

You are kindly invited to the public defense to obtain the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES

of drs. Zhengwen QI

Which will take place on the **3rd of July 2026** at **10:00 am** CET
D.2.01 Promotiezaal ([Building D](#)) – [VUB Main Campus Brussels](#)
Pleinlaan 2 – 1050 Brussel
Or if you wish to attend online, [click here to join the meeting](#).

**LEADERSHIP AND ORGANISATIONAL
DYNAMICS IN HIGHER EDUCATION
INTERNATIONALISATION: PERSPECTIVES
FROM EUROPEAN AND CHINESE UNIVERSITIES**

CHAIR

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Coming by car? Please [register your licence plate in advance](#) to have access to the campus.

You are also invited to the reception afterwards.

Please confirm your attendance before 01/07/2026 by filling out [this form](#).

SUMMARY

This dissertation investigates the complex interplay between leadership and organisational dynamics in higher education internationalisation across European and Chinese universities. Drawing on complex adaptive systems theory and integrating five qualitative empirical studies, it examines leadership roles at the micro level, organisational dimensions at the meso level, and the intra- and inter-university environments in which internationalisation is enacted.

The findings show that leadership for internationalisation is a distributed practice involving multiple institutional actors, but its distribution and enactment are deeply conditioned by organisational structure, identity, and centrality. The study further reveals how leadership interacts with digital governance factors in managing virtual internationalisation and with different configurations of institutional logics in sustaining international cooperation.

The dissertation contributes to a more contextualised and process-oriented understanding of leadership for internationalisation. It argues that universities should move beyond uncritical adoption of global internationalisation narratives and develop leadership practices responsive to their organisational realities, institutional positions, and changing external environments.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Zhengwen QI is a PhD candidate in Educational Sciences at Vrije Universiteit Brussel and a researcher at the EU-China Higher Education Research Center. His research focuses on higher education internationalisation, academic leadership, organisational dynamics, digital governance, and EU-China higher education cooperation. His research has been published in leading international peer-reviewed journals, including the *Journal of Studies in International Education*, *Social Psychology of Education*, *Education Sciences*, and *Higher Education Quarterly*.