



Research on the Development and Path of Chinese Higher Education under the Globalization Background

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Abstract. Currently, globalization has become an unavoidable and irreversible trend, which brings more development opportunities and challenges to countries, and it increases competition between countries. Higher education has been identified as one of the most essential tools for improving global competitiveness. Therefore, one of the critical concerns is better integration of higher education into globalization, which means better internationalizing higher education. China is one of the biggest promoters, contributors, and beneficiaries of globalization. The process of higher education internationalization in China is currently in its infancy. Through an extensive literature review and analysis, this paper finds that HEI can help China improve its academic standards and broaden its international perspective. However, there is also the possibility of brain drain and increased inequality in education. To reduce the negative impacts to help China develop better in the background of globalization, this paper suggests strategies that include valuing the needs of professors and students, utilizing online resources, and encouraging the diversification of universities.

Keywords: Globalization, Internationalization, Chinese Higher Education, Global Competitiveness.

1 Introduction

The impact of education globalization is dynamic; whether like it or not, almost all higher education institutions participate in the globalization process either voluntarily or by forced acceptance [1]. China, as a developing country undergoing rapid transformation, has voluntarily participated in the globalization of education, which brings with it a series of challenges and opportunities [1,2]. One of the most important opportunities is to take higher education internationalization (HEI) as an essential direction of educational development, which means conducting transnational and cross-cultural teaching and learning work, research work, and social services [3]. To assist the better development of higher education in China, this paper will show the history of higher education globalization, the current status of HEI in China, the positive and negative impacts of HEI, and give potential development strategies based on the information at the end.

2 Background

2.1 The Evolution of Globalization in Higher Education

Globalization is inevitable, and HEI is a significant development trend. Globalization is a social, cultural, political, and legal phenomenon that spreads ideas and consciousness as groups of people from different countries have more interactions [4]. Therefore, globalization is irreversible and inevitable. This situation also happens in higher education, with academic knowledge and ideas spreading as people from different countries have more interactions. To be at the forefront of academia, countries need to be integrated into the globalization of education, which can be achieved through the issuance of policies and measures that promote exchanges between countries. Therefore, HEI is an important development trend [3]. In addition, economic globalization has contributed to HEI. In detail, since the 1990s, the world has entered the era of economic globalization due to the rapid development of information technology and the spread of the internet [2,3]. If the country wants to integrate into economic internationalization to develop its economy better, the prerequisite is that people learn the world's common language, English [5]. Proficiency in English also provides the conditions for exchanges and cooperation in education [3].

2.2 The Current Status of HEI in China

HEI in China is currently in its infancy. Currently, the Chinese government and the Ministry of Education have noted the importance of HEI, and China has invested heavily in HEI [6,7]. Furthermore, China started to amend the relevant legislation to meet the WTO rules when it joined the World Trade Organization in 2001. At that time, China started to allow foreign educational institutions to import quality foreign educational resources to China, which indicates that higher education in China has begun to integrate into internationalization [2,8]. Furthermore, China has enacted several policies to promote international development, and the government has implemented major strategies, including management system reform, building world-renowned universities, education open to the outside world, emphasis on English language proficiency, education action of "The Belt and Road," etc. [1]. Currently, the main internationalization projects in Chinese higher education include activities such as international exchanges, study abroad programs, integration of international knowledge and skills into university teaching, and cooperation with overseas institutions [5]. This shows that the Chinese government and the Ministry of Education have recognized the importance of HEI and have started to implement a series of policies and measures. However, China's integration into higher education globalization has been short, and it is currently in its infancy and lacks a systematic strategy [2]. Compared with other Western countries, China's HEI still lacks competitiveness [1].

3 The Impact of HEI on China

To better integrate into globalization and develop appropriate strategies, it is necessary to understand the impact of HEI in China. Furthermore, HEI has brought more academic support and a broader perspective to China. However, there is also the possibility of brain drain and increased inequality in education.

3.1 Positive Impacts

Support for Academics.

HEI has offered students more possibilities for academic support. Furthermore, the rapid development of information technology means that the distance between countries, universities, and individuals has been shortened [9]. Figure 1 shows the number of Chinese students who have chosen to study abroad between 2010 and 2020., with the number increasing yearly except for 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Significantly, 80 percent of these will return to China to develop their careers after completing their studies [10]. Therefore, China can encourage students to study in developed countries to cultivate high-quality talents and contribute to the construction of China when they return to China.

The professors and universities have also enhanced their expertise due to HEI. Specifically, Chinese universities regularly collaborate with foreign universities in several research areas, and universities choose to assign some professors to exchange programs to improve the quality of their faculty, and they encourage professors who have studied abroad to exchange ideas with others [2,11]. In addition, universities also establish partnerships with renowned foreign professors, hiring or inviting them to come to China for international visits and dissemination of expertise [2]. The Chinese universities increase the proportion of international students enrolled to ensure that there are people from different cultures and thinking patterns who communicate and learn from each other in universities [3,11].

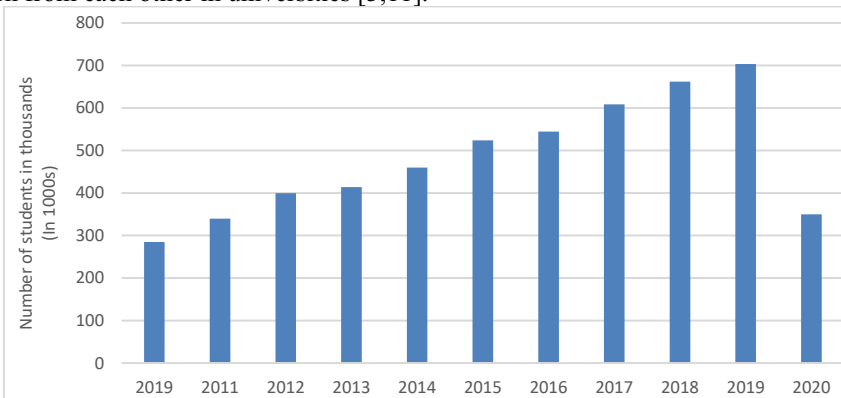


Fig. 1. The number of Chinese students studying abroad from 2010-2020 [12].

Broad International Perspective.

HEI has placed Chinese college students in an open learning environment, broadening their horizons and cultivating their abilities. Specifically, for those who choose to study abroad, the experience of studying abroad can help them integrate Chinese and foreign cultures and cultivate unique ways of thinking, enabling them to independently consider and solve problems in profound and innovative ways [13]. In addition, thanks to the Chinese government and the Ministry of Education's emphasis on the importance of students' English proficiency, even if some college students cannot study abroad, they can read papers written by foreign writers online and watch online teaching, and learn the latest knowledge and new skills promptly [11].

The traditional mode of education, teaching methods, and means of teaching in Chinese universities have undergone fundamental changes due to HEI. In other words, HEI allows universities to learn and introduce more advanced educational technologies, novel educational methods, and more appropriate modes of communication, thereby providing students with the most suitable teaching methods. For example, the widespread application of information technology allows schools in various countries to share educational resources and educational technologies through the network [3]. In addition to this, some universities have changed their bureaucratic management teaching methods, and curriculum design by learning from universities in other countries, providing students with quality education and more practical skills [9,11].

3.2 Negative Impacts

Brain Drain.

HEI has led to an increase in the cross-border mobility of personnel, it increases the possibility of brain drain in China. Specifically, in China's early stages of education reform and open-up, the education sector has mainly adopted an inward-oriented approach to internationalization, which the government decided to send students and determine the purpose and destination of studying abroad, and most of these students would return to China according to instructions after completing their studies [14]. However, with the quick growth of China's economy, study-abroad programs have begun to become privatized [15]. Especially after China joined the World Trade Organization in 2001, many families have acted as agents of big brands, which has changed their consumption patterns and allowed them to afford their children's study abroad expenses [15]. These self-funded talents who study abroad can choose whether or not to return to China at the end of their studies [10]. Moreover, China is at a disadvantage in terms of brain drain. Due to the less attractive packages offered to scholars by Chinese universities, according to the Global Politic and Safe Report, China has become the largest exporter of talent, and China's elite brain drain is at the top of the list [1]. Therefore, Chinese universities need to attract and keep excellent scholars by offering more attractive conditions.

The Chinese government and universities have introduced many relevant policies to attract these internationally minded talents, but whether these policies are effective or not has not been recorded. Those policies include household registration in first-tier

cities, employment/entrepreneurship bonuses, funding policies, entrepreneurial incentives, and tax-free car policies [16]. Also, some universities have provided research funds, living allowances, and apartments for people who graduated from prestigious overseas universities, and some universities also committed to offering associate professorships to Doctor of Philosophy students who graduated from prestigious universities abroad [11].

Increased Inequality in Education.

HEI has exacerbated the quality gap between rural and urban students' access to higher education. Specifically, the Chinese government has taken a series of measures to address educational inequality, including reducing the burden on farmers, lowering tuition fees, and increasing financial support for poor universities [2]. However, these only increase the probability of rural students entering regular universities, and entering elite universities requires additional family support, such as economic and visual support [8]. Therefore, the number of rural students who can enter elite universities of Project 985 / Project 211 is still less than that of urban students, and the number is decreasing year by year. The percentage of students at elite universities who had a rural household before attending the university is less than 17 % [17]. Furthermore, HEI has exacerbated the gap between regular and elite universities. This is because elite universities have more resources to support faculty to study in other countries to improve their teaching standards and more resources to attract top international professors to teach in the universities [2,8,11]. Compared to elite universities, regular universities do not have sufficient resources and competitiveness, so the quality gap between urban students and rural students in obtaining higher education has once again widened.

In addition, HEI has exacerbated regional inequalities in access to higher education. Chinese higher education institutions are unevenly distributed, and elite institutions are concentrated in the eastern region, municipalities directly under the central government, and provincial capital cities [2,17]. This is because the families of the students in this region have the financial ability to afford the costs of such collaborative programs. Therefore, students from wealthy families are more likely to have an international perspective and cross-cultural communication skills compared to vulnerable groups, which also gives them more competitiveness when searching for jobs [3,8,11].

4 Potential Strategies

Based on the negative impacts of HEI in China mentioned above, this chapter provides recommendations to address the brain drain and inequality in access to education, respectively, including focusing on the needs of professors and students, utilizing online resources, and encouraging university diversification.

4.1 Valuing the Needs of Professors and Students

With HEI, whether a university can retain excellent professors has become a key factor in its success, this is because Excellent professors can enhance teaching quality and the university's reputation and attract more high-quality students [11]. However, many professors working in Chinese universities are led by deans or academic committees in terms of promotion, teaching, and research work. If they want to make suggestions, they must submit complicated reports, and it usually takes several months to get the results of whether the research is approved [11]. Therefore, Chinese universities and the government need to simplify various processes and give professors some decision-making power to ensure that excellent professors are more willing to stay in Chinese universities for research. In addition, higher salaries and more research funds can be provided to reduce the life pressure of professors and increase their research interests.

The needs of students also need to be taken seriously. In detail, economic globalization and HEI mean that students from wealthy families have more options to pursue further studies [8]. Chinese universities need to ensure that they are attractive enough to retain local students and attract foreign students. However, few Chinese students can participate in university decision-making [11]. Therefore, some students who are eager to interact more with professors in the classroom and have a more free campus environment may choose to study in other countries [18]. Therefore, Chinese universities need to ensure that there is an open channel for students to give feedback to the university, which will help to instantly understand the needs of the students and meet them to retain the best talent.

4.2 Utilizing Online Teaching and Encouraging University Diversification

Online teaching can alleviate the problem of educational inequality brought about by differences in resources. In other words, universities can use information technology to share resources. To be specific, HEI has facilitated the availability of a large number of teaching videos of renowned professors from different countries on the internet [5]. Moreover, regular university lecturers can use prerecorded videos to teach students, while lecturers are responsible for ensuring student participation and providing guidance based on the teaching in the videos. Furthermore, each professor has their strengths and weaknesses in their field, and this method is highly suitable when they are not familiar with that field. Similarly, Chinese universities can invite domestic and foreign professors to teach specific courses to their students online, and online methods are more convenient and effective than face-to-face approaches.

Encouraging university diversification can avoid unhealthy competition and waste of resources, thus cultivating different types and levels of talent. Furthermore, many universities in China provide similar or identical specializations to other universities, aiming to cultivate talents with the same abilities [1]. In this situation, the top universities with more resources to invest can usually provide higher quality education to their students, whereas regular universities only provide poorer quality teaching for

students [8,11]. However, this competition is unnecessary, and universities can pursue diversity by operating according to their strengths and characteristics, thus avoiding waste of resources and allowing all students to access education that suits them, thus alleviating the inequality problem in education [1].

5 Conclusion

In summary, the globalization of higher education is inevitable, and HEI is an important trend. Currently, China's HEI is in its infancy, and it still needs to absorb the educational experiences of developed countries and construct its own higher education strategy. While HEI has had the positive impact of increasing academic support and broad international perspective in China, it has also brought with it the potential for brain drain and increased inequality in education, and focusing on the needs of both professors and students, utilizing online teaching and encouraging university diversification may help China's higher education to develop better.

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