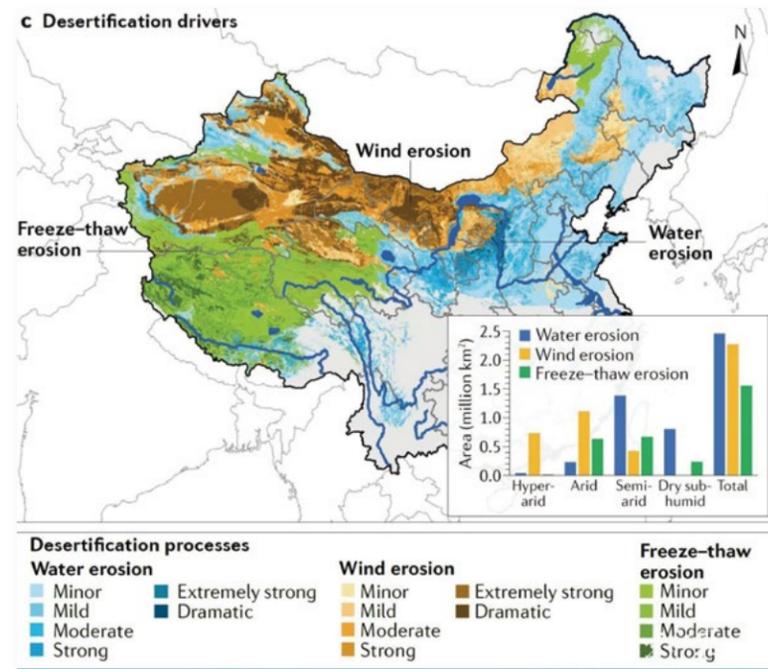
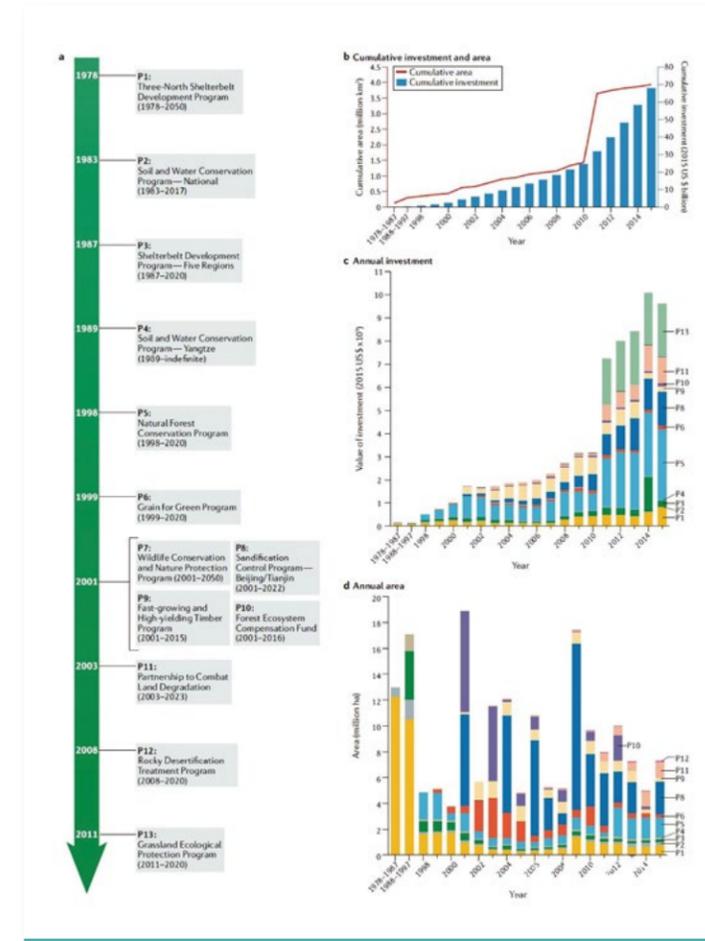
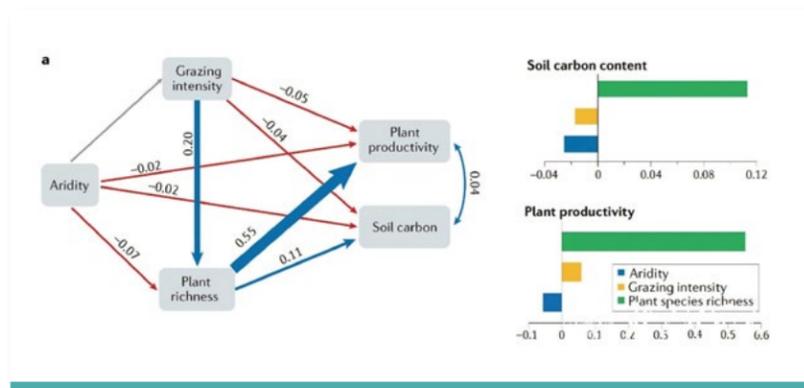
After he started working in BNU, he has met many excellent Party members under whose influence he has also developed his profound understanding and recognition with party membership. He concluded that party members should have the quality of self-discipline, self-awareness, and self-reflection. Self-discipline means that you have to be strict with yourself in line with the Party's requirement on her members. Self-awareness means that you need to not only do your own job well but also be able to do more responsibilities. Self-reflection means that at any time, no matter what achievements you have made, what high position you are in and how many people you command, you should remember that you are just one of the 90 million party members. At the end of the interview, Xiao Xiangrong seriously stressed, "I am just an ordinary worker and everything is a new beginning when I wake up every day."



# BNU Professor Fu Bojie's Team Published Paper on China's Drylands in Nature Reviews Earth and Environment

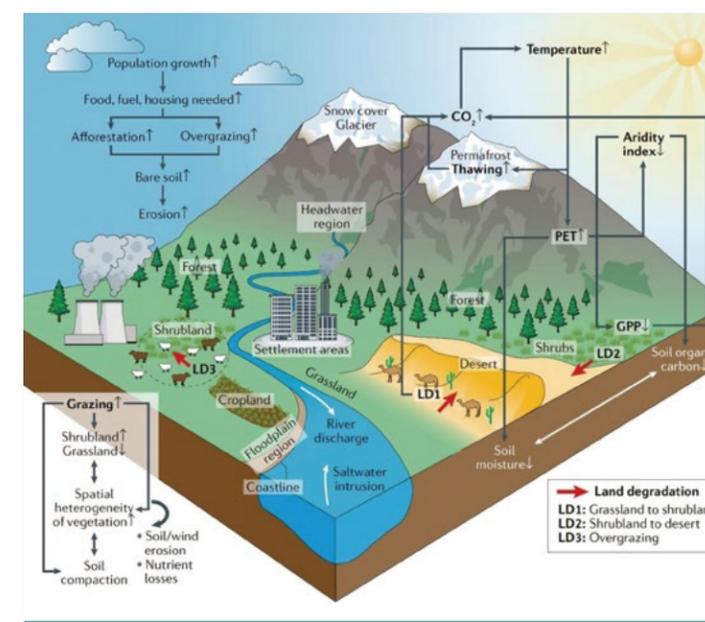
Article Source: Faculty of Geographical Science | Release Date: 2021-11-12

Academician Fu Bojie's team from the Faculty of Geographical Science (BNU) published a paper in Nature Reviews Earth & Environment on November 9, 2021, which reveals the ecosystem changes and driving mechanisms in the drylands of China and clarifies the effects of ecological protection and restoration projects. This fills the gap



in systematic researches on ecosystem changes, driving mechanisms, and ecological protection and restoration engineering effects in China's drylands.

Drylands are zones where the ratio of the average annual rainfall to potential evaporation is less than 0.65. With a fragile ecological environment and a high risk of desertification, it is one of the most vulnerable areas to climate change. China's drylands are widely distributed and highly diversified. From 1980 to 2000, the global dryland expanded by about 4%, one-third of which was China's dryland expansion.



The study shows that 45.8% of China's drylands experienced notable vegetation greenness, whereas 11.4% underwent desertification from 1982 to 2015. By quantifying the relative contribution of the drivers of ecosystem function changes in drylands, it is found that aridity has no significant effect on grazing intensity but a negative effect on plant richness, plant productivity, and soil carbon. Plant richness has a positive effect on plant productivity and soil carbon (see Figure 1).

The combination of climate change and human activities has led to serious desertification in China's drylands. The study shows that wind, water, and freeze-thaw erosion emerge as major active desertification processes. Water erosion affects the largest area (37.4%), and its main affected areas are distributed in semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas, but the intensity is mostly minor, mild and moderate. Wind erosion mainly affects hyper-arid and arid areas, the intensity is mostly strong, extremely strong, and dramatic. Freeze-thaw erosion mainly affects the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau region, and the intensity is mostly minor, mild, and moderate (see Figure 2).

Since 1978, China has launched a number of ecological protection and restoration programs. Covering nearly 60% of the drylands, the 13 programs include Three-North Shelterbelt Forest Program, Soil and Water Conservation Program, Grain for Green Program, Natural Forest Conservation Program, Sandification Control Program Beijing/Tianjin, and so on (see Figure 3). They have had an important impact on vegetation, water cycle, desertification, ecosystem services, etc., which have led to vegetation

greenness, land degradation recovery, and ecosystem function promotion in drylands.

The paper also puts forward the weakness and probable future researches on China's drylands, for example, studies on the threshold value of afforestation to meet vegetation growth and sustainable water use under the joint effect

of climate change and human activities, studies on nonlinear response and driving mechanism of arid ecosystems to climate change, and the long-term field observation and simulation studies on the impact of large-scale ecological restoration projects on soil and local climate (e.g. precipitation and temperature).

Li Changjia, Faculty of Geographical

Science, BNU, is the first author of the paper. Academician Fu Bojie is the author of the newsletter.

Changjia Li, Bojie Fu\*, Shuai Wang, Lindsay C. Stringer, Yaping Wang, Zidong Li, Yanxu Liu, Wenxin Zhou. Drivers and impacts of changes in China's drylands. *Nature Reviews Earth & Environment*. 2021. DOI: 10.1038/s43017-021-00226-z

Link: <https://www.nature.com/articles/s43017-021-00226-z>

## The 2020 Global Natural Disaster Assessment Report led by BNU Professor Yang Saini was officially released on Prevention Web

Editor: CHEN Xinyang | Release Date: 2021-11-08

On October 20, the 2020 Global Natural Disaster Assessment Report (English version) jointly prepared by the BNU Academy of Disaster Reduction and Emergency Management Ministry of Emergency Management &

Ministry of Education, the National Disaster Reduction Center of the emergency management department, and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies was officially released through Prevention Web of the United Nations Office for

disaster reduction.

The report includes a general report and a special report. The general report outlines the general situation, characteristics, and pattern of global natural disasters in 2020 and the global position of natural disasters



in China; The special report focuses on the overview of natural disasters in China in 2020, new findings in the analysis of global flood disaster data and flood cases in China in 2020. The assessment report shows that compared with the average value of the past 30 years (1990 – 2019), the global natural disasters in 2020 generally show a low level, with 4% less frequency, 73% less dead population, 50% less affected population and 29% more direct economic losses.

The assessment report was led and organized by Professor Yang Saini of School of National Safety

and Emergency Management of BNU, BNU Academy of Disaster Reduction and Emergency Management Ministry of Emergency

Management & Ministry of Education, and the State Key Laboratory of surface process and resource ecology. With the participation of many parties, it comprehensively utilized the global disaster database (Chinese version), foreign disaster data, China's disaster situation data, and so on. It has also received the support of relevant industry departments, international institutions, domestic social organizations, universities, and research institutes. The report will play a positive role in improving China's disaster risk management system, providing authoritative global natural disaster data for countries all over the world, and better promoting international disaster prevention and reduction.



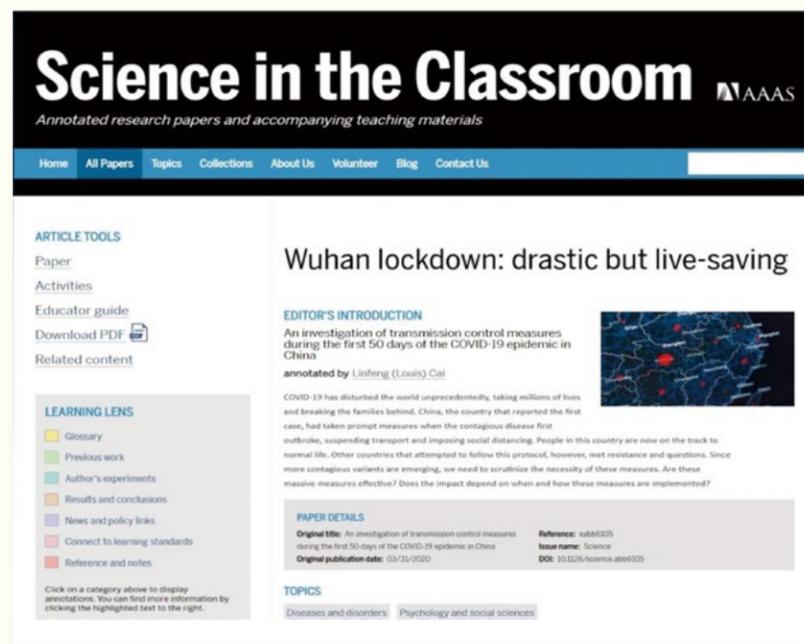
Please visit the website for the full English version of the 2020 global natural disaster assessment report: <https://www.preventionweb.net/publication/2020-global-natural-disaster-assessment-report>

## Research by GCESS-BNU Selected as AAAS Teaching Material

Article Source: College of Global Change and Earth System Science | Release Date: 2021-10-22

American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) teaching material Science in the Classroom included research by BNU's College of Global Change and Earth System Science (GCESS). The research and investigation of transmission control measures during the first 50 days of the COVID-19 epidemic in China, was published with the title *Wuhan lockdown: drastic but live-saving*. It was conducted by the research team led by Tian Huaiyu from the Global Change and Public Health Research Center of BNU and the State Key Laboratory of Remote Sensing, BNU. Researchers from BNU, Oxford University, Princeton University, and AAAS wrote the teaching plan together.

The plan helps educators, undergraduates, and high school students understand the content of research in the scientific



literature with annotations and accompanying teaching materials. The annotations include vocabulary, methodology, descriptions of previous studies, and explanations of key conclusions. It provides an overview of the

link between STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) learning framework and scientific competencies, and suggestions for interactive activities, discussions, and learning resources to further explore the topic.

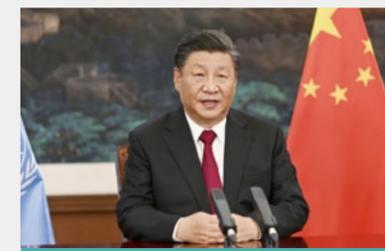
Link: <https://www.scienceintheclassroom.org/research-papers/investigation-transmission-control-measures-during-first-50-days-covid-19-epidemic>

## BNU Powers Northeast China Tiger and Leopard National Park, one of China's First 5

Article Source: College of Life Sciences | Editor: XU Zihan | Release Date: 2021-10-21

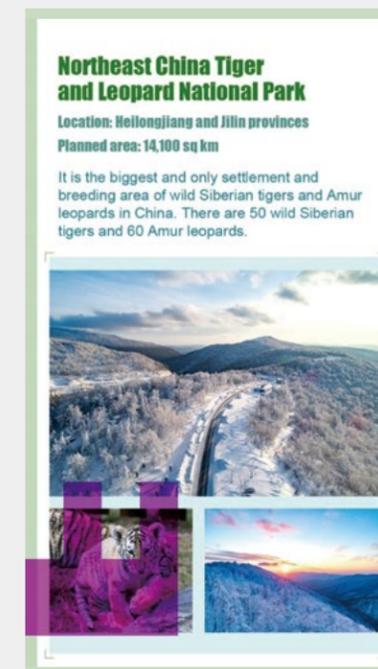
The 15<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP15), held in Kunming, China, is the first global conference of the United Nations on ecological civilization. On Oct.12<sup>th</sup>, President Xi Jinping said by video link that China establishes the first group of national parks. They are the Three-River-Source National Park, the Wuyishan National Park, the Giant Panda National Park, the Northeast China Tiger and Leopard National Park, and the Hainan Tropical Rainforest National Park.

Themed "Ecological Civilization: Building a Shared Future for All Life on Earth," COP15 will set new goals



for global biodiversity conservation by developing the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.

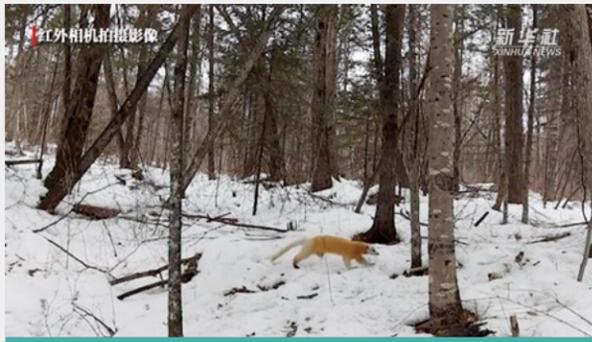
Before and during COP15, CCTV,



Xinhua News Agency, Guangming Daily and other media intensively reported on the outcomes of the Tiger and Leopard Research Team of BNU, gaining over a hundred million views.

Tigers and leopards are the top species in the ecosystem food chain and play an important role in maintaining ecosystem balance. Over the past 100 years, the world's wild tiger population and habitat have decreased by 95%, which has drawn governments' great attention. At the same time, tigers and leopards are important parts of Chinese culture, and China is also one of the main distribution areas of tigers and leopards in history. By the end of the last century, however, wild tigers and





leopards in China were on the verge of extinction. Whether there are wild north-east tigers and leopards in China remains a mystery.



In order to provide scientific guidance for the restoration of Chinese tigers and leopards, the BNU research team marched into the forests in northeast China in 2005 and has been carrying out arduous investigation and research for 16 years, having gained a series of important outcomes on biodiversity. The team finally revealed the population and survival of wild northeast tigers and leopards in China and found that the populations are facing a key opportunity to return to their hometown China. The outcome was selected as Springer Nature's 2016 world-changing paper. "This will be the world's most successful tiger conservation story in the next 20 years," commented Science.

BNU has been approved to build the Northeast Tiger and Leopard Monitoring and Research Center of the National Forestry and Grassland Administration (NFGA), the Northeast China Tiger and Leopard National Park Conservation Ecology Laboratory of NFGA, and the Northeast Tiger and Leopard Biodiversity National Field Science Observatory. With the strong support from BNU, NFGA, and Jilin



Provincial Government, the field scientific research and experimental building, the ecological monitoring data center, and a number of field science observation sites which in total takes 4000 sqm, have landed in the National Park and Hunchun, Jilin Province. The integrated monitoring system of Northeast China Tiger and Leopard National Park, developed by BNU, has become the first real-time monitoring system in the world to achieve large-scale coverage of biodiversity. At present, the research on biodiversity of the northeast tiger and leopard has formed a comprehensive scientific platform to serve the key demand of the national ecological civilization construction.



## BNU-China Won another iGEM Gold Medal

Article Source: College of Life Sciences | Release Date: 2021-11-19



The International Genetically Engineered Machine Competition (iGEM) concluded at 16:00 on November 14 (UTC). Team BNU-China won another gold medal and was nominated for the Best Inclusivity Award. This is the third consecutive year that BNU-China has won a gold medal, the fifth in eight years since the team was established, and the second nomination for a single award. In addition, the College of Life Sciences of BNU Zhuhai set up the



team BNUZ-China this year, which won its first gold medal due to the fine interactions between teachers and students, and between Beijing and Zhuhai campuses.



iGEM is a top-notch international academic competition in the field of synthetic biology, launched by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 2003. It is an international competition focusing on synthetic biology, combining life sciences, mathematics, engineering, information science, art design, and other subjects, which has attracted wide attention and special coverage from academic journals such as Nature, Science, Scientific American, Economists, and media like



BBC. iGEM encourages outstanding students around the world to innovate, address social concerns, and solve cutting-edge issues through synthetic biology, while striving to create an international community of synthetic biology that will provide a platform for future elites to communicate and present ideas. This year, iGEM attracted 352 teams from around the world, including Harvard University, MIT, and other top-class universities.

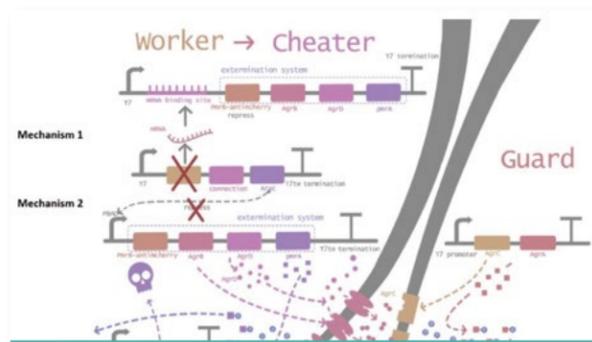
BNU-China started to participate in iGEM in 2014 and has achieved five golds, two silvers, and one bronze

in the eight years. In 2021, the team members are from the College of Life Sciences, the School of Artificial Intelligence, the School of Mathematical Sciences, the School of Arts & Communication, the Faculty of Education, the Department of Physics, the College of Chemistry, and the School of Philosophy.

This year, the BNU-China project Cheat Me If You Can focus on the problem in industrial production that genetically modified bacterial strains would have a genetic mutation that prevents the normal synthesis of the target protein. To

solve this problem, BNU-China has developed a common industry platform for protein production, which was inspired by models of natural bacteria. In this platform, a strain called Guard can specifically kill the mutated strain Cheater to maintain the stability of the productive strain Worker. The platform can not only reduce the huge loss of product quality and quantity caused by mutant strains but also has a wide range of applications in strain screening, directional evolution, biomedicine, etc.

This project used *E. coli* as the chassis organism to build the Guard strain and the Worker strain respectively. After two strains were put into the fermentation tank, once the Worker cell was unable to synthesize the product, i.e. it mutated into the Cheater, the cell would secrete a signal molecule that could induce the Guard to produce specific lethal substances and precisely eliminate the Cheater. In order to further study and improve the efficiency of the platform, BNU-China constructed a population



growth model and a kill model and determined the optimal Guard delivery according to the mutation probability of different strains of Worker. Finally, BNU-China demonstrated its innovative work clearly and perfectly through Wiki webpages and video presentations.

Through all stages of brainstorming, project design, and future application, BNU-China actively built relationships with the society, consulted experts, and visited plants in related fields (e.g., Kexing, Yakult factory, etc.) to further refine the project through their feedback and advice.

At the same time, the team actively promoted synthetic biology education for the general public. They designed different educational methods and popular science materials for different people in seven main aspects, i.e. family education, school education, community



education, regional education, social education, special education, and in-depth education. They established a multi-level, all-around continuous interactive education system, hoping to break down barriers so that more people can understand and enter the field of synthetic biology. The nomination for the Best Inclusivity Award was a recognition of BNU-China's efforts to promote synthetic biology education.

In more than 8 months, BNU-China completed documentation research, program design, expert

consultation, carrier construction, gene expression, mathematical modeling, functional verification, webpage establishment, project presentation, and education promotion, under the guidance of professors from the College of Life Sciences, and strived to promote synthetic biology to a wider audience. At the same time, BNU-China well expounded their innovative work through webpages and video presentations and was complimented by the judges. Finally, they won a single award and another gold medal this year.

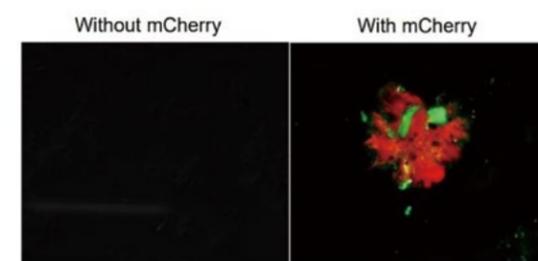


Figure 2. The fluorescence of GFP has been observed under the microscope in the present of mCherry.

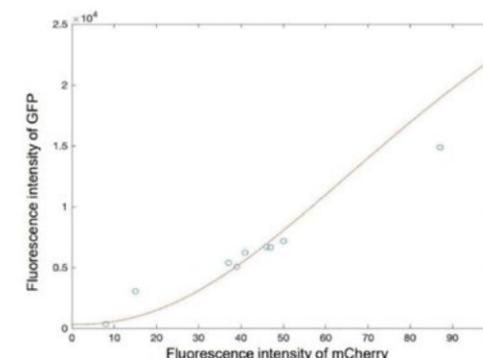


Figure 3. The correlation of mCherry input and fluorescence intensity of the induced GFP. As the concentration of mCherry increasing, the fluorescence intensity of the induced GFP was also increasing.



Photo from: Official Website of BNU  
Photo by: LI Meixian

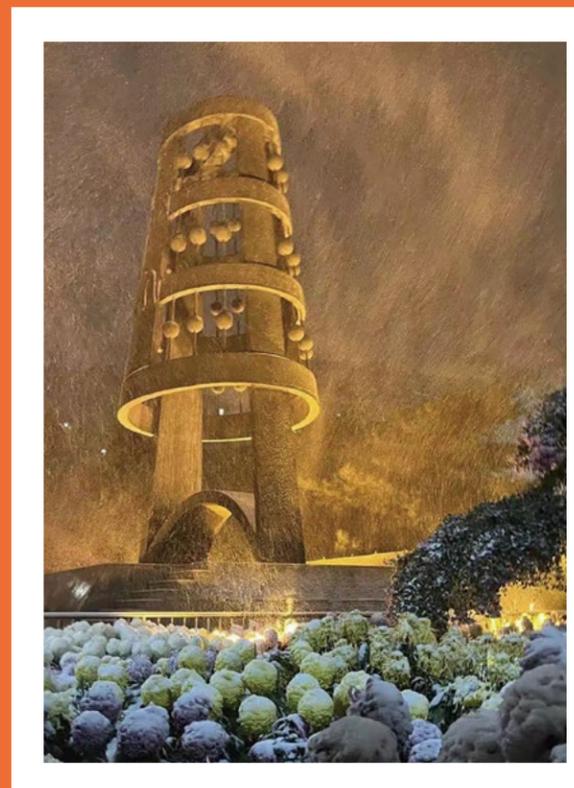


Photo from: Jingshixuegong  
Photo by: DAI Jinghan, SUI Yuan, XIANG Lai



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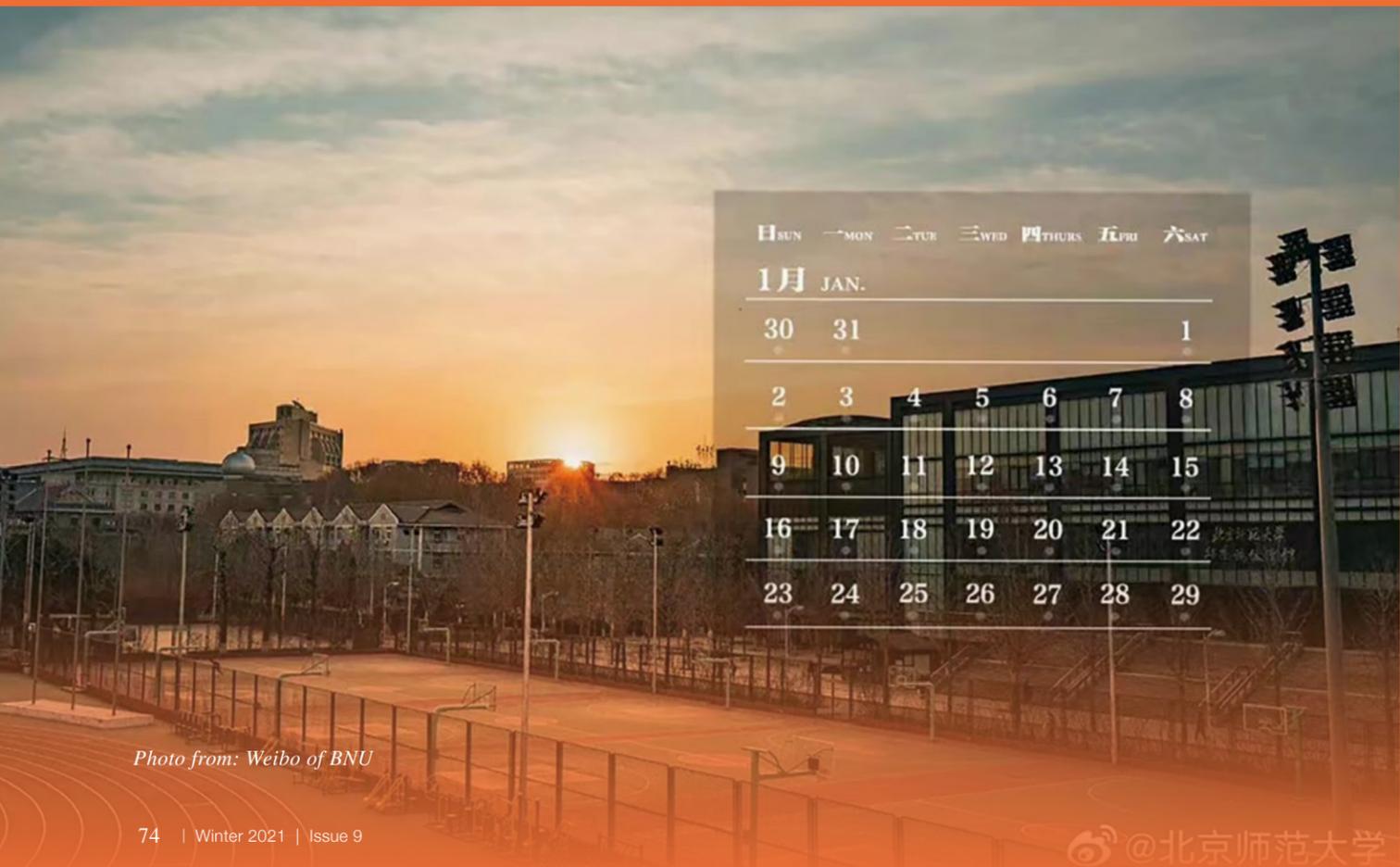


Photo from: Weibo of BNU



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