

The Role of University in High-Level Human Capital Cultivation in China's West Greater Bay Area

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Abstract : University has played an active role in the country's development in China. There has been an increasing research interest on the development of higher education cooperation, talent cultivation and attraction, and innovation in the regional development. The Triple Helix model, which indicates that regional innovation and development can be engendered by collaboration among university, industry and government, is often adopted as research framework. The research using triple helix model emphasizes the active and often leading role of university in knowledge-based economy. Within this framework, universities are conceptualized as key institutions of knowledge production, transmission and transference potentially making critical contributions to regional development. Recent research almost uniformly consistent in indicating the high-level research labours (i.e., doctoral, post-doctoral researchers and academics) as important actors in the innovation ecosystem with their cross-geographical human capital and resources presented. In 2019, the development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) was officially launched as an important strategy by the Chinese government to boost the regional development of the Pearl River Delta and to support the realization of "One Belt One Road" strategy. Human Capital formation is at the center of this plan. One of the strategic goals of the GBA development is set to evolve into an international educational hub and innovation center with high-level talents. A number of policies have been issued to attract and cultivate human resources in different GBA cities, in particular for the high-level R&D (research and development) talents such as doctoral and post-doctoral researchers. To better understand the development of high-level talents hub in the GBA, more empirical considerations should be given to explore the approaches of talents cultivation and attraction in the GBA. What remains to explore is the ways to better attract, train, support and retain these talents in the cross-systems context. This paper aims to investigate the role of university in human capital development under China's national agenda of GBA integration through the lens of universities and actors. Two flagship comprehensive universities are selected to be the cases and 30 interviews with university officials, research leaders, post-doctors and doctoral candidates are used for analysis. In particular, we look at in what ways have universities aligned their strategies and practices to the Chinese government's GBA development strategy? What strategies and practices have been developed by universities for the cultivation and attraction of high-level research labor? And what impacts the universities have made for the regional development? The main arguments of this research highlights the specific ways in which universities in smaller sub-regions can collaborate in high-level human capital formation and the role policy can play in facilitating such collaborations.

Keywords : university, human capital, regional development, triple-helix model

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