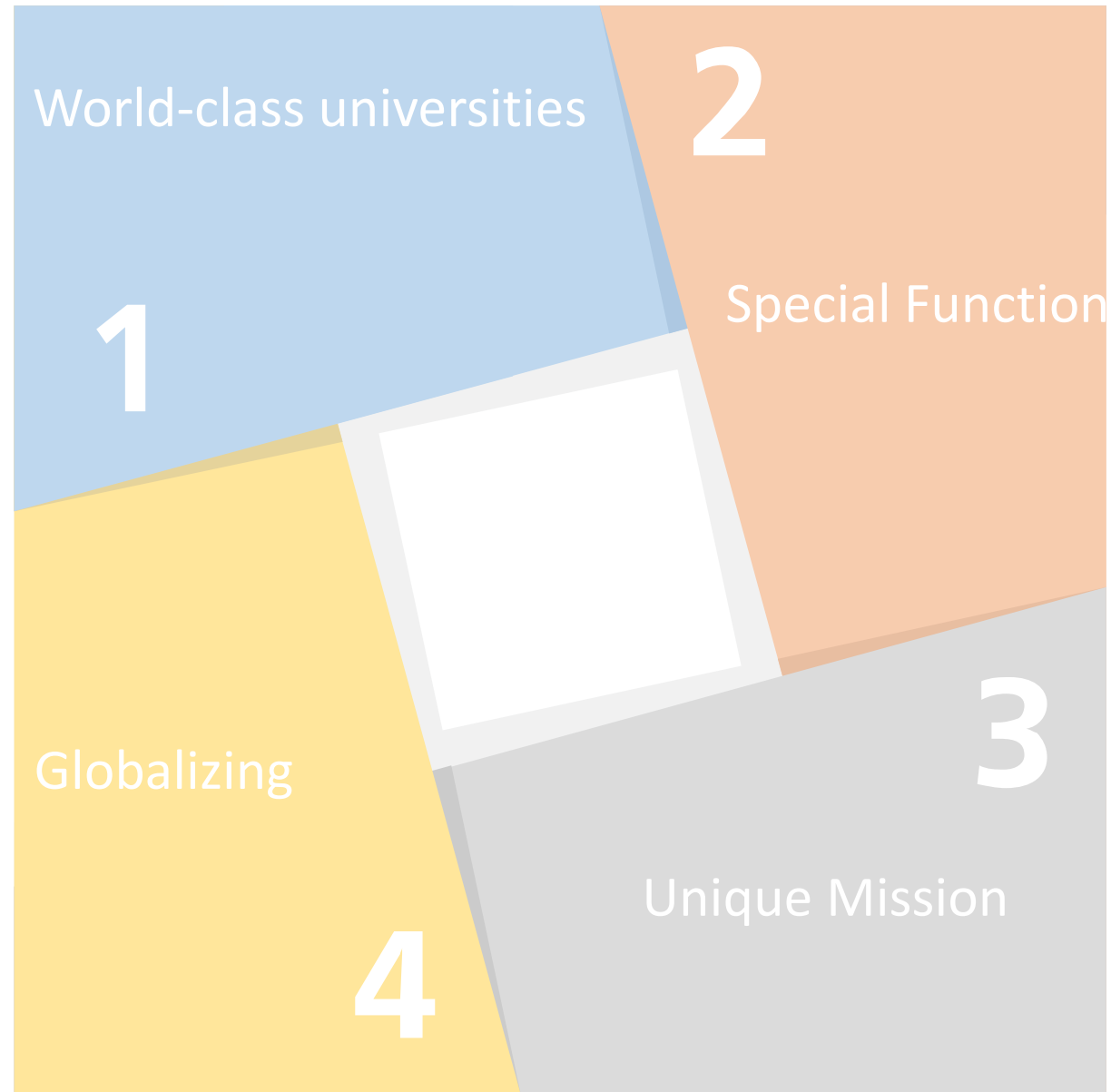


Globalizing as World-Class Universities' Special Function or Unique Mission

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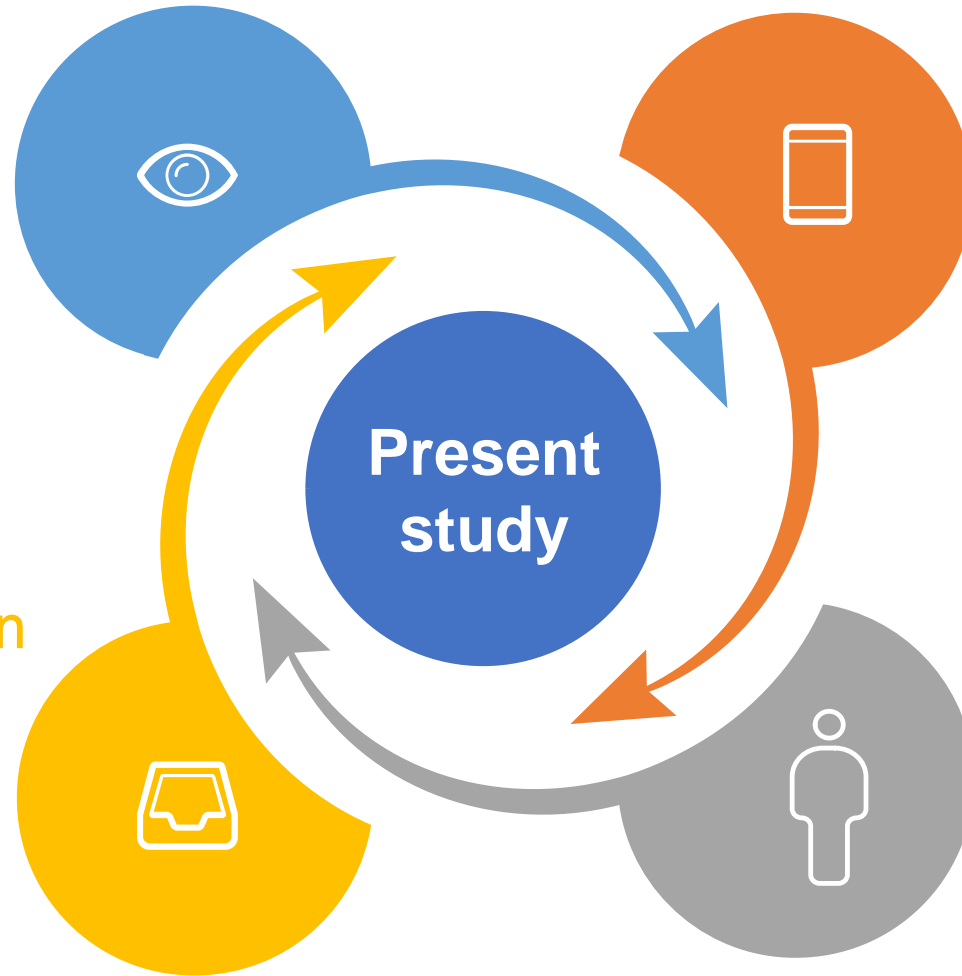
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Overview

1. Background

- World-class universities (WCUs)
- Research universities (RUs)



2. Purpose

- The differences in the three basic between WCUs and RUs;
- The special function that is possessed exclusively by WCUs when compared with RUs, with an international comparative perspective among different countries and regions.

4. Findings and discussion

- Globalizing as World-Class Universities' Special Function or Unique Mission

3. Method

- Documentary Method (Qualitative)
- Semi-Structured Interviews (Qualitative)
- Survey (Quantitative)

1. Background

1.1 Phenomenon of WCU

- World-class universities (WCUs), which are generally regarded as global research universities, are important constituents of the global higher education system.
- Features of WCUs: (1) talent concentration; (2) abundant resources; (3) global engagement; (4) international reputation; (5) favorable governance (Salmi, 2009; Marginson, 2011a; Wang, Cheng and Liu, 2013).
- The deepening of globalization has witnessed the increasing importance of WCUs, as they produce the intellectual capital required by the worldwide knowledge society (Mohrman et al., 2008). WCUs are more globalized or global than other research universities (RUs).
- WCUs' pursuit of excellence.

1.2 Functions of WCU

- WCUs' pursuit of excellence is closely related to their multiple functions (that is, education, research, service, etc.),
- The world-class status or identity of universities does not merely depend on their research contributions, but also on their advanced educational ideas, innovative educational models and extensive social engagement, reflecting the importance of WCUs' education and service functions.

- World-class universities (WCUs)
- Research universities (RUs)

2. Research question and purpose

- What do WCUs do differently with their distinctive features when compared with RUs?
- Do WCUs have a “special function or unique mission” that RUs do not have?

This paper aims to investigate:

- (1) the differences in the three basic functions (education, research, and service) between WCUs and RUs;
- (2) the special function that is possessed exclusively by WCUs when compared with RUs, with an international comparative perspective among different countries and regions (China, the US, and Europe).

In this study, a more “Quantitative” definition

- **World-class universities (WCUs)**

Research universities that are ranked among the top 100 list in ARWU, QS and THE; they have declared themselves to be “world-class”.

- **Other research universities (RUs)**

Research universities that are not ranked among the top 200 list in ARWU, QS and THE; they have never declared themselves to be “world-class”.

3. Research method

■ Documentary Method (Qualitative)

83 universities, 4 kinds official documents (president's message, mission statement, vision statement and strategic plan) on the university websites were collected, classified, and analysed, in order to compare WCUs and RUs on the functional orientation (education, research, and service) stated by the universities themselves.

■ Semi-Structured Interviews (Qualitative)

From December 2016 to May 2019, a total of 74 in-depth interviews were conducted. Interviewees include university leaders, professors from China, America and Europe, international academic experts world-wide.

■ Survey (Quantitative)

A total of 118 people participated in this survey, including 100 university leaders from 77 WCUs and 18 international academic experts.

4. Findings and discussion

- Differences in Three Basic Functions between WCUs and RUs
- Dimensions of WCU's Special Function or Unique Mission
- The Unique Features of WCUs' Special Function or Unique Mission
- The Distinctiveness of WCUs for their Special Function or Unique Mission

Globalizing as World-Class Universities' Special Function or Unique Mission

Findings and discussion

1. Differences in Three Basic Functions between WCUs and RUs

- Education: The aim or purpose of education (related to the types and levels of talents cultivated by universities), the approach and model of education and the resources of education (participants, funding, etc.) are significantly different between WCUs and RUs.
- Research: Type, content and focus, level, and size, which are largely contingent on available resources, universities' self-positioning, and visions. This is the function with the most significant differences between WCUs and RUs.
- Service: the most significant differences between WCUs and RUs lie in the scope of service.
- The above-listed differences do not necessarily indicate that WCUs are superior to RUs in terms of education, research, and service.

Findings and discussion

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TABLE 2.5 A comparison of research between WCUS and RUS based on AGIL scheme

AGIL scheme	WCUS	RUS
A: Adaption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Providing solutions to major global issues of common concern. – Meeting the social development needs of countries and regions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Paying more attention to social issues and focusing on major (global) issues in certain areas.
G: Goal Attainment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Acting as the most important scientific research centre in the world. – Carrying out leading research projects of the highest quality. – Discovering and disseminating cutting-edge knowledge. – Carrying out basic research of innovative discovery and high-level applied research. – Providing timely solutions to the most complex problems of global concern. – Pursuing global excellence and scientific breakthroughs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Becoming top national research universities and striving to become world-class research universities. – Some RUS carry out small-scale basic research and conduct research of high level and quality in certain fields. – Being committed to becoming leaders in applied research and innovation. – Emphasizing the commercial value of applied research. – Paying more attention to local and national issues, as well as problems of local enterprises. – Regarding WCUS as role models in research.

TABLE 2.5 A comparison of research between WCUS and RUS based on AGIL scheme (*cont.*)

AGIL scheme	WCUS	RUS
I: Integration	<p><i>Resources and conditions:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Obtaining generous national funding and having multi-channel funding sources. – Investing heavily in research activities. – Having strong international scientific cooperation networks. – Having the most outstanding scientific research teams. – Having advanced scientific research facilities. 	<p><i>Resources and conditions:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Diversifying funding sources through cooperation with external societies (especially enterprises); guiding and attracting funds into some key research areas. – Cooperation networks are more established at the regional and national levels. – Some RUS have also joined the global research networks.
	<p><i>Approaches and pathways:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Highlighting graduate education and interdisciplinary research methods. – Applying the latest scientific knowledge and technology to conduct cutting-edge research. 	<p><i>Approaches and pathways:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The research activities of RUS take root in local society and are closely connected with the local community.
L: Latent Pattern Maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Promoting and maintaining a free and inclusive academic culture and tradition. – Creating an open, transparent and efficient research environment. – Most WCUS have specific financial policies for research activities. – Most WCUS have specific research strategic plans and research excellence initiatives (for example, the Strategic Research Plan in McGill University). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Striving to build a supportive and cooperative research environment. – A few RUS have specific research support frameworks.

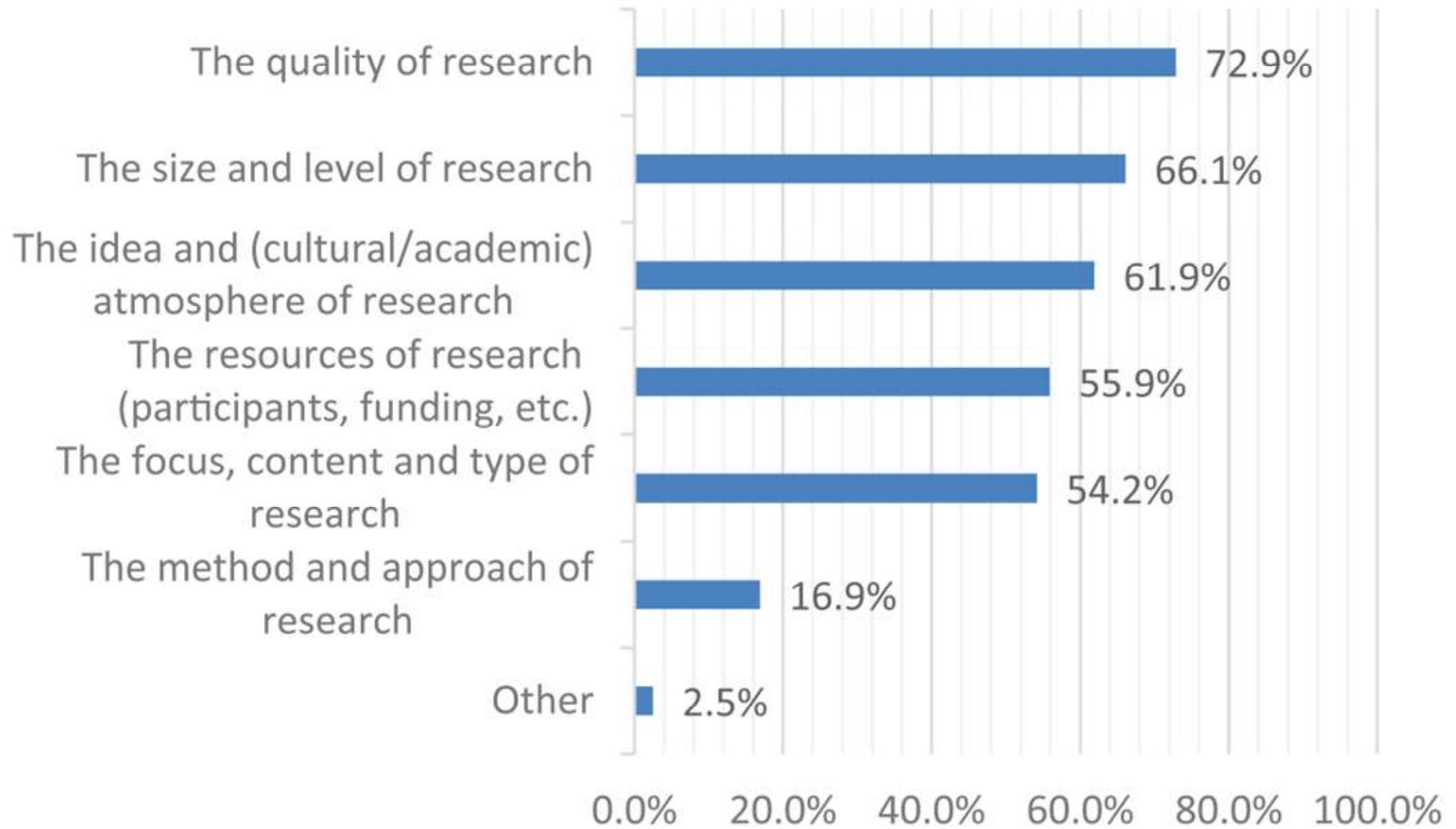


FIGURE 2.3 Responses of “the differences between WCUs and RUs in research” (multiple answers)

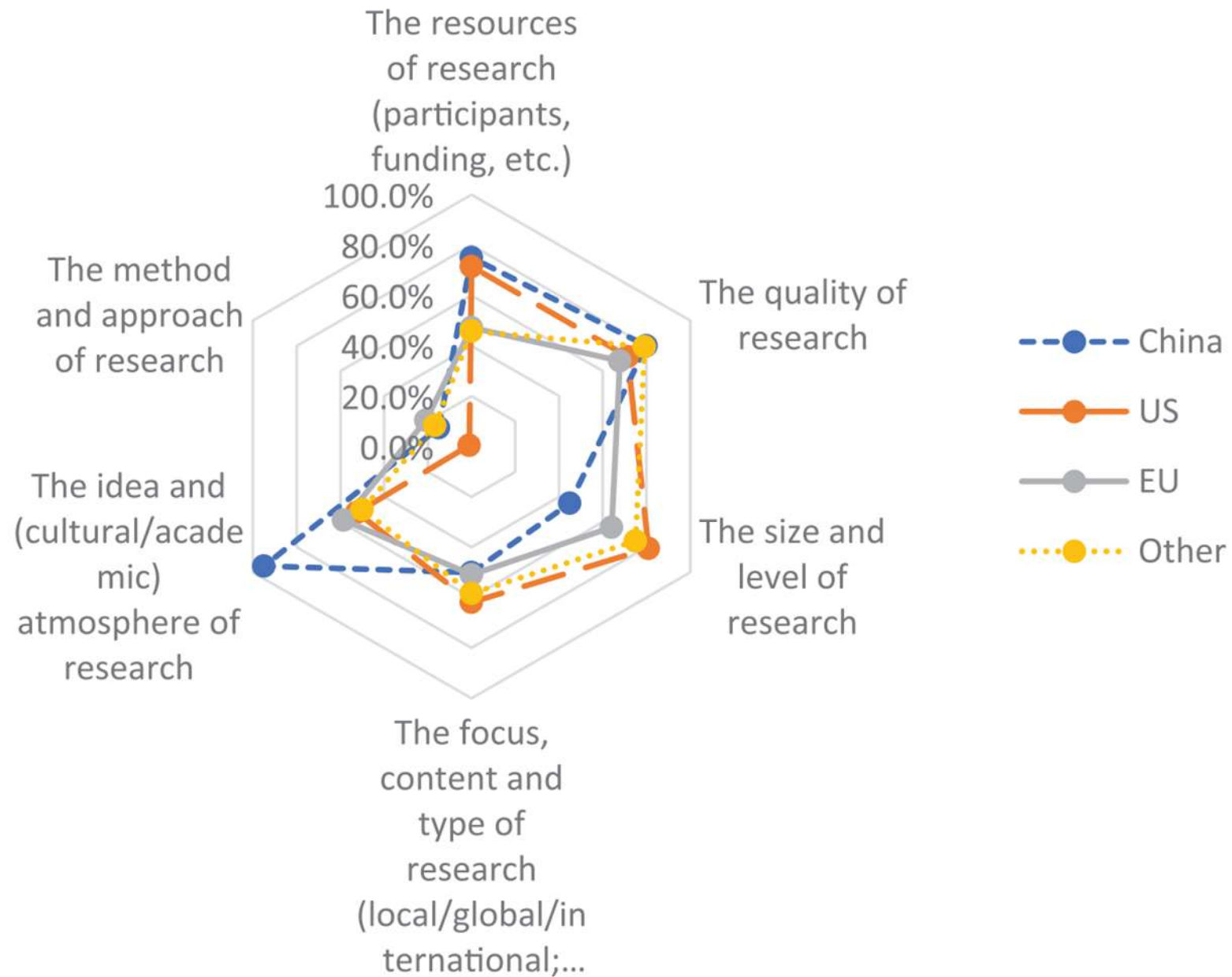


FIGURE 2.4 Choices of respondents from different countries/regions on the differences between WCUS and RUS in research

Findings and discussion

2. Globalizing as World-Class Universities' Special Function or Unique Mission

- 2.1 Dimensions of WCU's Special Function or Unique Mission
- 2.2 The Unique Features of WCUs' Special Function or Unique Mission
- 2.3 The Distinctiveness of WCUs for their Special Function or Unique Mission

Findings and discussion

2. Globalizing as World-Class Universities' Special Function or Unique Mission

- 2.1 Dimensions of WCU's Special Function or Unique Mission

- Among the 74 interviewees, the vast majority of respondents ($N = 70$) considered that WCUs have a special function or unique mission that differentiates them from RUs;
- More than half of the respondents ($N = 44$) believed **that serving the global common good** is one of the dimensions of a WCU's special function or unique mission;
- About one-third of the respondents ($N = 24$) suggested that **acting as a global role model for research universities** is a dimension of a WCU's special function or unique mission;
- More than 10 respondents mentioned that **serving national soft power** is also one of the dimensions of a WCU's special function or unique mission.

Findings and discussion

2.1 Dimensions of WCU's Special Function or Unique Mission

TABLE 2.7 Respondents' perspective on WCUs' special functions (multiple answers)

Dimensions of a special function of WCUs	Number (respondents who chose the item)	Percentage
Serving the global common good	83	70.3
Global role model for research universities	86	72.9
Serving the national soft power	45	38.1
Other	9	7.6

Findings and discussion

2.1 Dimensions of WCU's Special Function or Unique Mission

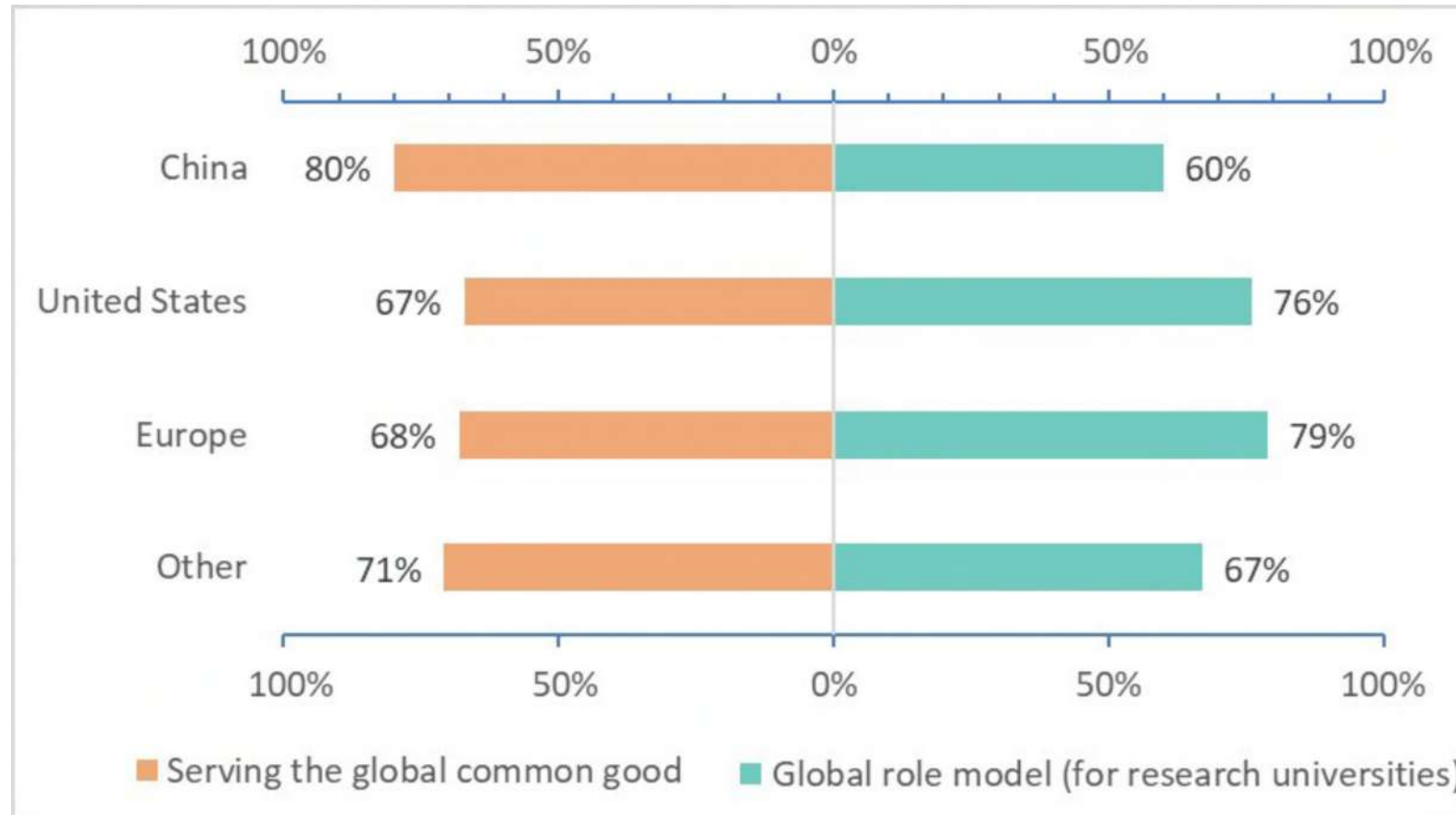


Figure 7. Respondents' views on special function based on their geographic locations

Findings and discussion

2.1 Dimensions of WCU's Special Function or Unique Mission

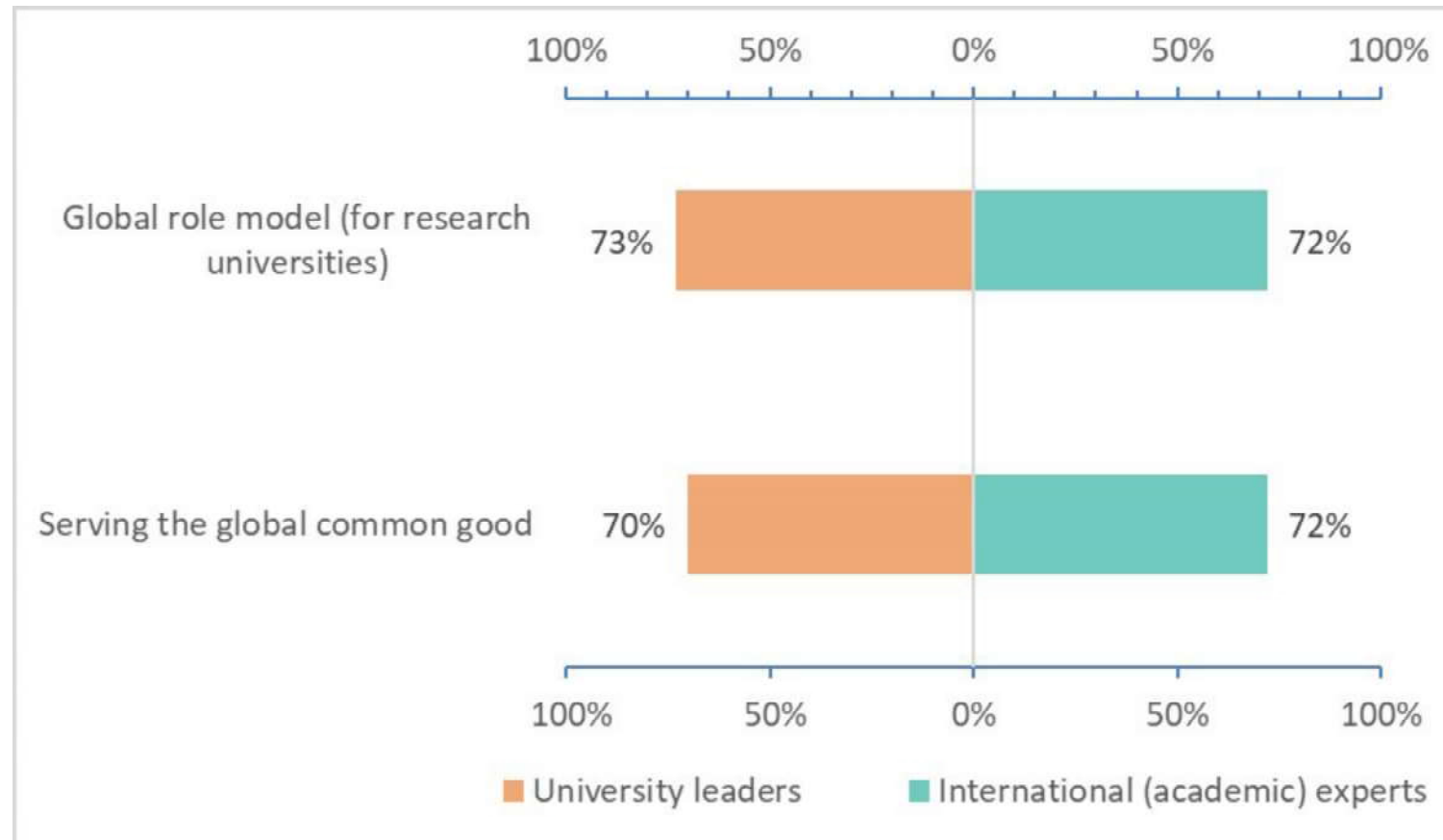


Figure 8. Comparison of responses between university leaders and international experts

Findings and discussion

2.1 Dimensions of WCU's Special Function or Unique Mission

WCUs **servicing the global common good** can be observed in the following six respects:

- (1) WCUs cultivate talents and leaders with global perspectives and future orientation, who can also guide people to think about broader global interests and human well-being;
- (2) WCUs generate transformative and leading scholarship, ideas and practices, which can not only advance the development of the world, but also lead the entire society culturally, philosophically, and morally;
- (3) WCUs construct global collaborative networks and then build a global academic community through global cooperation;
- (4) WCUs are dedicated to revealing and solving complex problems in the global society;
- (5) WCUs have a firm commitment to the sustainable development of the world;
- (6) WCUs contribute to inclusive innovation and social mobility.

Findings and discussion

2.1 Dimensions of WCU's Special Function or Unique Mission

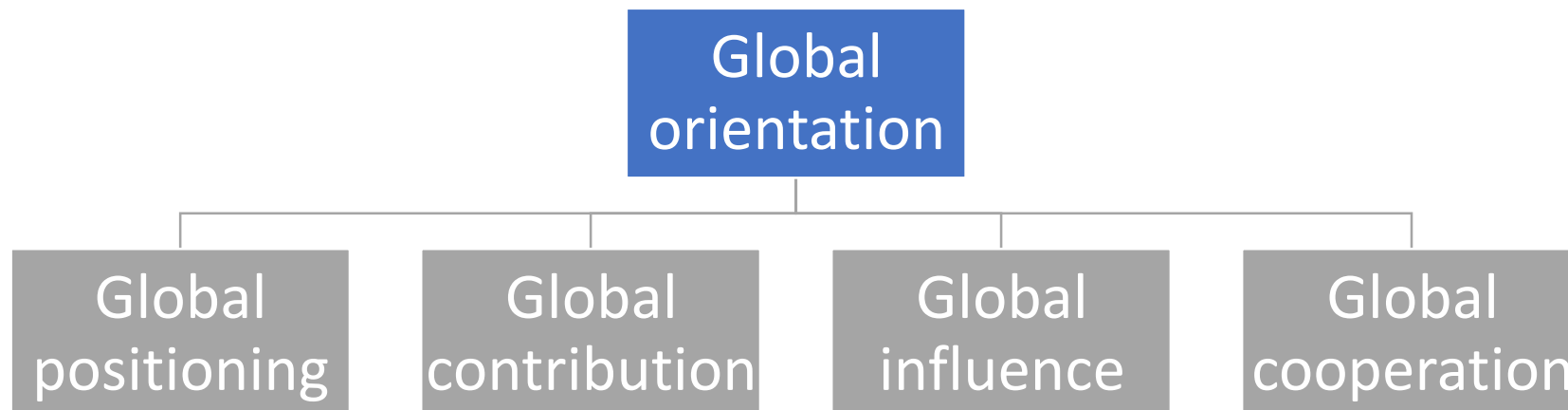
WCUs are **global role models for research universities**:

- (1) WCUs are the benchmark for both research-intensive universities and other universities aspiring to become research universities, especially in the process of developing strategic plans;
- (2) WCUs are not only the framers and maintainers of high-level academic standards, but also the pioneers of discovering and disseminating knowledge in new ways, and front runners of considering and solving scientific, technological, social, and cultural issues in a global context;
- (3) WCUs are often the guides and leaders of new ideas and practices; they are exemplars in a certain country and can also lead the spirit, value, culture, and practice of students, faculty and staff, universities, and society as a whole in a positive and promising direction.

Findings and discussion

2.2 The Unique Features of WCUs' Special Function or Unique Mission

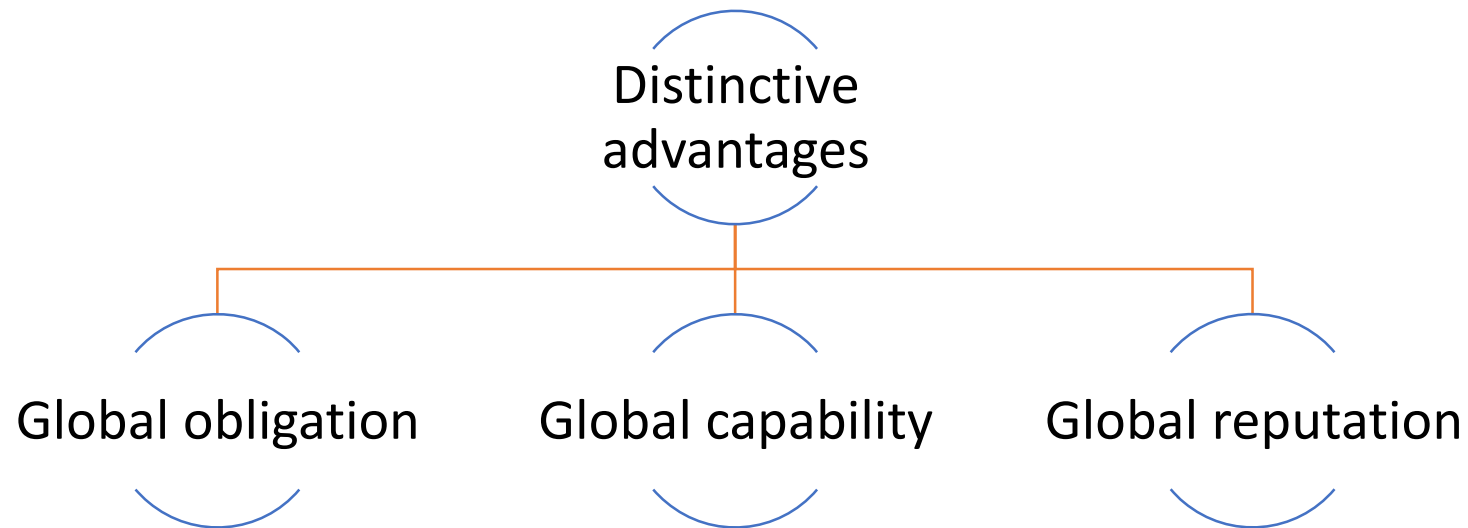
- The findings of this study show that WCUs have a special function or unique mission that distinguishes them from RUs, mainly reflected in serving the global common good and acting as a global role model for research universities, which can be regarded as **the two core dimensions** of WCUs' special function or unique mission.
- The unique feature of the special function and unique mission proposed by interviewees and agreed by WCUs' leaders and academic experts is **global orientation**.



Findings and discussion

2.3 The Distinctiveness of WCUs for their Special Function or Unique Mission

- The special function or unique mission is exclusively possessed by WCUs, because it is related to WCUs' distinctive advantages, including **global obligation, global capability, and global reputation.**



Findings and discussion

2. Globalizing as World-Class Universities' Special Function or Unique Mission

This study defines the special function or unique mission of WCUs as “**globalizing**” :

In the face of the increasingly complex internationalization of higher education, continuously growing global challenges, and rapidly evolving information technology, world-class universities, relying on their distinctive advantages, including global obligation, global capability, and global reputation, serve the global common good and act as a global role model for research universities, and continuously improve the unique features of their special function or unique mission, including global positioning, global contribution, global influence, and global cooperation.

Conclusion

- *“The goal here is two-fold: the first, that universities represent the most successful experiments in global institution building; the second, that if universities work together to build global curricula and global platforms, for research and teaching, they might provide models and ideas that will predicate new ways of engaging – and reimagining – globalization itself.”* —Nicholas Dirks (2015), the previous chancellor of UC Berkeley
- Among all universities, WCUs, at any one time, are being asked to stretch beyond the traditions of education, research, and service, and to reach out beyond their walls, real or metaphorical, in order to connect with the global world in ways that are novel, challenging, and impactful.

For more information: Tian, L., & Liu, N. C. (2021). Globalizing as world-class universities' special function / unique mission. In: N. C. Liu, Y. Wu & Q. Wang (Eds.), *World-Class Universities: Global Trends and Institutional Models* (pp. 13-49). Rotterdam: Brill Sense Publishers.

Thank you!

