

# A Review of Quality and Quantity of Foreign Students' Education under the Characteristics of the Popularized Times

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**Abstract:** In recent years, the scale of international students in China is growing rapidly, but the quality of education for international students in China seems to be obviously lagging behind, which is reflected in the academic level. These disadvantages and deficiencies have seriously hindered the development of the education of foreign students in China. To improve the quality of international students in China, colleges and universities must carry out curriculum reform and strengthen the construction of teachers. The government and society must also play their respective roles in formulating long-term policies. It is expected to have a clear international education development strategy, establish the quality standards of education and teaching for international students in China, and establish the trinity of government, society and universities. Thus, the educational quality assurance system must be established to realize effective monitoring.

**Keywords:** Higher education, Education development, International students.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In order to meet the needs of economic development for higher education, to meet the needs of parents to enroll their children in colleges, and to realize the popularization of higher education in China as soon as possible, while stimulating education consumption, stimulating new economic growth points, and stimulating domestic demand, since 1999, China's higher education has dramatically expanded its enrollment scale. This is undoubtedly the need of China's higher education reform and development and at the same time, an increase in the scale of international students. The scale of Chinese government scholarships continues to expand, helping international students to study in China. Statistics show that in 2018, 63,041 students from 196 countries had Chinese government scholarships to study in China, accounting for 12.81%, an increase of 22441 students in 2015 (MOE, 2019). Statistics show that in 2015, 40600 students from 182 countries were granted Chinese government scholarships to study in China, accounting for 10.21% of the total number of Chinese students, 3657 more than 36943 in 2014, an increase of 9.9%. Compared with last year, the level of scholarship students continued to improve, the proportion of degree students was 89.38%, 1.38% higher than 2014, and the proportion of graduate students was 68.01%, 5.01% higher than 2014 (MOE, 2015).

Chinese government scholarships continue to play a leading role in studying in China. The scale of foreign students in central and western regions and border provinces such as Qinghai, Ningxia, Guizhou, Yunnan, Jiangxi, Sichuan and Guangxi have expanded significantly. The role of scholarships in stimulating the source of students from neighbouring countries is obvious. The scale of international students in China grew steadily, and the structure of students continued to be optimized. Compared with 377054 in 2014, the number of foreign students studying increased by 20581, or 5.46%, and the number of institutions of higher learning, scientific research institutes and other teaching institutions receiving foreign students is 36 more than that of 775 in 2015. Again, statistics show that there are 492,185 foreign students from 196 countries and regions studying in 1004 institutions of higher learning, scientific research institutes and other teaching institutions in 31 provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities, which is more 0.62% than 2017. Among them, the

total number of overseas students from Asia, Europe, Africa and Oceania are 295,043, 81,562, 73,618, 35,733 and 62299 respectively. Beijing, Shanghai and Jiangsu are among the top three provinces attracting foreign students to China (MOE, 2019).

The quality of teaching in colleges and universities is its lifeline, and improving and guaranteeing teaching quality is the eternal theme of higher education. The popularization of higher education has made the quality of higher education the focus of attention. Although the increase in quantity and the improvement in quality are not an irreconcilable contradiction, the popularization of higher education still has a certain impact on the quality of higher education in China. Tang and Hu (2016) discussed the quality and quantity related issues of China's popular higher education in their article on the quantity and quality of China's popular higher education, and provided some support for the development of China's higher education. In the same vein, Chao and Wang (2020) study on teaching quality assurance under the background of higher education popularization analyzed the main reasons for the problems of Chinese higher education teaching quality under the background of higher education popularization, and put forward corresponding suggestions to ensure quality teaching.

Studying in China is an important part of China's education opening up. Along with China's reform and opening up process, studying in China has made remarkable progress. As the number of international students in China increases year by year, how to improve the quality of the training of international students has become an urgent issue to be discussed. This article will review literature to analyze and summarize the current situation of foreign student education, elaborate the main problems in the recruitment, teaching, scientific research and management of foreign student training, and propose a number of improvement measures and suggestions that can help improve the quality of foreign student training in China. On the basis of relevant literature, and based on the reality of undergraduate teaching in Chinese universities under the background of popularization, this paper proposes a new idea of innovating the undergraduate teaching quality assurance system in universities, so as to provide reference for the practice of teaching quality management in Chinese universities.

## 2. EDUCATION OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN CHINA

The most prominent manifestation of the popularity of international students in China is the continuous expansion of the school's enrollment scale. In this context, there have been many problems in the teaching quality of Chinese higher education for foreign student (Cheng, 2017). The main reasons for this problem are: First, the continuous expansion of international student enrollment has resulted in uneven student quality. Although the continuous expansion of international education has brought more opportunities for students to receive higher education, it has also lowered the enrollment standards of international education to a certain extent, which has largely caused the uneven quality of students. This has had a negative impact on the quality of teaching; second, the continuous expansion of international students has caused an imbalance between the teacher-student ratio. As far as the current situation is concerned, China's international education continues to expand enrollment, and the number of students in schools has increased significantly, but in terms of the number of teachers, it has not been able to increase correspondingly with the increase in the number of students. The imbalance of the teacher-student ratio has affected quality of teaching. In addition, with China's growing international influence, international students from various countries have begun to study in China, and Chinese higher education has exposed many problems. With the deepening of reform and opening up, scientific and technological capabilities and the increasing influence of China, more international students, especially students from countries along the Belt and Road, are more willing to study in China. The rapid increase in the number of international students has led Chinese universities to establish international education colleges and vigorously develop international student education; at the same time, it has also brought many problems (Cheng, 2017). At present, there are mainly the following problems in the education of Chinese students:

### a. Teaching problems for international students

- **The quality of foreign students is not high**

At present, many domestic colleges and universities regard the number of international students as an indicator of the school's internationalization level. Therefore, the threshold and policies will be lowered when recruiting foreign students (Zhang & Liang, 2018). The increase in the scale of foreign students is mainly in the low-level expansion stage, blindly pursuing quantity and relaxing quality requirements. At the same time, when international students choose the teaching

language of their majors, most of them choose Chinese. A series of problems such as low entry threshold for foreign students, low starting point for students' academic qualifications, and lax graduation conditions have severely affected the improvement of international students' educational level, which is not conducive to the sustainable development of international student education and the internationalization of Chinese universities.

- **Insufficient teaching staff**

In recent years, with the increase in the number of Chinese students studying abroad, higher requirements have been placed on teachers. However, the current foreign student faculty is far from being able to meet the growing needs of foreign student education, which is mainly reflected in the uneven teaching level and ability (Zhang & Liang, 2018). For example, instructors need to fully understand the cultural background of the student's country, but in the actual teaching process, some teachers lack the experience of studying and living abroad, resulting in insufficient and difficult classroom teaching communication; there are also some old teachers who have rich teaching experience but have limited English proficiency, and this will affect the correct transmission of information in the teaching process; although some young teachers have high English proficiency, they lack teaching experience. In addition, some universities hire part-time teachers to teach international students. Due to the lack of teaching experience for foreign students, the "cracking duck" education method is adopted in the class, and the differences between foreign students and Chinese students are not taken into account, the level of teaching teachers is uneven, and there is a shortage of reserve teachers. A study by the Medical Department of Xi'an Jiaotong University found that the number of teachers in the main courses of the medical foundation of the school is for example: 11 in physiology, 14 in anatomy, 7 in pathology, immunology, microbiology, molecular biology, and tissue embryology, 3 people in parasitology. These teachers have to undertake not only the teaching and research work of domestic students, but also the English teaching work of foreign students. The tasks are heavy and the staff is seriously insufficient. (Si, Wang, Zhang, Liu, Wu, Li, & Cheng, 2020).

- **The teaching mode is unscientific**

The teaching of foreign students is deeply influenced by traditional Chinese education. The teaching of foreign students is not specifically designed according to the habits of students from different countries. The utilization of modern and new teaching methods is not high, and most of the teaching is still carried out in accordance with the Chinese teaching model. Due to the low Chinese proficiency and insufficient professional knowledge of some international students, in order for international students to graduate smoothly, some colleges and universities will adopt "closed" small class teaching, separate classes for foreign students, and implement different teaching and assessments for difficult courses from Chinese students' standards, reduce the difficulty and scores of test papers, and relax their academic requirements. (Cheng & Liu, 2017).

- **The education professional system for international students is relatively single**

At this stage, the majors taught in Chinese are increasing year by year, and majors taught in English are still relatively scarce. Most international students who come to China will choose more mature subjects such as medicine, economics, and law, which are not attractive to foreign students. (Bao, 2016). There is still a lot of room for other subjects to expand, and they still have development potential.

#### **b. Problems of international students in scientific research**

An investigation conducted by Zhang and Liang (2018) on the problems existing in the graduation thesis of international students in China and the suggested papers showed that the quality of most of the papers of international students in China failed to reach the appropriate quality. In these papers and researches of international students, due to defects in curriculum design, lack of Chinese or English proficiency, and lack of understanding of Chinese writing habits, there will be problems in topic selection, lack of innovation, and poor logic. Therefore, the level of these papers or research of international students is still at a relatively low level. Again, a study conducted by Wang, Jing and Jing (2015) found that foreign students are a major obstacle to participating in scientific research due to lack of sufficient instructors or lack of practical platforms for foreign students to participate in scientific research and innovation. The research suggests that participating in scientific research and innovation projects while studying abroad needs to be systematically straightened out and needs to be renewed in the system.

### c. Problems in the management of international students

- **Lack of international student managers**

With the rapid increase in the number of international students, most Chinese universities have begun to carry out a series of reforms in the education and management of international students in a planned way. However, the management of international student is a huge and complex project, and various problems will inevitably arise in the management process. In response to these problems, international student managers should recognize the situation, raise awareness, strengthen management, and actively solve them. Managers play a leading role in the management process; thus, the manager's management concept, awareness and management level will directly affect the quality and final results of the education and management of international students in China. Judging from the current situation of international student managers and administrators, there are many problems. First of all, most colleges and universities have relatively few personnel engaged in the management of international student, and the problem of insufficient manpower is very serious (Du, 2018). In some colleges and universities, there are a lot of international students that a manager is responsible for, and there is not enough energy and time to manage everything.

- **Lack of the concept of "human nature"**

For a long time, the functions of the management of international students have traditionally been centered on management. In the management of international students, the role of scientific management and precise management has been emphasized. They are often used to the management of things and things, with things as the center. Seeing things rarely see people, and even seeing things but not people. There is nothing wrong with this starting point, but in the current era of integration with international standards, this management philosophy and practice still dominate the practical activities of international student management. The management philosophy of international students lacks "human nature, lack of deepening and sublimation of human nature (Lu, 2009). This lack of a correct and profound understanding of the nature or nature of people not only restricts the formation and development of advanced management concepts for international students, but also seriously restricts the improvement of the quality of management of international students and the realization of management goals. At the same time, "management" is the main focus. The model lacks democratic elements, and democracy is a very important concept rooted deep in the minds of foreign students. Coercive management methods can only arouse their resentment and confrontation, which is not conducive to education and management. Therefore, the management model that lacks the concept of "human nature" must be adjusted.

### d. Exchanges between international students and Chinese college students

- **Cultural conflicts between countries**

China's traditional culture is dominated by Confucianism. Regarding the positioning and role of people, it emphasizes the social responsibility and historical mission of people. This also pay great attention to the relationship between groups and the harmony between people. The international students of universities come from different countries such as Asia, Africa, Europe and America, and have different cultural and social backgrounds. These differences can hardly be integrated and accepted in a short time. In particular, American cultural thoughts are basically "personal first" and "self-centred". This has created cultural conflicts and frictions.

- **Traditional management and endless problems**

At present, many colleges and universities in China still use the traditional single and backward methods for the management and education of international students. This makes the management and education of international students have endless problems, and the expected educational effects are far from being achieved (Zhang & Liang, 2018). The traditional mode of managing foreign students is generally a decentralized mechanism, which separates the management of Chinese domestic students from foreign students in China. Although this management mechanism can improve the convenience of managing international students in universities, it has increased the learning difficulties of most international students because they have to travel to different departments of the school in order to study, which seriously affects the effectiveness of international student management and education. At the same time, this decentralized management system is not conducive to the communication and learning between foreign students and Chinese students, as well as cultural exchanges. Over time, it will make foreign students in China feel alienated from China, which will seriously affect their better study and further study in China (Zhang & Liang, 2018).

- **Lack of the educational and life needs of international students**

Due to the lack of experience in international education in Chinese universities, many international students have raised questions about China's education and lifestyle. Due to the late start of teaching in English in colleges and universities, and the lack of teaching faculty, many international students cannot choose their favourite courses and choose relevant Chinese courses intelligently and unconditionally (Chen, 2004). Although colleges and universities have set up courses taught in English, teachers often have inaccurate pronunciation because they have not received professional English training. Many international students cannot fully understand the content of the courses, which affects their acquisition of corresponding professional knowledge (Zhang & Liang, 2018). In addition, the living environment of international students in China is basically Chinese, and even the signs of buildings are in Chinese. For example, places such as restaurants, libraries, and classrooms are not equipped with corresponding English prompts. The living problems of international students have affected their living standards and quality.

### 3. EFFECTIVE WAYS TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN CHINA

- **Establish an international faculty**

There is the need to strengthen the construction of the teaching staff to improve the quality of teaching. Organize teachers to strengthen language training and pedagogical training, aiming at some teachers with low English proficiency, pair up with teachers with high English proficiency and high professional level, and give play to their respective advantages. Increase the training of existing foreign student teachers, give young teachers more opportunities to go abroad for training, learn scientific teaching skills, and improve their teaching ability and professional level (Cheng, 2017). In addition, teachers are encouraged to participate in academic conferences related to foreign student education, and foreign experts are invited to give lectures to understand the development of foreign student education at home and abroad, and they can also introduce excellent teachers with overseas education backgrounds and establish an international faculty.

- **Improve the management system of international students**

Due to different cultural backgrounds, international students have very different cultural concepts and learning goals. An effective management system is conducive to the smooth progress of international student education and the creation of a good learning environment. When establishing specialized management and service departments, Chinese universities guide the education management of international students from a macro perspective, participate in discussions on major issues, evaluate and supervise teaching activities, and provide decision-making on the education of international students. In addition, it is necessary to increase management efficiency and management skills by increasing the training of management personnel and inspections inside and outside the school.

- **Improve professional curriculum**

The education of international students in universities should focus on the quality of teaching, expand their own specialties, and improve the curriculum system for international students (Bao, 2016). In view of the differences between Chinese and foreign students, curriculum arrangements and teaching plans should be made according to the students' own characteristics (Meng, 2020). Avoid full-school education, formulate teaching methods suitable for international students, and increase their enthusiasm in class. According to the different learning situations of international students, different methods should be adopted to teach students in accordance with their aptitude.

- **Pay attention to enrollment publicity and raise the entrance threshold**

The enrollment model based on universities should be changed, and an enrollment publicity model involving departments, mentors, and alumni should be established. Selectively go to the main source countries and potential source countries for enrollment promotion, face-to-face exchanges and selection, so as to deeply tap the source of outstanding students (Zhang, Liang, 2018). Actively expand the cooperation agreements signed with universities in other countries, carry out double degree cooperation, and expand the scale of foreign students in the form of complementary disciplines. Only when publicity is in place can we have the opportunity to attract more outstanding international students to study. In addition, it is necessary to raise the entry threshold for international students, and do not use the scale of the number of international students as an indicator to judge the internationalization of the school. The internationalization of the school focuses on the quality of the education level of international students rather than the number of international students.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The internationalization of higher education has accelerated the development trend of international student education in China. However, with the continuous expansion of the scale of foreign students in China, problems in the quality and management of foreign students' education continue to emerge. This requires us to face the problems, solve them, and actively carry out work in strict accordance with the specific requirements of the Ministry of Education's Measures and Regulations. Colleges and universities must ensure the entry of foreign students in China, continuously improve the training program for foreign students in China, strengthen and improve the construction of professional curriculum systems; strengthen the construction of high-level teachers in the school; in the process of discovering and solving problems, insist on quality first and persistence Standardize management, strengthen exchanges and cooperation between domestic and foreign students, continue to promote the connotative development of the cause of studying in China, and strive to establish a firm foothold in the center of world education for Chinese education, to spread Chinese excellent traditional culture, and to tell Chinese stories. There is the need to actively build a community with a shared future for mankind and make positive contributions to the internationalization of higher education.

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