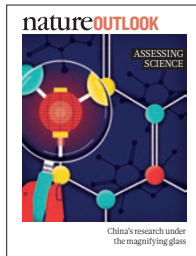


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Over the past few decades, China has enjoyed economic prosperity, driven by its vigorous manufacturing output. More recently, the country has used this wealth to ratchet up other skills and now has the world's second largest spend on research and development (see page S8), and the second largest output of scientific papers.

Behind these accomplishments are the incentives that drive good scientific behaviour. Having lost a generation of scientists during the Cultural Revolution, the country has made a huge effort to instil qualities that are in line with those of other developed countries. These issues were examined at a symposium held in Shanghai in October 2014, co-hosted by *Nature*. Representatives from academia, industry and scientific societies talked about the importance of research to China's ongoing development, and how to stimulate it (S10). This Outlook was influenced by the debates, although *Nature* takes sole responsibility for all editorial content.

Unlike countries such as the United Kingdom and Australia, China does not have a national process of research assessment. The closest comparison is the evaluation undertaken by its largest research organization, the Chinese Academy of Sciences (S18).

Any complete measure of science must also recognize new technology, improved health and job creation — but Chinese researchers face institutional obstacles in translating their research into industrial applications (S28).

At the heart of this progress are China's scientists, yet many of them are struggling to find their way in a system that is undergoing such extensive change. In particular, young researchers (S36) and female scientists (S26) crave policies that would enable them to make a greater contribution. Such improvements may fortify China's scientific acumen and make the country a formidable player in global research.

Michelle Grayson

Senior Editor, Supplements

CONTENTS

S8 STATISTICS

China's research & development spend

An analysis of where the money goes

S10 SYMPOSIUM OVERVIEW

Raising standards

The drive to boost research quality

S13 Q&A

Science regeneration

With biophysicist Kurt Wüthrich

S18 EVALUATION

Moving away from metrics

A revised method to assess science

S21 Q&A

The numbers game

David Sweeney on evaluating scientific research accurately

S26 Q&A

Times are changing

The female perspective on science by Chen Xiangmei and Zeng Xuan

S28 RESEARCH IMPACT

A tale of two systems

The limitations of translating basic research into commercial gain

S34 Q&A

China still rising

Changes to science funding are paying dividends, says Anthony Cheetham

S36 PERSPECTIVE

Give youth a chance

Young researchers are struggling on low pay, says Wang Chuan-Chao

S37 Q&A

The global view

Virologist Jin Dong-Yan compares working in different countries

RELATED ARTICLES

The latest news and comment on science in China published in *Nature*.

S41 Developing excellence: Chinese reform in three steps
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