

A Comparative Study of Curriculum Internationalization Models in Chinese and Australian Higher Education and Its Implications

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Abstract: This study focuses on curriculum internationalization in Chinese and Australian higher education. Using a comparative research method, it examines the differences and features of the two countries' approaches. The findings show that Australian higher education curriculum internationalization is highly systematic and industrialized. It emphasizes practical skills and cross-cultural awareness, with course designs closely aligned with international standards and industry needs. In contrast, China's approach is more government-led and institution-driven, maintaining traditional theoretical strengths while actively incorporating high-quality international resources. Through the analysis of teaching cases, the study explores how curriculum integration and teaching innovation are implemented in Sino-Australian joint programs. Finally, based on the comparison, it offers insights for China in three areas: curriculum system development, faculty training, and quality assurance mechanisms, providing a reference for enhancing the quality of curriculum internationalization in Chinese higher education.

Keywords: higher education, curriculum internationalization, sino-australian comparison, teaching model, international competence

1. Introduction

Higher education internationalization is a key trend in the global era. It includes not only the mobility of students and academic exchange but also the internationalization of educational concepts, learning goals, and teaching content. As a core part of internationalization, curriculum internationalization directly affects the quality of talent development. In 2005, the International Association of Universities defined higher education internationalization as the process of integrating intercultural, international, and global perspectives into the purpose, functions, and delivery of post-secondary education at the national, sector, and institutional levels.

2. A Comparison of Curriculum Internationalization Models in Chinese and Australian Higher Education

2.1 Features of the Australian Model

The Australian approach to curriculum internationalization is market-driven and emphasizes quality assurance. It has three main features.

First, Australian universities see curriculum internationalization as central to internationalization. Many offer special courses for international students and create global learning programs, such as Bachelor of Arts (Global Studies) and Master of Adult Education (Global direction), which help students develop a global vision and cross-cultural skills.

Second, courses in Australia are practical and industry-focused. They link closely to real-world situations and help students learn to solve problems. Teaching methods include project-based learning and reflective writing. Class discussions encourage students to think creatively and critically. This practical approach helps graduates meet global job market needs.

Third, Australia has a strong quality assurance system for curriculum internationalization. This includes the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF), internal university reviews, state and federal government oversight, and external evaluation by the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA). This multi-level system supports high-quality and sustainable development.

2.2 Features of the Chinese Model

China's curriculum internationalization is mainly guided by the government, with universities also playing a role. Under national policy, many Chinese universities have launched programs that align with international standards or include global content.

There are three ways this is done. One is by creating new international courses or adding global themes to existing programs. For example, law schools may offer courses in international relations or international law, and economics departments may teach international trade[1].

Another way is by adding international content to current courses. Teachers or editors include global examples, recent international advances, or material from foreign textbooks. This allows gradual integration of international aspects without major changes to the course structure.

A third method is through joint programs with foreign universities. Many Sino-foreign programs offer dual degrees and introduce high-quality educational resources, including teaching methods, course content, and faculty. These partnerships help internationalize the entire curriculum system and promote local-global integration[2].

2.3 Key Differences Between the Two Models

The two models differ in three main areas: motivation, approach, and evaluation.

In terms of motivation, Australia's model is market-led and industrialized, while China's is policy-led and strategic[3].

In approach, Australia uses a full integration model, blending international elements into course design, content, teaching, and assessment. China often uses an incremental model, adding international content step by step within the existing system. This makes Australia's model more thorough, while China's is more steady and manageable.

In evaluation, Australia focuses on practical outcomes and job readiness, assessing students' ability to work in global settings. China emphasizes strong theoretical knowledge and understanding of international concepts. These differences reflect variations in educational philosophy and cultural tradition[4].

3. Case Analysis Based on Teaching Practice

3.1 Design and Implementation of an Integrated Curriculum

In Sino-Australian joint programs, integrated curriculum design is central. One program combined the strengths of both sides — China's focus on strong theory and Australia's emphasis on practical skills and professional development — to create a training plan that balances theory and practice.

The program also strengthened English language training. It designed a four-stage language program tailored to students' needs, using lectures, group discussions, and tutorials to improve academic English. This step-by-step approach prepared students for full English-language instruction and overseas study.

Core courses were imported from the Australian partner, including key subjects that reflect its teaching strengths. These courses brought in advanced teaching concepts, methods, materials, and assessment systems. Australian teachers with strong academic backgrounds and teaching experience led the courses, with support from bilingual Chinese teaching assistants, ensuring high-quality instruction[5].

3.2 Teaching Method Innovation and Challenges

Sino-Australian programs show innovation in teaching methods but also face challenges in cultural adaptation. Australian teaching stresses student participation and interaction. Teachers act as guides, helping students learn independently and develop critical thinking. This differs from the traditional Chinese model, where teachers mainly lecture and students listen.

In one joint program, small classes were held in smart classrooms using seminar and inquiry-based methods. International textbooks and materials were used, and a diverse assessment system was applied. This model broadened students' global outlook, improved practical skills, and supported the development of high-quality, international talent.

However, these new methods also brought challenges. One student noted: "At first, it was hard to adjust. In my first report, the teacher encouraged me to question the textbook—that was unheard of in high school." Such cultural differences affect both students and teachers. Australian teachers need to adapt to Chinese learning styles, and Chinese teachers need to learn Western teaching methods. Mutual cultural adaptation is key to the success of curriculum internationalization[6].

4. Conclusion

The comparison shows clear differences between the two models. Australia's is systematic and industrial, with a focus on practical skills and cross-cultural learning, closely tied to global standards and industry needs. China's is government-led and exploratory, building on theoretical strengths while adopting international resources.

Case studies show that joint programs can successfully blend educational ideas and methods through integrated curriculum design and teaching innovation. This blend requires a two-way process that combines global and local elements. Successful curriculum internationalization must address cultural adaptation, supporting both teachers and students.

Implications for China include building a two-way enabling curriculum system, developing faculty internationalization, and establishing sound quality assurance mechanisms. These steps can enhance the quality of curriculum internationalization in Chinese higher education and help develop talent with global vision, knowledge of international norms, and the ability to engage in global affairs.

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