

# Research on the Development Strategies and Challenges of Internationalization of Higher Education in China

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**Abstract:** The internationalization of higher education is an important way for countries to improve the quality and competitiveness of education in the context of globalization. As a developing country with a huge education system, China faces many opportunities and challenges in the internationalization of higher education. This article aims to analyze the development strategy of the internationalization of China's higher education, explore the challenges it faces, and propose corresponding countermeasures and suggestions, in order to provide reference for the internationalization of China's higher education.

**Keywords:** higher education, internationalization, development strategy

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## Introduction

With the acceleration of globalization, the internationalization of higher education has become an important means for countries to improve educational standards, promote cultural exchanges, and enhance international influence. The development of internationalization of China's higher education will not only help improve its own education quality and scientific research level, but also enhance the country's soft power and international competitiveness. However, China's higher education internationalization faces many challenges during its implementation, and effective development strategies and countermeasures are urgently needed.

### 1. Background and significance of internationalization of higher education

#### 1.1 Internationalization of higher education in the context of globalization

The process of globalization has promoted the transnational flow of educational resources and promoted cooperation and exchanges in higher education in various countries. The internationalization of higher education in Western countries is an important fulcrum for enhancing national soft power at the national level. Meanwhile, it is the basic way and functional orientation for constructing academic discourse capacity and extending commercial interests. Besides, at the individual level, it is the key support for deepening cross-cultural understanding and shaping individual global competence.<sup>[1]</sup> The internationalization of higher education is mainly reflected in the following aspects.

##### 1.1.1 International mobility of students

Including the introduction of international students and the study abroad of domestic students. China's attractiveness as a study abroad destination is increasing year by year. According to statistics from the Ministry of Education, China accepted nearly 500,000 international students in 2019, an increase of 0.6% from 2018.<sup>[2]</sup> These students are mainly from

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South Korea, Thailand, Pakistan, Indonesia, India, the United States and other countries. In contrast, the number of Chinese students studying abroad is also increasing year by year. In 2019, the number of Chinese students studying abroad reached 703,500, an increase of 6.25% from the previous year.<sup>[2]</sup>

### **1.1.2 International exchange of teachers and researchers**

This is achieved through international cooperation projects, academic conferences and visiting scholars. Chinese universities have introduced a large number of international teachers and visiting scholars. According to 2019 data, there are more than 20,000 international teachers and visiting scholars in Chinese universities. In addition, the international exchange activities of Chinese university teachers and researchers have also increased significantly. In 2019, more than 30,000 Chinese teachers and researchers went abroad for academic exchanges and cooperation.<sup>[3]</sup>

### **1.1.3 International cooperation in running schools**

Jointly run schools with foreign universities to offer international courses and degree programs. As of the end of 2019, there were more than 2,200 Chinese-foreign cooperative educational institutions and projects in China. These cooperative education institutions and projects include Sino-foreign cooperative education undergraduate programs, master's programs and doctoral programs.<sup>[2]</sup>

### **1.1.4 International scientific research cooperation**

Jointly carry out scientific research projects and share scientific research results and resources. The number of scientific research projects cooperated by Chinese universities and international scientific research institutions is increasing year by year. For example, in 2019, the number of scientific research papers jointly published by Chinese universities and foreign universities accounted for more than 30% of the total number of published papers.<sup>[3]</sup>

## **1.2 The significance of internationalization of higher education in China**

Improve educational standards by introducing advanced international educational resources and teaching concepts. Improve scientific research levels and innovation capabilities through international scientific research cooperation. Through studying abroad and international exchanges, we cultivate talents with international vision and competitiveness. Through the internationalization of higher education, China's status and influence in the international education community will be enhanced.

## **2. Challenges facing the internationalization of China's higher education**

### **2.1 Policy and institutional barriers**

Differences in education systems and management models between China and foreign countries make it difficult to promote cooperative education and exchange projects. Policy restrictions and legal obstacles faced by international students and international scholars in terms of visas, work permits, etc. According to the Survey Report released by the China Education Association for International Exchange in 2016, Although many colleges and universities have formulated internationalization strategies and set up internationalization promotion offices, the percentage of internationalization indicators is relatively low, indicating that the internationalization level of higher education in China is still at a low level. One of the important reasons for this is that the implementation of internationalization policies is not in place, and many internationalization policies only remain on paper, reflecting the problems of policy implementation, such as the lack of unified arrangement and coordination among university departments working in their own ways.<sup>[4]</sup>

### **2.2 Language and cultural differences**

Insufficient language skills affect the international communication and learning outcomes of students and teachers. The adaptation problems caused by cultural differences between China and foreign countries have affected the life and study of international students and international scholars. At present, the total number of internationalized courses in Chinese universities is not large and the scope of the courses is narrow, and one of the main reasons is that the level of

foreign language, especially the level of professional foreign language, is not high. Although the foreign language proficiency of the teachers in universities is progressing fast, and it should not be a problem for them to cope with daily exchanges, it would be difficult for them to conduct lectures on professional knowledge in foreign languages.<sup>[5]</sup>

### **2.3 Insufficient resources and funds**

Insufficient financial investment required for international development limits the development and scale of projects. The uneven distribution of higher education resources puts some universities at a disadvantage in international development. Lack of financial security will have multiple negative impacts on the internationalization of education in Chinese universities, including the fact that the lack of funds will limit the introduction of excellent teachers with international perspectives and rich teaching experience, reduce the opportunities for students to study abroad and exchange studies, and reduce the opportunities for scientific research and participation in international projects.<sup>[6]</sup>

## **3. Countermeasures and suggestions**

### **3.1 Policy support and institutional innovation**

#### **3.1.1 Improving policy support**

The government should formulate and improve policies to support the internationalization of higher education and provide more funds and resources. The Chinese government has issued a series of policies to support the internationalization of higher education, such as the *Regulations of the People's Republic of China on Sino-foreign Cooperative Education* and *Several Opinions on Doing a Good Job in Opening Up Education to the Outside World in the New Era*. The China Scholarship Council (CSC) provides a large number of scholarships every year to support Chinese students to study abroad and foreign students to study in China.

#### **3.1.2 Promoting institutional innovation**

Innovating education management models and promoting the integration and interoperability of Chinese and foreign education systems. Giving universities greater autonomy in international cooperation in running schools, curriculum setting, and introduction of teachers, and encouraging innovation. Establishing and improving the supervision and evaluation mechanism for international education to ensure the quality and fairness of education. Establishing and expanding cooperation networks with world-renowned universities and scientific research institutions to promote teacher-student exchanges and scientific research cooperation. Regularly organizing and participating in international academic conferences and educational forums to enhance academic influence.

### **3.2 Strengthening language education and cultural exchanges**

#### **3.2.1 Improving the quality of language education**

Strengthen foreign language education and improve the language skills of students and teachers. Although Chinese universities offer a large number of English-taught courses, language barriers remain a challenge for international students and teachers. The foreign language proficiency of many Chinese students still needs to be improved to adapt to the international teaching and scientific research environment. Besides, promoting the reform of university foreign language teaching is the basic project of internationalized curriculum construction. China should realize the transformation from general foreign language to academic foreign language to professional foreign language as soon as possible, and strive to increase the proportion of academic foreign language and professional foreign language courses.

#### **3.2.2 Promoting cultural exchanges**

Through cultural exchange activities, we enhance mutual understanding and integration between Chinese and foreign teachers and students. The cultural adaptation problem of international students in China still exists, and cultural differences affect their learning and life experience. The differences in teaching concepts and methods between Chinese and foreign teachers also require coordination and integration.

### **3.3 Increasing capital investment and resource allocation**

Firstly, the government and universities should increase funding for international development to ensure the smooth development of projects. Increasing funding investment to support universities to carry out international education and scientific research activities. Besides, rationally allocating higher education resources and supporting more universities to participate in international development. Strengthening support for local universities and promoting the balanced distribution of educational resources.

### **3.4 Improving international management capabilities**

Improving the international management capabilities of university managers through training and exchanges. Providing more policy support and financial investment to encourage universities to carry out international talent training projects. Meanwhile, it is necessary to establishing an international management system. Improving international management systems and processes to improve management efficiency and service quality. Improving visa and work permit policies to streamline the application process for international students and scholars.

## **4. Conclusion**

The internationalization of China's higher education is an important way to improve the quality of education, enhance scientific research capabilities, and cultivate international talents. Although it faces many challenges, through effective development strategies and countermeasures and suggestions, the internationalization of China's higher education will usher in greater development opportunities. In the future, universities and the government need to work together to promote the internationalization of higher education and enhance China's status and influence in the international education community.

### **Conflicts of interest**

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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