

Building a “Think Tank for Think Tanks” to Promote the Construction of New-Type Think Tanks with Chinese Characteristics (Postprint)

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Abstract

Think tank evaluation constitutes an important component of think tank development. A scientific and rational evaluation system can facilitate the improvement of think tanks' capabilities and serve the construction of new-type think tanks with Chinese characteristics. The World-Class Think Tank Evaluation Research Center of Wuhan University is an academic institution specializing in think tank research and evaluation that was recently established in April of this year. The editorial department of *Think Tank: Theory & Practice* conducted an interview with Professor Qiu Junping, Director of the Center, on topics including the background, characteristics, operational mechanisms, research priorities, and research achievements of the Center's establishment, aiming to provide insights and considerations for the study of think tank evaluation in China.

Full Text

Preamble

Think tank evaluation constitutes a vital component of think tank development, as a scientific and rational evaluation system can promote the improvement of think tanks and serve the construction of new-type think tanks with Chinese characteristics. The World-Class Think Tank Evaluation Research Center at Wuhan University, established just this April, is a specialized academic institution dedicated to think tank research and evaluation. The editors of *Think Tank: Theory & Practice* conducted this interview with Professor Qiu Junping, Director of the Center, to explore its background, distinctive features, operational mechanisms, research priorities, and achievements, hoping to inspire reflection on think tank evaluation research in China.

1. Establishment of the World-Class Think Tank Evaluation Research Center at Wuhan University

Question: The World-Class Think Tank Evaluation Research Center at Wuhan University was just established in April this year. What is the background, motivation, and development goal of its establishment?

Answer: The World-Class Think Tank Evaluation Research Center at Wuhan University is a newly established research and evaluation institution, created specifically to respond to and implement the “Opinions on Strengthening the Construction of New-Type Think Tanks with Chinese Characteristics” issued by the CPC Central Committee and the State Council, as well as the “Promotion Plan for Building New-Type University Think Tanks with Chinese Characteristics” issued by the Ministry of Education. It is an academic institution specialized in conducting think tank research and evaluation.

The Center adheres to the principle of “innovative research, evaluation services,” adapting to new trends in modern think tank development. It positions itself based in China while facing the world, establishing close connections with all sectors of society through project research, talent cultivation, and exchange cooperation. By building an open platform for think tank research and evaluation, it strives to become a “think tank for think tanks” and serve the advancement of new-type think tanks with Chinese characteristics. During the 13th Five-Year Plan period, the Center will develop into a domestically first-class and internationally renowned institution for think tank research and evaluation in China’s science and education fields.

2. Operations of the World-Class Think Tank Evaluation Research Center at Wuhan University

Question: What are the organizational structure, operational mechanism, and management model of the Center?

Answer: The World-Class Think Tank Evaluation Research Center at Wuhan University is an interdisciplinary, university-level academic institution that bridges liberal arts and sciences. It is jointly established primarily by the School of Information Management, the University Library, and the Institute of Education Science, and is affiliated with the School of Information Management. The Center’s Director is Professor Qiu Junping, and its Chief Expert is Dr. Yang Siluo. It currently has a research team of over 20 members, with the professional team already taking initial shape and forming a sound academic 梯队 in terms of knowledge structure, academic background, and age distribution.

The Center operates under a director responsibility system guided by an Expert Guidance Committee, which serves as the highest decision-making and guiding body responsible for Center-related affairs. As the core supporting unit for the Center’s construction, the School of Information Management at Wuhan University provides full support in terms of office space, funding, personnel es-

tablishment, and quotas for doctoral students and postdoctoral researchers. The Institute of Education Science and the University Library also make substantial investments in organizational management and operations, research personnel, and research achievement promotion. All parties jointly explore institutional and mechanism innovations to create a new research organizational structure and vigorously carry out distinctive think tank evaluation and research.

The Center has designated the National Committee for Scientometrics and Informetrics, the journal *Think Tank: Theory & Practice*, and the Wuhan University Chinese Science Evaluation Research Center as collaborative units. It actively forms organic partnerships with relevant universities, research institutions, international organizations, government agencies, and industry enterprises both domestically and internationally, establishing a cross-regional, cross-departmental, and cross-industry collaborative cooperation mechanism.

3. Research Priorities and Achievements of the Center

Question: What are the research priorities of the Center? What achievements have been made so far?

Answer: The Center is currently implementing a “Six Ones” project, which will successively produce a series of achievements and major activities: A think tank knowledge base that systematically collects and organizes domestic and international think tank status data, automatically extracts relevant think tank achievements, and builds an intelligent online shared think tank knowledge base; A professional journal that creates a specialized think tank publication through hosting or co-hosting to publish the Center’s think tank evaluation and research findings, providing an exchange platform for think tank research and practice; A series of research projects that strive to undertake and complete commissioned research and consulting projects from government departments such as the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Science and Technology, as well as from universities, research institutes, and enterprises, providing targeted and effective consulting reports; A continuous academic conference that cooperates with think tanks in the United States and Europe to regularly hold international symposiums such as the “World-Class Think Tank Construction and Evaluation International Seminar” to extensively carry out international cooperation and exchanges; An evaluation monograph that, based on the Center’s characteristics and advantages, annually co-publishes the *Report on the Evaluation and Development of Chinese Higher Education Quality* to build it into a famous brand; and A think tank ranking that plans to regularly develop and publish the *World-Class Think Tank Evaluation Report* to provide decision-making services for government departments, enterprises and institutions, and various think tanks.

4. Advantages of the Center

Question: Compared with other evaluation centers at home and abroad, what are the main characteristics and advantages of the World-Class Think Tank Evaluation Research Center at Wuhan University?

Answer: The characteristics and advantages of the Center are mainly reflected in the following aspects: We position our research object as world-class think tanks, clearly defining the study as focusing on the world's top and best think tanks. So-called world-class think tanks mainly refer to those with strong strength, high social reputation, and top rankings in the world. We believe that world-class think tanks should meet five standards: first-class team, first-class influence, first-class achievements, first-class management, and first-class benefits, with these standards complementing each other. We have long been engaged in scientific evaluation research, establishing and laying the theoretical foundation for evaluation science, providing essential theoretical and methodological guidance for evaluation endeavors. Combining theory, methods, and practice has always been our advantage and distinctive feature. In China, we were the first to author and formally publish *Evaluation Science: Theory, Methods, and Practice* and *Theory and Practice of Humanities and Social Sciences Evaluation* (two volumes), constructing a content system that integrates theory, methods, and application in evaluation science. This work is pioneering and represents a positive contribution to the development of evaluation science and evaluation endeavors in China. Both monographs have successively won the Ministry of Education's Scientific Research (Humanities and Social Sciences) Outstanding Achievement Awards and have received widespread acclaim from academic and peer experts. We have long been engaged in evaluation practice and possess rich evaluation experience. The *Chinese University and Discipline Evaluation Report*, *Chinese Graduate Education Evaluation Report*, *Research Report on the Competitiveness Evaluation of World-Class Universities and Research Institutions*, and *Chinese Academic Journal Evaluation Report*, which are continuously developed annually, have received recognition from government departments and praise from industry insiders, exerting considerable influence both domestically and internationally. We concentrate our research content on think tank evaluation and research, making the Center a "think tank for think tanks" and planning to play the role of a "meta-think tank" in the construction and development of think tanks in China. By pooling social resources both domestically and internationally, innovating the Center's research mechanisms, strengthening evaluation talent cultivation, and improving evaluation consulting work, we provide management diagnostics and decision-making basis for the healthy and rapid development of think tanks in China. We have a sound development foundation and platform. Wuhan University is currently one of the six universities selected for the first batch of national high-end think tank construction, possessing multidisciplinary comprehensive advantages and talent advantages. The School of Information Management at Wuhan University has first-class disciplines, first-class teams, first-class conditions, first-class achieve-

ments, and talent. The Center will utilize and integrate relevant disciplinary advantages to pursue a path of distinctive development.

5. Perspectives on the Current State of Domestic Think Tank Evaluation

Question: How do you view the current think tank boom in China? What is your assessment of the current state and development of domestic think tank evaluation?

Answer: Think tanks, also known as “idea banks” (English: “Think Tank”), have a long history of development. With the deepening of economic globalization, world multipolarization, and social informatization, the role of think tanks is becoming increasingly prominent, particularly in serving government strategic decision-making, promoting economic and social development, actively participating in global governance, and enhancing international discourse power—all of which require necessary and timely intellectual support from think tanks. Currently, think tank construction in China has entered a climax and has gradually risen to become a national strategy. However, with the “think tank fever” sweeping across the nation, we must be vigilant against the “think tank bubble.”

Currently, domestic institutions such as the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, and the Zijin Media Think Tank are engaged in think tank evaluation research and practice. However, both internationally and domestically, think tank evaluation is still in its preliminary stages, with insufficient work in evaluation data acquisition, improvement of evaluation indicator systems, and public disclosure of evaluation results. Personally, I believe that think tank evaluation should emphasize characteristics and pursue quality over quantity; it should value benefits and needs; it should focus on specialized research rather than publicity and promotion; it should ensure transparency and openness of data and evaluation results; and it should implement independent third-party evaluation operations.

Question: Could you briefly introduce your involvement in evaluation research and think tank evaluation work over the years? What insights have you gained?

Answer: Over the years, my involvement in evaluation research and think tank evaluation work has included: continuously developing and releasing the “Four Major Evaluation Reports” and a popular science work (the college application guide) for 13 years, establishing a complete evaluation system, and creating the famous “Wuhan University Version” evaluation brand. I created a content system for “Evaluation Science” that integrates theory, methods, and application, which is pioneering and leads the nation. The monograph *Evaluation Science: Theory, Methods, and Practice*, which I authored and published for the first time, is a foundational work in evaluation science and won the third prize of the Ministry of Education’s 6th Outstanding Achievement Award in Higher Education Scientific Research. The monograph *Theory and Practice of Humanities and Social Sciences Evaluation* (two volumes) won the second prize

of the Ministry of Education' s 7th Outstanding Achievement Award in Higher Education Scientific Research. I also hosted the “9th National Symposium on Scientometrics and Science-Tech Education Evaluation—Metrics and Think Tank Research and Evaluation.” Since 2007, I have presided over more than 10 special columns on evaluation research and think tank evaluation in the *Journal of Chongqing University (Social Science Edition)*. Over so many years, my greatest insight regarding scientific evaluation has been: continuously innovative thinking, demand-oriented positioning, exchange and cooperation mechanisms, and multidisciplinary research.

Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.

Source: ChinaXiv –Machine translation. Verify with original.