



Postgraduate Tuition Policies in Transition: A Comparative Policy Analysis of China and Finland

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Abstract

This study compares postgraduate tuition and funding policies in China and Finland through literature review and cross-national policy analysis. In China, postgraduate tuition reform has evolved from a tuition-free model to a universal tuition-based system since 2014, accompanied by ongoing debates on cost sharing, public responsibility, and equity in financial aid. Research highlights the tension between expanding access and ensuring sustainable funding mechanisms. In contrast, Finland maintains a tuition-free system for domestic and EU/EEA students while charging tuition for non-EU/EEA master's students, typically between €8,000 and €20,000, with doctoral education remaining free for all. Finnish universities offer extensive scholarships to attract international talent. The comparison reveals that China emphasizes state responsibility and affordability for domestic students, whereas Finland integrates tuition-free access with internationalization strategies. China's aid system relies more on need-based subsidies, while Finland focuses on institutional scholarships and research funding. The paper concludes that both systems face challenges of fairness, sustainability, and global competitiveness. It recommends linking tuition policies more closely with financial aid design, enhancing transparency and targeting in funding allocation, and developing adaptive models that balance equity with fiscal responsibility.

Keywords: Postgraduate Tuition, Higher Education Policy, China, Finland