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**Internationalization of Higher Education in China:  
A Case Study of the University System in Shandong**

By

**Ying Zhu**

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies  
through the Faculty of Education  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
the Degree of Master of Education  
at the University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

2021

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**Internationalization of Higher Education in China:**

**A Case Study of the University System in Shandong**

by

**Ying Zhu**

APPROVED BY:

---

G. Zhang  
Department of Mechanical Automotive and Materials Engineering

---

S. Xu  
Faculty of Education

---

Z. Zhang, Advisor  
Faculty of Education

June 14, 2021

## DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

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## ABSTRACT

This case study explores the current situation and problems associated with the internationalization of China's higher education institutions. The collection of research data was completed online from 12 universities in Shandong Province. This research shows that the organizational arrangements for the internationalization of higher education in China are diversified and improving gradually. Especially local non-research-oriented universities are more flexible and innovative in the specific organization and arrangement of internationalization. In addition, the research results also show that there are many difficulties and conflicts between academic and cultural integration in the internationalization of universities.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY .....	iii
ABSTRACT.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	v
LIST OF TABLES .....	viii
LIST OF FIGURES .....	ix
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION .....	1
<b>1.1 Statement of the Problem</b> .....	1
<b>1.2 Purpose of the Study and Research Questions</b> .....	3
<b>1.3 Significance of the Study</b> .....	3
<b>1.4 Positionality</b> .....	4
CHAPTER II.....	6
CONTEXT AND REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE.....	6
<b>2.1 Globalization and Internationalization of Higher Education</b> .....	6
<b>2.1.1 Globalization</b> .....	7
<b>2.1.2 Internationalization</b> .....	9
<b>2.1.3 Globalization Versus Internationalization</b> .....	11
<b>2.1.4 Internationalization of Higher Education</b> .....	12
<b>2.2 Higher Education in China</b> .....	14
<b>2.2.1 The Traditional Context of Higher Education in China</b> .....	14
<b>2.2.2 The Structure of the Chinese Higher Education System</b> .....	17
<b>2.2.3 Attempts Towards Formulating a Modern University Model</b> .....	22
<b>2.2.4 Sustaining National Characteristics and Preserving Cultural Identities</b> .....	24
<b>2.2.5 Internationalization of Chinese Higher Education System</b> .....	26
CHAPTER III .....	34
METHODOLOGY .....	34
<b>3.1 Research Approach</b> .....	34
<b>3.2 Research Site</b> .....	36
<b>3.3 Sample Selection</b> .....	36

<b>3.4 Data Collection Methods</b> .....	37
<b>3.5 Data Analysis Procedures</b> .....	38
<b>3.5.1 Organizing and Analyzing the Data</b> .....	39
<b>3.5.2 Coding and Thematic Generation</b> .....	42
<b>3.6 Limitations</b> .....	43
<b>3.6.1 Objectivity</b> .....	43
<b>3.6.2 Generalizability</b> .....	43
<b>3.6.3 Sampling</b> .....	44
CHAPTER IV .....	46
FINDINGS .....	46
<b>4.1 Description of the Targeting Universities</b> .....	46
<b>4.2 Themes Discovered</b> .....	48
<b>4.2.1 “Bringing in” strategy</b> .....	49
<b>4.2.2 “Going out” strategy</b> .....	59
CHAPTER V .....	63
INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS.....	63
<b>5.1 The Significance of the Internationalization of Universities</b> .....	63
<b>5.2 The Main Form of the Internationalization of Universities</b> .....	65
<b>5.3 The Implementation Path of the Internationalization of Universities</b> .....	69
<b>5.4 Difficulties in Integrating with the World</b> .....	72
CHAPTER VI.....	78
<b>6.1 Summary of Findings</b> .....	78
<b>6.2 Limitations</b> .....	79
<b>6.3 Recommendations for Future Research</b> .....	80
REFERENCES .....	82
VITA AUCTORIS.....	105



## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Specific classification and number of programs offered by different types of universities .....	50
Table 2. Detailed information about degree programs provided by seven universities....	52
Table 3. Sino-foreign cooperative undergraduate program .....	54
Table 4. Sino-foreign cooperative junior college program.....	56
Table 5. Sino-foreign cooperative non-academic program.....	57
Table 6. The distribution of Confucius Institutes around the world .....	60
Table 7. The distribution of Confucius Institutes in eight universities around the world	61

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Chinese higher education administrative system .....	18
Figure 2. The specific distribution of HEIs in China .....	22
Figure 3. The location of Shandong Province in China.....	47
Figure 4. The specific distribution of the 12 universities in Shandong Province .....	48
Figure 5. The distribution of 12 universities cooperation programs.....	58
Figure 6. Distribution of four types of study abroad programs .....	62

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### **1.1 Statement of the Problem**

The modern world of the 21st century, with its fast-paced growth in research and educational sectors, has led to the transformation of higher education, which has had to evolve into a worldwide enterprise with operations in the global market. Hence, universities have grown into contributors to the world economy as one of the critical pillars of economic growth and are a crucial part of the service sector (Breton & Lambert, 2004). The universities' core functionalities, which are education, research, and organizational/skill transfer, all offer international prospects (Foskett, 2010). In universities, the aspiration to become or be seen as international or global institutions is all-pervasive (Maringe, 2010). Co-existing and co-developing of global competition is the pressure among universities worldwide. Over the past decade, universities have generally sought to gain a larger share of the worldwide market of higher education (Foskett, 2010).

Since the well-known "reform and opening-up" policy was launched in 1978, China has undergone significant changes in its political environment, economic system, foreign policy, social structure, and ideology (Cai et al., 2018). With the deepening of internationalization, China's higher education has also undergone significant reform. Since entering the 21st century, a series of new challenges have come. The problems China is facing are new ones brought about by its economic and social development. As Cai et al. (2018) discuss, these problems are the result of any combination of three potential issues: an incomplete and inadequate new system, a failure to cover by previous

reforms, or novel elements that have recently emerged after the rapid development of globalization and modernization.

Alternately, compared with their Western peers, as Altbach (2010) notes, Chinese universities have relatively limited management autonomy due to the influence of traditional political management. The bureaucratization of higher education may limit the scope of internationalization of Chinese higher education. However, for Chinese universities, the funding source no longer only relies on that from the central financial departments as diversified financing channels for education funds are becoming available. This makes it possible for universities to carry out their internationalization and respond to challenges during this process.

Moreover, becoming an international university is one of the common goals of the development of China's research universities, and the Chinese government is also committed to vigorously investing in a small number of universities that have the potential to become world-class research universities to enhance the degree of internationalization of higher education (Li et al., 2008). At the same time, China's internationalization of higher education is expected to explore new methods of enhancing universities' internationalization, maintaining their local nature, and upholding and publicizing their own characteristics while following the international rules. In the West, however, the process of internationalization is increasingly seen as "a commodity or as an investment, rather than as a way of exploring what might help lives flourish" (Maringe & Foskett, 2010, p. 244). Given these contrasting rationales, a framework constructed for understanding internationalization based on Western experiences may not be adequate for the Chinese context.

## **1.2 Purpose of the Study and Research Questions**

The purpose of this study is to discuss the current situation of the internationalization of China's higher education system and to explore the internationalization development strategy with Chinese characteristics according to the actual situation of China so as to expediate the progress of science and technology and the cultivation of talents in China. Based on the literature review and data analysis, the current study aims to understand and demonstrate the concept of internationalization of China's higher education system from the perspective of the historical process of the internationalization of China's higher education. On this basis, the paper analyzes and reflects on the problems existing in higher education's internationalization and forwards the feasible direction in the future. A selected number of universities in Shandong Province in China were chosen as a case to study this issue. These include not only world-class research universities but also local universities in Shandong. To this end, the study seeks to answer two research questions:

1. How do universities implement their internationalization?
2. What could be done to strengthen internationalization in higher education in China?

## **1.3 Significance of the Study**

According to Yang (2002), the studies on the internationalization of higher education are primarily based on Western experiences. Studies on China's system, in contrast, are principally focused on the period before 2000, during which the scope of internationalization activities was mostly limited to the academic exchange level. Alternately, research in this field has focused on analyzing policies and objectives from

the macro national perspective and lacks investigation and analysis of practices. Moreover, most of the studies on the internationalization of higher education in China still focus on the world-class research universities in China and lack discussion and research on local universities.

Since the 2000s, the pattern of higher education in China has undergone significant changes. Based on this background, this study provides a timely analysis and discussion of the understanding and practice of internationalization in China's higher education system in recent years. Moreover, this study investigates the status quo of internationalization of universities in Shandong Province, many of which are not world-class research universities. In this process, this study fills the current gap and provides direction for future practices, research, and discussions on higher education institutions in China in the context of internationalization with Chinese characteristics.

#### **1.4 Positionality**

My own study experience shapes my interest and views on the internationalization of Chinese higher education. I was a university student in Shandong, China prior to my studies at the University of Windsor in Canada. Given my academic background, my experiences studying at a Chinese university and a university in Canada provide me with a multicultural perspective to critically analyze and put forward my own views. From my personal study experience at the University of Windsor, I saw that the University of Windsor provides comprehensive support and services to international students in terms of curriculum, academic atmosphere, student management and other issues. It aims to help students acquire knowledge and skills while enhancing their intercultural communication competence. The university's International Student Center

(ISC) also provides all necessary assistance and activities for international students. Through these experiences, I have come to appreciate that the internationalization of higher education is a complex system and therefore want to analyze and discuss the current situation and problems associated with the internationalization of China's higher education system in order to make a contribution to the progress of international education.

## CHAPTER II

### CONTEXT AND REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Before developing a research plan and theoretical framework to understand the issues associated with the internationalization of education in China and develop effective interventions, it is critical to first understand the trends and issues outlined in current research and identify the gaps in research to develop research questions and an appropriate methodology. Before outlining the key issues highlighted in the current literature, it is important to define key terms, particularly the definitions of globalization and internationalization. It is likewise important to outline related dimensions of the delimit and the rationales, debates around globalization and internationalization, and internationalization in China's higher education. With a clear understanding of these, it is then possible to understand the key issues. To develop a comprehensive understanding of the internationalization of education in China, it is vital to establish the social, historical, and empirical foundation for understanding the most recent development in the internationalization of higher education in China. This requires the understanding of three key themes: (1) the history of higher education in China since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, (2) the development of the Chinese university model, which embodies China's continuous efforts to explore and establish a modern university model, and (3) the internationalization of China's higher education system regarding policies and practices.

#### **2.1 Globalization and Internationalization of Higher Education**

Globalization and internationalization each of varied definitions, and debates are surrounding both. Therefore, it is vital to establish operation definitions of both as



research and discussion on the relationship between globalization and internationalization have always been common in higher education's academic literature.

Knight (2004) discusses the relationship between globalization and internationalization in several academic studies of different periods. She notes that the internationalization of higher education is not considered the same as globalization, clarifying the difference between the two. Knight (2008a) also argues that internationalization is continually shaping and developing higher education in a new reality, facing the turbulence and challenges of globalization, and she maintains that "internationalization is changing the world of higher education, and globalization is changing the world of internationalization" (p. 1). Currie (1998) offers the view that it is necessary to differentiate between globalization and internationalization, while Cudmore (2005) asserts that a university's internationalization is more reflected "in the recruitment of the staff, students, and the curriculum" (p. 44). The globalization of the university is seen as an essential part of the alignment in the marketplace; thus, there should be a distinction between the two (Cudmore, 2005). It is important to determine if internationalization and globalization two different terms describing similar connotations, or are they actually two completely different concepts that have been ongoing in the academic field.

### **2.1.1 Globalization**

There have been many vital definitions and interpretations of globalization in literature in contemporary society. Wallerstein (1988) views globalization as a capitalist world system, whereas Giddens (2000) defines globalization as increasing social, political, and ideological interdependence between nations. Conversely, Harvey (2002)

compares globalization to the development of international relations based on the free market values, while Nayyar (2006) frames globalization in the context of world economic integration. Steger (2003) is perhaps more thorough and expounds upon the nature of globalization through four dimensions: economic, political, ideological, and cultural. These dimensions do not exist independently but intersect. For example, the economic, ideological, and political levels belong to a part of any country's cultural structure. Maringe (2010) drew upon these key ideas and offered a definition of globalization:

Globalization is a multidimensional concept that relates to creating a world in which the social, cultural, technological, political and ideological aspects of life become increasingly homogeneous and in which economic interdependence and growth are driven by the principles of the free market (p. 24).

Thus, the definition of globalization has been gradually broadened to refer to political, economic, technological, cultural, and scientific trends that can directly affect higher education and lead to a contemporary world that is more interdependent and interconnected (Bloom, 2005). Scott (1998) also argues that the concept of globalization is by no means simply the Westernization of other parts of the world. The role of universities in globalization has taken on a broad, new, and unexpected significance. This is reinforced by Altbach and Knight (2007), who posit that the influence of globalization on education can be described as “economic, political, and societal forces pushing 21st century higher education toward greater international involvement” (p. 290). In this context, globalization is identified as the strong influence of global capital on the emergence of a knowledge society (Altbach & Knight, 2007).

The development of globalization perspectives and understandings of this phenomenon have differed in various ways in a broad range of contexts. Consequently, every aspect of education, from policy to practice, has undergone profound and significant changes under the pressure and influence of globalization because it has shaped and is changing almost every aspect of our society (Teichler, 2004). However, the term internationalization is usually more closely related to disseminating knowledge and providing higher education, as described in the following sections.

### **2.1.2 Internationalization**

Relevant literature suggests that the most widely cited definition of internationalization is proposed by Knight (2003). She defines internationalization as “the process of integrating an international, cross-cultural, or global dimension into the purpose, function, or delivery of higher education” (p. 2).

#### ***Process***

The term ‘process’ is deliberately used to convey that internationalization is an ongoing, sustainable process rather than a collection of isolated activities. De Wit (1999) maintains that internationalization as a ‘process’ is distinct from the process of globalization itself, which contains both “international and local elements” (p. 2). Many studies limit the expression of internationalization to a few activities, such as academic mobility, global or multicultural education, area studies, and studying abroad. This is not a process but an activity with a beginning and an end. It is easy to confuse internationalization with a variety of theories. For example, in economics, internationalization as a process does not equate to the demands of an increasingly international market. ‘Integrating’ refers to the process of system embedding the

international and cultural dimension into policies and programs to ensure that the international dimension remains at the center of sustainability.

### ***International, Intercultural, and Global***

These three terms complement each other to reflect the breadth and depth of internationalization. ‘International’ refers to the relationships between countries in the horizontal direction, and intercultural refers to links within communities and institutions within countries in the vertical direction and globally provides a broad world perspective (Knight, 2008b).

### ***Purpose, Function, and Delivery***

Purpose, function, and delivery are three concepts that are taken together to illustrate that the mission accomplished by higher education is directed at the overall role and long-term goals of a country or region. The rationales driving internationalization have traditionally been grouped into four categories: social/cultural, political, academic, and economic (de Wit, 1995; Knight & de Wit, 1997, 1999). Between 2000 and 2020, many scholars have studied the fundamental changes within and between these four categories. Knight (2004) introduced some new emerging rationales for internationalization at the national and institutional levels because of the increasing emphasis on these levels. At the national level, the reasons include human resource development, strategic alliances, business trade, nation-building, and social/cultural development. The reasons include “international branding and profile, revenue generation, student and staff development, and knowledge production” at the institutional level (Knight, 2004, p.23).

Knight (2004) further divided internationalization into two types— "internationalization abroad and internationalization at home"—which she believed were interdependent, not independent. Internationalization abroad includes all forms of cross-border education, with the mobility of students, teachers, scholars, programs, courses, and curriculum (p.16). Alternately, internationalization at home refers to activities that help students develop an international understanding of multi-culture and intercultural skills (Knight, 2008a).

### **2.1.3 Globalization Versus Internationalization**

Globalization and internationalization are seen as distinct but interrelated processes, like two interlinked universes, where it is difficult to draw a clear line between them (Brandenburg & de Wit, 2011; Knight, 2004). Van der Wende (1997) maintains that internationalization is “any systematic effort aimed at making higher education responsive to the requirements and challenges related to the globalization of societies, economy and labor markets” (p. 18). Mitchell and Nielsen (2012) indicate internationalization is a variable that responds to the existence of globalization in the fields of economy, politics, culture, and social interaction, as well as a leading variable that encourages and promotes globalization. This means both terms denote complex processes and are increasingly given multidimensional interpretations. They share many features and overlap in many ways, but they are not synonyms, and each has notably different emphases and branches.

Brandenburg and de Wit (2011) propose that people are, to some extent, more inclined to believe that “internationalization leads to peace and mutual understanding” (p. 16); however, globalization is always associated with economic interests. Thus the

construction of internationalization has become a synonym of “doing good” (p. 16), while globalization is exactly the opposite.

According to Ennew and Greenaway (2012), the term globalization is being broadly used to elaborate on the larger socio-economic systems that are contributing to a larger volume of interlinking and inter-reliability among and beyond countries. Globalization’s few pertinent characteristics are fading nation borders, reformatting beliefs, and inter-border collaboration of financial, societal, and traditional processes (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). However, this is different from the common usage of the term internationalization. It is often ideated with a heavy focus on having efforts and preferences towards the domestic cultures and national traditions (Marginson & van de Wende, 2009).

Internationalization and globalization have been used in many similar contexts when it comes to higher education (Fok, 2007). Firstly, the two terms are often used to describe the changing state of affairs that poses new hurdles for higher education. Secondly, the intricate setting of multiple levels of providers and a focus on distance education are primarily described by both of these terms or nouns. Thus, as Altbach and Knight (2007) assert that internationalization and globalization might be “a two-way street” (p. 291), they focus on contrasting features of university education, even if they might replace each other in various research documents and educational policies.

#### **2.1.4 Internationalization of Higher Education**

According to Maringe (2010), the word “university” itself contains the concept of the universe and can be extended to the concept of an international space for individuals and groups to develop universal knowledge, so the university has always had an

international mission and character. As globalization has intensified over the past few decades, higher education systems, including universities, have turned to internationalization as a way of responding positively to meet the demands of greater globalization. Whether in the present or in preparation for the envisaged future, internationalization has become a new global platform for higher education institutions and countries around the world to empower themselves.

There is a growing base of literature on internationalization in higher education that has explored a wide variety of internationalization conceptualizations and the implications and challenges. Some examples include the knowledge society and economic transformation, the increasingly competitive international students and scholars, and the growth of cross-border teaching projects (de Wit et al., 2015). In the process of international cooperation and competition, many challenges are introduced and are crucial to the impact of the internationalization of higher education and concerns such as the increasing commercialization of higher education and the effect of internationalization on cultural differences (Douglass & Edlestein, 2009). In addition, a growing body of research has focused on the quality assurance, credibility, and qualification of international programs in international higher education (Pietsch, 2013).

A review of relevant literature shows that many publications on globalization and internationalization have been authored by scholars whose views are based on Western countries' research backgrounds. These large volumes of research seem to have evolved into models of understanding and practice in this area. The higher education system's internationalization has regional differences due to national conditions and cultural backgrounds and leads to transnational higher education, which involves various

strategies and challenges. There is an apparent gap between the internationalization of China's higher education system and the above-mentioned Western studies, and these gaps have not been resolved in the discussion of internationalization in the context of the West. Through the review of the above literature, this also becomes a prominent problem.

## **2.2 Higher Education in China**

This section reviews the literature related to higher education in China to sort out the development of China's higher education system and its internationalization.

### **2.2.1 The Traditional Context of Higher Education in China**

China has a population of approximately 1.4 billion (World Bank, 2019), and the land area is about 9.6 million square kilometers (World Bank, 2018). China's current political governance was established by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 1949, and its state administration system is multi-tiered, with the State Council as the highest administrative organ and subordinate administrative units, including provinces, autonomous regions, centrally-administered municipality, and special administrative regions.

Since the founding of the People's Republic of China, China's higher education has undergone many adjustments, from the reform of the examination and enrollment system to the expansion of university enrollment, and then to the construction of high-level national universities implemented in parallel with the national five-year construction plan (Yang, 2004). These milestones witnessed the formation of China's modern higher education system.

To understand the internationalization of education in China's tertiary schools, it is important to review the formation and development of the higher education system in



China in the context of historical, social, and political significance. Looking back through this long history, it can be seen that various influences, forces, and circumstances came together to shape China's higher education system, which has both characteristics common to many other higher education systems and characteristics specified in the context of China. A review of the history and background of China's higher education system provides a better understanding of the reforms of higher education in China in recent years, the challenges it faces, and the reasons for continuing efforts to promote internationalization.

### ***1949-1978***

In October 1949, the CCP came into power and founded the People's Republic of China. China's educational institutions were nationalized, including public, private and missionary universities, they were reformed in order to achieve socialism goals (Mok & Ngok, 2008). In June 1950, the first national conference on higher education put emphasis on the Soviet's socialist model (Wang, 2010). Starting in 1952, China's higher education system imitated Soviet administration, teaching methods, textbooks, and even classroom design (Zhou, 2006). Based on the Soviet experience and suggestions, China formulated the first five-year plan (1953-1957) with an emphasis on the development of heavy industry (State Council, 1955). In order to ensure that the reformed system would play the expected role, the center of gravity of Chinese higher education shifted its focus accordingly. During this period, China refused to learn from the higher education of other countries, especially Western countries (Yang, 2011).

In 1956, the Eighth National Congress of the Communist Party of China once again emphasized the role of higher education in national construction. It required

Chinese universities and colleges to absorb the latest technological developments in the world and suggested dispatching teachers and students abroad to learn advanced knowledge and technology (MOE, China, 1956). However, after this conference, in the context of the Cold War and in the face of a tit-for-tat struggle between classes and lines—socialism and capitalism—the bourgeois view of education was sharply criticized (Schram, 1974).

By the late 1970s, after the Great Leap Forward (1958-1966) and the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), higher education in China eliminated entrance examinations for universities and colleges, reduced the length of school years required for graduation, and abolished the examination-based grading system (Yang, 2004). As time went on, it became increasingly clear that this egalitarian approach to education was not producing the high-quality technicians and scientists needed for China's modernization program.

### ***1978-2020***

In December 1978, the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee of China was convened. China began to adopt more rational and economically oriented policies (Reed, 1988). One of the first tasks on the road to modernization was repairing the education system. Since almost all the necessary decisions to re-establish the formal education system had been announced by 1966, practical action was put on the agenda much more quickly (Pepper, 1990). The entrance examination for higher education was reintroduced, and professional standards and expertise were again respected.

Subsequently, higher education was made a top priority in China in order to promote the

country's economic reforms. Higher education has been promoted as an essential support for national progress and national economic development (Hayhoe, 1996).

From 1985 to 1992, in order to achieve the goal of focusing on the development of science and technology to serve the socialist modernization drive, China carried out a series of reforms related to the field of education (Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, 1985). Since 1992, China's higher education system has developed at an unprecedented speed. As early as the early 1990s, Chinese universities were authorized by the government to start enrolling self-funded students in order to obtain additional funding from private sources, rather than relying solely on government funds. Thus, university enrolment increased from less than 3 million in 1994 to approximately 7 million in 2000, and more than 9 million in 2019 (MOE, China, 2019a). At the same time, with the expansion of the scale of China's universities, the discussion of establishing a new model of China's university system has also been put on the agenda of education policy.

## **2.2.2 The Structure of the Chinese Higher Education System**

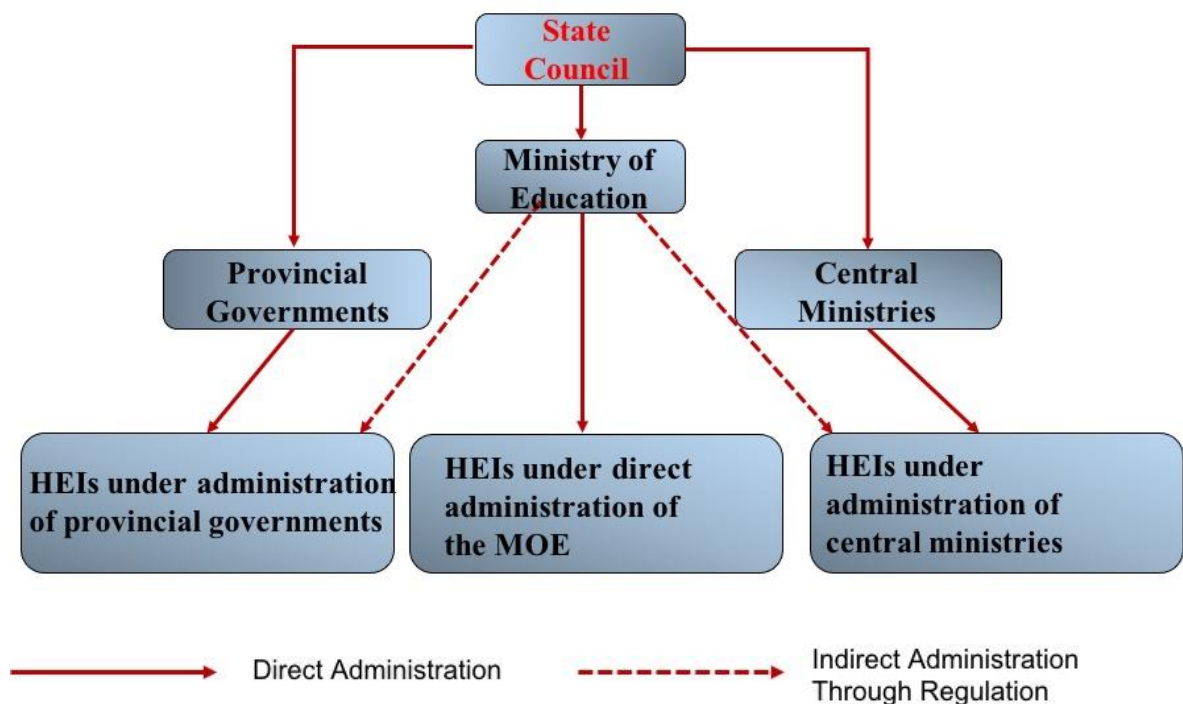
### ***The Administrative System***

As a part of higher education administration power, China's higher education administration system belongs to the centralized and local hierarchical decentralization mode (Zhu & Lou, 2011). This mode refers to the system in which higher education's administrative power is assumed by the central and local governments respectively and is controlled by the departments of the central and local governments separately.

As Zhu and Lou (2011) explain, the administrative departments at all levels perform their duties from top to bottom. The State Council is responsible for formulating

national educational guidelines and related policies. The Chinese Ministry of Education (MOE) develops policies and regulations for the higher education system.

Simultaneously, the MOE and some central ministries also have administrative control over some of China's top universities, which are referred to as central higher education institutions (HEIs). The other universities are managed by provincial governments, collectively known as provincial HEIs. Each provincial government has an education department that manages and funds the provincial HEIs. Figure 1 shows the relationship between the State Council, the MOE, provincial governments, central ministries, and universities.



**Figure 1.** *Chinese Higher Education Administrative System*  
Adapted from *Higher Education in China*, by J. Zhou, 2006, Thomson Learning Asia.

In terms of the relationship between the central government and the local government, Zhou's model emphasizes the division of labor and cooperation between the

central government and the local government; however, it attaches importance to the leadership and guidance of the central government to the local government and attaches importance to the direct leadership and guidance of the government departments to the higher education institutions of their subordinate institutions (Zhu & Lou, 2011).

Correspondingly, the low operating efficiency caused by the educational structure division is also a problem in this administrative system. Therefore, according to Tian and Li (2002), the structural reform had been the core of China's higher education reform beginning in 1990.

### ***The Funding System***

Before 1986, China's higher education was funded entirely by the government. After that, to meet the needs of economic development and reform, the sources of higher education funds were gradually diversified, including state financial support, tuition fees, funds of school-run enterprises, and donations. (Ding et al., 2011). Since 2000, with the expansion of enrollment and the significant increase of social and personal investment in higher education, some new financial channels have emerged, such as the cooperation between colleges and universities and between colleges and enterprises, as well as Sino-foreign cooperation in running schools and other fields (Ding et al., 2011). Through this form of multi-subject co-sponsorship and joint investment, social capital not only participates in the infrastructure construction and logistics management of colleges and universities but also penetrates into the fields of teaching and research, and even invests in the construction of new campuses.

### ***The Enrollment System***

In China, all students applying to higher education institutions, including colleges and universities, are required to take an examination called the National College Entrance Examination (NCEE), which is a Chinese national standardized testing system (Feng, 1999).

The NCEE takes place at the end of each school year, with students taking tests in six various subjects over three consecutive days. Universities and colleges use the results of these tests as a vital selection requirement. Students' scores on these tests are the primary measurement that matters, determining whether they can enter higher education institutions and which institutions they are eligible to enter. Therefore, the NCEE has always been regarded as a vital factor in China's political, economic, and educational development (Ryan, 2011b). The duties associated with the NCEE are spread across the national, provincial and municipal levels: At the national level, the MOE decides the country's annual enrollment and the quota for each province; at the provincial level, education departments are responsible for the supervision and administration of examinations; and at the municipal level, education departments are responsible for the specific examination organization and examination paper distribution.

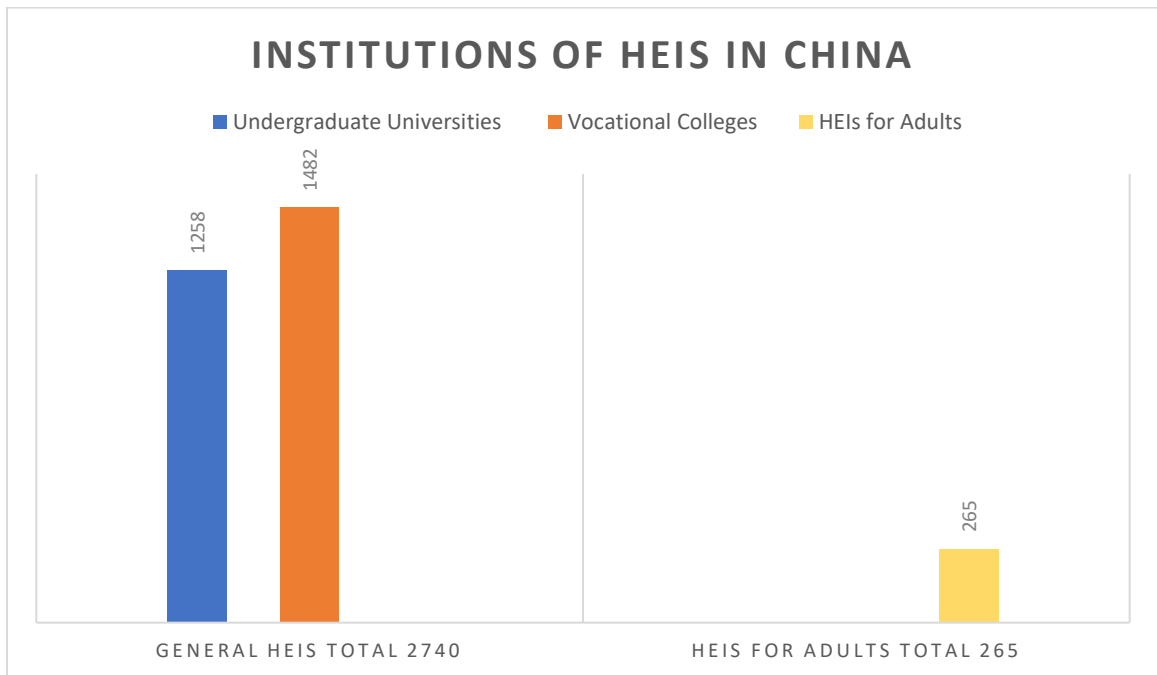
The NCEE system reflects the impact of political centralization and meritocracy on China's higher education, which has been the foundational philosophy of China's higher education system (Li, 2012). At the same time, it also has some disadvantages of development. For instance, the quota policy of the NCEE is prone to inequality in access to education and leads to regional discrimination. Each year, the MOE allocates enrollment placement according to the number of high school graduates in each province. China's economically developed regions and political centers are always given priority,

and students from remote provinces or more populous ones usually need to score higher on the NCEE than those from other provinces to be admitted to the same university (Zhu & Lou, 2011). In addition, it is stipulated that students must take the exam in their home province, where their House Registries is located. With the development of the Chinese economy, many families migrated to different provinces to work and live. These policies have become an obstacle to these people's equal access to higher education. In recent years, the Chinese government has begun to try to reform this system and explore various new models. For example, some HEIs are allowed to have more autonomy in the admissions process rather than relying solely on NCEE scores (MOE, China, 2005).

### ***The Academic Degree System***

According to their characteristics, Chinese higher education can be divided by institutions into 13 different types, including comprehensive universities, liberal arts universities, and science universities (MOE, China, 2016b). The Chinese system is comprised of four-year undergraduate programs in universities or colleges, which lead to a Bachelor's degree while studying at medical colleges and some technology institutes requires more than four years. With the authorization of the MOE, graduate schools attached to four-year colleges, universities, and national scientific research institutions are responsible for the management and organization of graduate education. Master's degree requirements can be completed in about three years of successful studies that include a thesis; Doctoral degree requirements can be completed in no less than three years of successful studies that include a dissertation. A dissertation must be presented proving that the candidate possesses the ability to undertake independent research and has made a significant contribution to the field.

According to the latest data released by the MOE, China (2020), as of June 2020, there were a total of 3,005 institutions of HEIs in China, among which 2,740 were general HEIs, including 1,258 undergraduate universities and 1,482 vocational colleges. There are 265 HEIs for adults. Figure 2 shows the specific distribution of the number of colleges and universities in China. This list does not include institutions of higher education in Hong Kong, Macao, or Taiwan.



**Figure 2.** *The Specific Distribution of HEIs in China*

### 2.2.3 Attempts Towards Formulating a Modern University Model

After 1949, China’s higher education system relied heavily on the Soviet model after restructuring. Since the end of the Cultural Revolution, China’s higher education has fallen behind that of Asian and Western developed countries. Since the early 1980s, China has developed a series of higher education policies that reflect the urgent need to catch up with world-class universities (Cheng, 1996). In fact, there is no accepted ranking criteria for the concept of a “world-class” university. According to Altbach (2003), “the



world-class universities have a significant measure of internal self-governance and an entrenched tradition”, usually includes a range of evaluation criteria such as “the admission of students, the curriculum, the criteria for the award of degrees, the selection of new members of the professoriate, and the basic direction of the academic work of the institution” (p. 7). In 1993, the central government put forward the first initiative of building 100 world-class universities in China, which was also the Project 211 rudiment (State Council, 1993). In 1995, the Chinese government formally launched Project 211, which aims to strengthen the infrastructure of higher education further and improve the quality of teaching and research in major Chinese universities in order to catch up with Western universities (Wang, 2010). Project 211 refers to the construction of 100 outstanding universities in the 21st century (State Council, 1993). The policy document sets out three primary goals: building quality higher education, developing scientific research, and exploring university management (Wang, 2010).

In 1999, the MOE announced a new initiative aimed at building a number of universities that would become China’s first group of world-class universities (MOE, China, 1999a), this initiative was known as Project 985. From 1999 to 2002, the Chinese government allocated 3 billion USD to strengthen research and infrastructure at universities in Project 211 and Project 985. These two projects were implemented nationally in order to build world-class universities and increase China’s global competitiveness and economic growth (Li et al., 2008).

In 2015, in order to further improve the quality of higher education in China and enhance the international influence of Chinese universities, the State Council of China announced that it would be the overall plan for coordinately advancing the construction

of world-class universities and first-class disciplines, hereinafter referred to as the Double-First Class initiative (State Council, 2015). Its core idea prioritizes building China into a world power of higher education. Building the Double-First class initiative is a decision made by the Chinese government to adapt to the educational environment changes at home and abroad. However, the implementation of the Double-First class initiative also has some potential problems, such as the definition of “world-class” is not precise enough, the institution’s scope is too narrow, and the lack of a future-oriented development mode. These problems have caught the attention of the government and universities (Ryan, 2011a).

#### **2.2.4 Sustaining National Characteristics and Preserving Cultural Identities**

Knight (2015) believes that the internationalization of higher education is a mutually beneficial process. Although countries may have their own interests in some aspects, it can ensure that knowledge is effectively used to deal with global challenges and “benefits involved for all partners” (p. 9). The statement proposed by Hayhoe (1995) can provide some support for Knight’s “knowledge diplomacy” theory (Knight, 2015, p. 9). Hayhoe (1995) maintains that universities could connect with different civilizations on a fundamental level due to their core values of autonomy and academic freedom.

In the case of China, Confucianism provides a way for the development of international relations between different civilized countries based on shared positive values, such as the idea of “harmonious co-existence within diversity [和而不同]” (Wu, 2017). In view of China’s history and current situation, “the internationalization of higher education can absorb the rich nutrition of Confucianism and promote the dialogue of civilizations based on He [和]” (Wu, 2017, p. 47).

With this view, China has taken an important step to the process of internationalization by supporting the establishment of Confucius Institutes, a non-profit and public welfare organization that aims to “develop and facilitate the teaching of the Chinese language overseas and promote educational and cultural exchange and cooperation between China and other international communities” (Hanban, 2019a).

The first Confucius Institute was launched in South Korea in 2004. Since then, the number of CIs has increased drastically. By December 2019, China had set up 547 Confucius Institutes and 1,172 Confucius Classrooms in primary and secondary schools in 162 countries and regions around the world (Hanban, 2019b). In Asia, 138 Confucius Institutes and 117 Confucius Classrooms have been established in 39 countries and regions. Africa has set up 61 Confucius Institutes and 48 Confucius Classrooms in 46 countries. There are 190 Confucius Institutes and 346 Confucius Classrooms in 43 countries and regions in Europe, and 138 Confucius Institutes and 563 Confucius Classrooms in 27 countries in the Americas. Seven Oceanian countries have set up 20 Confucius Institutes and 101 Confucius Classrooms (Hanban, 2019b). In July 2020, the brand of Confucius Institutes had been fully run by the Chinese international education foundation (Thung, 2021).

At present, there are three models for the establishment of Confucius Institutes: direct investment from its headquarters in Beijing, cooperation with foreign institutions and franchising from its headquarters (Ma & Zhao, 2011). The main mode of running Confucius Institutes is a cooperation between Chinese and foreign universities (Zhou, 2018). Foreign universities are the main organizers, and Chinese universities are the supporting units (Zhou, 2018).

The courses offered by Confucius Institutes differ from each other in the following main parts: first, Chinese language; second, Chinese history and cultural thoughts; It also offers courses on Confucianism, Daoism, Chinese geography, social customs, traditional and modern lifestyles, and business (Yang, 2015). Besides, there are some practical courses, such as calligraphy, traditional Chinese medicine, Qiyi, traditional Chinese painting, kung fu, Chinese tea ceremony, cooking and so on (Ma & Zhao, 2011). In terms of communication channels, in addition to regular classes, broadcasting Confucius College, Confucius Institutes on Yellow River TV and Confucius Institutes on the Internet, which make full use of electronic network media to provide multi-level online courses for learners from all over the world and expand teaching resources (Ma & Zhao, 2011).

### **2.2.5 Internationalization of Chinese Higher Education System**

According to Wang (2014), The internationalization of higher education in China during the past decades has been characterized by emphasizing various aspects per its different phases. From 1978 to 1992, the internationalization of China's higher education system was almost directly controlled by the Chinese central government; however, economic factors and government regulation drove it more. Since the 1990s, due to the challenges of globalization and multinational competition, the internationalization of Chinese higher education has been market-oriented (Huang, 2003).

#### ***1978-1992***

During this period, the government policies and regulations focused on the going-out strategy and the bringing-in strategy (Wang, 2014). The going-out strategy involves sending outstanding students, scholars, and faculty members abroad for further study; the

bringing-in strategy involves foreign scholars and experts being invited to conduct research and teaching in China, especially in English teaching and practice. This reflects China's urgent demand for advanced overseas knowledge and technology, the urgent need for professionals who are proficient in these aspects, and China's strong desire to learn from developed countries.

In August 1978, the government's program on dispatching more undergraduate and graduate students to study abroad was published as an important document by the MOE—which was renamed the State Education Commission (SEC) in 1985 and renamed back to the MOE in 1998. A series of dispatching principles, requirements and selection plans are laid out in the document, which states that those selected to study abroad are strongly advised to study in the fields of science, engineering, agriculture, and medicine (MOE, China, 1978). Thus, during that period, China emerged a large number of outstanding graduates in these fields. In 1981, the MOE issued the first policy for Chinese citizens to study abroad with their own funding. The policy on dispatching scholars and students abroad fell into two categories: one for scholars, faculty officers, and students who are sent and funded entirely by the Chinese government, and the other for students who study abroad depending on their own expense (MOE, China, 1981).

After 1984, there were increasing attempts to further expand the scope of sending students, visiting scholars, and faculty members to study overseas. The Chinese government had decided that provincial governments, municipal governments, and some individual universities could be authorized to select and send students overseas according to their own needs (MOE, China, 1986). That means that—instead of being selected, sent, and financed only by the SEC—a growing number of institutions were empowered to

select and send candidates abroad. Therefore, from the mid-1980s, the public sponsors for scholars, faculty members, and students to study abroad included not only the SEC but also other institutions, agencies, and local governments (MOE, China, 1986).

During this period, China also introduced policies to invite foreign professors and experts to China as part of the bringing-in strategy. These scholars were tasked with introducing and translating foreign textbooks and encouraging overseas Chinese scholars and students to return to China. A document from the MOE shows that at that time, the MOE encouraged nationwide English education (MOE, China, 1979).

### ***1993-Present***

Starting in 1993, China's attention began to change. Previously, a large number of talented people were sent overseas to become master professional and technical personnel of advanced knowledge and skills. According to He's study (1998), by 1986, there were 76 destinations for Chinese students and scholars to study abroad, among which 45% were in the United States, 30% in Western and Northern Europe, 10% in Canada and Australia, 9% in Japan and 3% in other regions. By the end of 2000, the scope of countries to study in had gradually expanded to 103 countries and regions (Huang, 2003). How to encourage these overseas Chinese scholars and students to return to China, this phase focused on three strategies: attracting more international students to study in China, carrying out transnational education, and developing international university curricula.

In 1995, the MOE issued a document approving and encouraging cooperation between Chinese higher education institutions and foreign educational institutions (MOE, China, 1995). The document (1995) clarified that cooperation and exchanges with foreign institutional partners should be formally incorporated as a supplementary part of the

Chinese education plan. At this stage, Chen Zhu, then the Minister of the MOE, also asserted that China's education must be more extensive and more active to open up to the world and open up the way for China's higher education to connect with the international community (Chen, 2002). As an important carrier of China's education opening to the outside world, Sino-foreign cooperative education has been vigorously developed since 1995. Sino-foreign cooperative education refers to the educational and teaching activities conducted by Chinese educational institutions and foreign educational institutions with respect to various elements of education—such as disciplines, majors, and courses—with Chinese citizens as the main target students (MOE, China, 2004).

By June 2020, nearly 2,300 Chinese-foreign cooperatively-run schools and projects had been approved and recorded by the Ministry of Education (MOE, China, 2020a). In order to expediate and expand the opening up of education and further support and standardize Sino-foreign cooperation in running schools, China issued the opinions of the Ministry of Education and other eight departments regarding the acceleration and expansion of the opening up of education in the new era in 2020 (MOE, China, 2020b). The document calls for efforts to remove institutional barriers in China and step up reform of Chinese-foreign cooperation in running schools (MOE, China, 2020b).

Li (2016) maintains that there are mainly three modes of Sino-foreign cooperatively-run schools. The first is the Sino-foreign cooperative university with an independent legal personality (Li, 2016). By 2020, there were nine such universities in China (MOE, China, 2020a), including Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University, Duke Kunshan University, and The University of Nottingham Ningbo. The second type is the Sino-foreign cooperatively-run schools without the legal person qualification, which is

generally second-level colleges located in universities (Li, 2016), such as the Sino-French Institute of Engineering of Beihang University, Sino-German Engineering of Tongji University, and the Joint College of the University of Edinburgh of Zhejiang University. The last type is the Sino-foreign cooperative programs of domestic colleges and universities (Li, 2016). Students will first complete two or three years of intensive English courses in a domestic university and learn some specialized courses, and then go to a cooperative university to study specialized courses for two years and get a bachelor's or master's degree from a foreign university (Li, 2016).

By 1998, China had two universities officially cooperating with foreign universities (Huang, 2003). The first was the Johns Hopkins-Nanjing University Center for Chinese and American Studies. China and the United States jointly funded it. The other was Goethe Institute Beijing, which is the outcome of a collaboration between the Beijing University of Foreign Studies and the Goethe Institute in Germany, which is committed to German training and introduced German culture in China (Huang, 2003).

In 1999, China officially joined the World Trade Organization, and the open market environment has provided more convenient conditions and broader opportunities for these initiatives. By 1999, there were more than 70 higher education institutions in China that obtained the qualification to conduct some kind of international education in China with foreign institutions. Among them, 27 universities in China have carried out about 30 projects in cooperation with 25 universities in countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and France (MOE, China, 1999b).

Since the beginning of the 21st century, the Chinese government has demonstrated a growing awareness of the essentiality of higher education development



and internationalization, which is reflected in China's Five-Year Plans and five landmark policies on education (Wu, 2018), which can be understood as "a series of development initiatives formed mainly by the government through plenary sessions and the National Congresses" (Wen, 2013, p. 128). The Tenth Five-Year Plan (2001-2005) laid out strategies for introducing and utilizing foreign educational resources, attracting overseas talents and returnees, and supporting overseas studies (State Council, 2001). It also highlighted plans to further advance the 211 Project and develop high-level research universities (State Council, 2001). It also set out for the first time China's goal of improving the status of Chinese universities in terms of internationalization (MOE, China, 2001). The internationalization of university teachers is one of the core contents of the internationalization construction of higher education (Li, 2020). The internationalization of higher education could lose its essential significance if university staff have not engaged with international learning and research (Zhou, 2010). Broadening the path of internationalization of the development of Chinese university teachers is central to guaranteeing the improvement of the internationalization of the teaching staff, which can help teachers broaden their international vision and can contribute to teaching, research and management (Li, 2020).

The Eleventh Five-Year Plan (2006-2010) stressed the importance of recruiting returned students and attracting overseas talents (State Council, 2006). The Outline of the National Eleventh Five-Year Plan for Education Development put forward the development strategies of supporting overseas studies, promoting international enrollment, supporting Sino-foreign cooperation in running schools, and promoting overseas Chinese as a second language education (MOE, China, 2007). This plan

outlined four goals for China's enrollment: (1) expanding the scale, (2) optimizing the student management system, (3) improving the educational model, and (4) improving the level or the quality of overseas students (MOE, China, 2007). According to the two documents, China began to place greater emphasis on bilateral cooperation and "export-oriented" approaches, such as promoting Chinese language education overseas and international student recruitment during this period.

The Twelfth Five-Year Plan (2011-2015) put forward the goal of building world-class universities and establishing a center of scientific and technological innovation with global influence (State Council, 2011). It elaborates the strategic planning of establishing a Sino-foreign joint laboratory, reforming the school-running mode to promote international enrollment, supporting the overseas development of the Confucius Institute program, and enhancing the influence of China's higher education in the world (MOE, China, 2011).

With regard to higher education, China's Thirteenth Five-Year Plan (2016-2020) has made more detailed plans for the upcoming Double-First Class construction, including supporting a number of universities and a number of disciplines to enter the world-class key areas, forming incentive and restraint mechanisms, and stimulating the construction vitality of universities and colleges (MOE, China, 2016a). Under the international environment of the deepening development of world multi-polarization, economic globalization, cultural pluralism, and social informatization, it proposes deep participation in the formulation of international education rules and plans to carry out international assistance in education (MOE, China, 2016a).

Overall, the Chinese government's understanding of the significance of internationalization in higher education has shifted over time, "from an awareness of the changing context" to "the facilitation of economic competition," and then to "the enhancement of international status" (Wang, 2014, p. 23). The international deployment of Chinese higher education in the new era is multi-faced: It seeks to provide educational assistance, attract overseas students to emphasize the participation and leading role of Chinese scholars in international cooperation, continuously seeks high-quality international cooperation through a number of joint programs (Yang, 2014).

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

Crotty (1998) defines research methods as the techniques or procedures used to collect and analyze data related to particular research questions or hypotheses. There are two purposes for this study. First, it seeks to identify what organizational arrangements are made in universities in Shandong regarding internationalization. Second, it seeks to identify how universities in Shandong implement their internationalization. To this end, a qualitative case study would prove most appropriate. To understand the merits of this approach, it is critical to outline the specific methods and the reasoning for choosing them and how the sample selection will be collected. It is also important to outline both data collection and analysis and the reliability and validity of both. Finally, as is the case with all research, it is essential to consider any ethical issues.

#### **3.1 Research Approach**

A case study is “a general term for the exploration of an individual, group or phenomenon” (Sturman, 1997, p. 61) that explores “the problem, the context, the issues, and the lessons learned” (Creswell, 2014, p. 15) to provide a comprehensive description of an individual case and its analysis (Mesec, 1998). Sagadin (1991) states that if researchers “remain in such analyses on the descriptive level, then a case study is considered as a form of descriptive method”; however, if researchers “climb to the causal level, case study proceeds towards causal experimental method” (p. 31). According to Simons, “a case study is an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, program or system in a real life” (2009, p. 21). Stake (2005) asserts that a case study is not a choice different

from methodology but a choice of research content. In other words, the case study approach can be applied to both qualitative and quantitative research, and what makes a case study qualitative is how researchers position the case study and how they interpret the case. Therefore, it is important to discuss and analyze why a qualitative case study is the most appropriate method for the current study.

Meredith (1998) describes two advantages that echo the definition of the case study approach: First, it can be done in a natural environment; second, the relevant conclusions obtained can be developed and put into practice. Yin (2009) explains that a case study is optimal in several instances: when the researcher is asking ‘when,’ ‘how,’ or ‘why’ questions, when the researcher has little control over events; and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon. These three situations apply to the current study as it investigates the organizational arrangements made in Shandong’s universities and their process of internationalizing its higher education. This study investigates the phenomenon in the natural environment of the study site without interfering with the activities and events that occur at the site. Most importantly, through the method of case study, it is possible to understand the practice and basic strategies of internationalization of China’s higher education system to achieve the purpose of this study.

Au and Blake (2003) note that case studies explore a phenomenon through several individual but related cases; thus, the current study can be seen as a collective case study. The strengths of the collective case study approach allow the objectives of the current research to be achieved. This case study aims to thoroughly explore the issues of the internationalization of the target institutions. Through this understanding, the study provides interpretations of the hidden realities about internationalization in China.

### **3.2 Research Site**

This study used documents published on the official websites of selected universities in Shandong, one of the provinces with a developed economy and rich educational resources in the east part of China. The collection of research data was completed online.

### **3.3 Sample Selection**

I have applied purposive sampling to select universities from Shandong Province, which is the birthplace of China's traditional Confucius and Mencius culture and one of the provinces with the largest number of universities in the country. Purposive sampling is the deliberate choice of a participant due to the qualities the participant possesses (Etikan et al., 2016). Lavrakas (2008) notes that the primary aim of a purposive sample is ensuring the sample is representative of the population being discussed and ensure the data regarding the phenomenon being studied will be able to accurately answer a study's research question. It is used in instances where a random sample will not likely achieve this goal (Lavrakas, 2008).

The university system in Shandong Province has grown and developed significantly in the past two decades, both in terms of quality and size. To be eligible to be chosen in the study, candidate universities should meet the following criteria: (1) there must be at least a searchable English version of the institution's official website; (2) universities must be directly under the MOE or under the jurisdiction of provincial education departments; and (3) the nature of the university is a national public university. Based on the above criteria, 12 universities in Shandong Province were selected as the research targets.

### 3.4 Data Collection Methods

The data used for this study are mainly documents published on websites. Patton (2002) suggests that records, documents, artifacts, and archives can be valuable sources of information in qualitative research. According to Berg (2009), documents consist of public and private records that the researcher obtains about a site or participants in a study. Atkinson and Coffey (1997, p. 47) refer to documents as “social facts,” which are generated, shared, and used in socially organized ways. Berg (2009) further defines that there are archival records in the following categories: public archives, private archives, official documentary records, commercial media accounts, actuarial records, and other types of documentary sources of data, including audiovisual material.

Like other analytical methods in qualitative research, document analysis requires the examination and interpretation of data to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Creswell (2008) proposes a five-step procedure for collecting documents in qualitative research: (1) identifying the documents related to the study’s research questions, (2) considering both public and private documents; (3) seeking permission to use documents from appropriate individuals and groups; (4) examining documents for accuracy, completeness, and usefulness; and (5) recording information from the documents in relating to the research questions in the study.

In order to analyze the practice and development of the internationalization of the target institutions, I consider the connections between the policy texts as well as the social relations and structures that generated the phenomenon. During the data collection process, I retrieved government policy documents, institutional documents, and public

media documents. Documents were selected from both the national level and institutional level. I chose to access and obtain the documents through the MOE, the official websites of the universities, and the University of Windsor library. I also collected media articles from the universities' official websites related to this topic.

Berg (2009) asserts that researchers should be cautious when using archival material as data. He suggests that, although documents could be an essential source for some research questions, some archives may provide the wrong source of data for some other questions. Thus, it is important to use multiple procedures when using archival documents in order to reduce the possible source of error. In order to avoid the possible bias brought by archives and material from a sole source, documents from multiple sources in both English and Chinese languages were retrieved for the current study. For example, the Chinese and the English versions of policy documents were gathered for most of the documents.

### **3.5 Data Analysis Procedures**

As Berg (2009) address, data analysis is a “careful, detailed, systematic examination and interpretation of a particular body of material in an effort to identify patterns, themes, biases, and meanings” (p. 338). According to Sandelowski and Barroso (2002), the qualitative study requires an explicit description of research findings in order to evaluate and summarize what is known about the target domain. In addition, qualitative researchers have varied narratives about the relationship to data, method, and how they should be communicated (Sandelowski & Barroso, 2002). In a metaphorical way, qualitative researchers act like detectives when carefully asking questions and examining data, and researchers sometimes even re-enter the research site to gather more



data to help them answer their questions until the process or topic of research is understood (Johnson & Christensen, 2012).

Miles and Huberman(1994) believed that researchers need to alternate between the two stages of data collection and data analysis in qualitative research, so data analysis is not a linear process. During this period, the term “interim analysis” was used to define the entire research process of collecting data, analyzing data, collecting data beyond the original data, analyzing these data, and so on. Interim analysis in qualitative research can deepen scholars’ understanding of their research and further guide each round of data collection.

Collective case studies are the study of a phenomenon through several individuals, but interrelated cases require careful reading and examination of the data to consider how the evidence gathered through documents can be linked together. In this case, Miles and Huberman(1994) proposed a data analysis program model, which other researchers adopted (e.g., Berg, 2009; Lincoln & Cuba, 2008; Patton, 2002): (1) data immersion, which involves organizing and preparing the data for analysis, reading data for content to determine the quality of the data, and identifying patterns; (2) categorization, which involves transforming data into categorical labels or themes and presenting the date via tables or charts; (3) abstraction and comparison, which involves sorting data by these categories and identifying patterns, relationships, commonalities, and disparities; and (4) integration and interpretation, which involves distinguishing main and sub findings and identifying the core meaning of the data, and considering data in light of previous research and theories.

### **3.5.1 Organizing and Analyzing the Data**

Data does not speak for itself if it is left behind in the form in which it was collected, such as recordings, a few pages of transcripts, or documents of one kind or another. Thus, as Ryan (2006) notes, raw data does not constitute the results of a study. When talking about the findings of a study, the central component is what comes out of the data after analysis. This process is a fascinating part of the research because it provides the opportunity to “pick out the gems that the data undoubtedly contains” (Ryan, 2006, p. 96). However, it is also one of the most challenging and time-consuming parts of any research project.

**“Making the Familiar Strange.”** As discussed in Chapter III, this study selected the method of document analysis. According to Flick (1999), the text is the actual experience material and the ultimate basis of the theory development. In the course of analysis, the shreds of evidence presented for specific claims should be unambiguous, and how the data have fitted together with the translation should be clearly shown (Richardson, 1990). In this process, the kind of data is used and how it is used are filtered by researchers. Several factors determine how to provide analysis and interpretation through the data, such as the researcher’s personal and professional experience, the literature reviewed, and the theoretical knowledge. Analytic procedures and the results derived from a particular set of data can drastically differ from one researcher to another depending on the construction of knowledge and the particular interests of the researcher. During the analysis process, I tried to observe and reveal the essence of the data in various ways. These data, derived from documents, might be described as mundane or obvious. One of my tasks, and also one of the critical purposes of the analysis, as Ryan (2006) notes, is to “make the familiar strange”(p. 95), and, in the process of letting the

data answer one's research questions, to give the data some alternative path of interpretation.

**Interim Analysis.** According to Ryan (2006), the analytics process “requires that the data be organized, scrutinized, selected, described, theorized, interpreted, discussed, and presented to a readership” (p. 95). The term “interim analysis” was first be used to define the cyclical process of collecting data, analyzing data, collecting additional data, and analyzing these data through research (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Yin (2009) argues that case researchers could not use fixed formulas to analyze qualitative information, unlike quantitative or statistical analysis. On the contrary, the analysis of data from a case study relies on the investigator's own way of thinking with careful consideration of evidence and alternative interpretations, as well as having a thorough understanding of the background of information collection (Yin, 2009).

My data analysis process was not linear and there was no formula to follow. My research design is a collective case study that examines a phenomenon through many individual but related cases. This means that the information needs to be understood as a whole, not as isolated pieces of datum. First of all, in the process of data collection and analysis, it is difficult to accurately distinguish the endpoint of data collection and the starting point of data analysis. My data analysis process often occurred during the data collection phase of my research. To get started, I organized my document notes and summarized some points after each university's document data collection. In the course of taking notes and summarizing, several possible thematic ideas emerged. For example, in the early stages of data collection, ideas about universities' understanding of the internationalization of higher education emerge from the documentation process.

To sum up, my entire data analysis process includes collecting data, documenting and sorting out data, exploring coding, developing themes, summarizing findings, and conveying personal reflections. There are a few key strategies throughout, first of all, to continually consult my research questions. This strategy ensures that my data analysis is focused and not overwhelmed by a flood of information. Secondly, in data analysis, I compared data information with existing literature and past studies, which is conducive to my final exploration and discovery of the themes. Finally, I cross-referenced many documents in both Chinese and English. I noticed some of the challenges of working and switching between two different languages and found some problems along the way.

### **3.5.2 Coding and Thematic Generation**

According to Johnson and Christensen (2012), in data analysis, researchers often search for essential statements that are particularly relevant to the phenomenon being studied. My understanding of these statements became the basis for identifying the codes that emerged from the data and formed the themes of my findings. Saldana (2009) points out that a code in qualitative research can be a word or phrase that symbolically summarizes and captures the essence of language or visual-based data. He also believes that there are usually two cycles in the data coding process. In the first cycle, the codes could range from a single word to a whole sentence or entire page. In the second cycle, the codes are refined to the same unit, a long passage, or a “reconfiguration” (Saldana, 2009, p. 3) of the codes that have been developed.

Saldana’s approach to coding the data and developing themes was adopted in this study, which followed and developed the themes by reconfiguring the code and categories. A series of critical statements and bullet points were marked, recorded, and

used as the study's code during the data collection process. The code was often derived from recurring words and statements that were summarized from the data. For example, the official websites of different universities all mentioned Sino-foreign cooperative education, overseas study, international conference, Confucius Institute, and application for study in China. To determine the theme, the codes were put into similar categories for data analysis and classified and summarized the relevant situations of these 12 universities. Then lists were then made by interpreting and describing the meanings of the codes.

### **3.6 Limitations**

Though ideal in many respects, there are several potential limitations to the methodology, particularly with regard to the objectivity of case studies, generalizability, and sampling.

#### **3.6.1 Objectivity**

A significant criticism of case study research is that it lacks objectivity and rigor (Remenyi, 1998). This perspective contends that the case study researcher is often immersed in the case, so it is difficult for the researcher to be objective about the case's data. This potential concern for lack of objectivity can be addressed to some degree by establishing clear categories with regard to the content being assessed for each university's website. In this way, the content can be objectively identified even if its level of quality is subjective.

#### **3.6.2 Generalizability**

Another criticism describes case study research as lacking generalizability because of the small sample size scale (Bryman & Bell, 2003). All of these mentioned

above may cause potential limitations of the study. That said, this is a typical problem when the sample size represents a relatively inconsequential percentage of a significantly larger population. For example, a case study involving the experiences of four international students could hardly be generalizable to a population that is in excess of one million. However, the current study is examining 12 universities in a province that has fewer than 100 such schools and thus comprises a number greater than 10% of the population in which it exists. Thus, the findings from these cases would be more generalizable than most would otherwise be.

### **3.6.3 Sampling**

There are also some limitations in the university selection process. In order to understand the degree of internationalization and development of the university system under relevant institutional mechanisms, private colleges and universities were not included in the scope of this study. This is because the private institutions are not required to operate under the mandate of the MOE since they are funded through private capital; thus, their objectives may not be consistent with or reflective of public institutions. As a result, the findings may not be generalizable to private schools. Moreover, the sample consists of schools that are exclusively located in Shandong Province because this province has made significant progress with respect to the internationalization of tertiary education since 2000. However, these advances are relatively consistent with major institutions throughout China and should therefore be relatively generalizable. In addition, as China has a national education system, all universities fall under the jurisdiction of the same MOE, meaning their institutional practices should be generalizable to other universities throughout China.

### **3.7 Ethical Considerations**

As the current study is merely collecting data that are publicly displayed by institutions and does not involve human subjects, the focus of ethical considerations of this study will ensure the accurate use of the documents collected. 3.6 Limitations

Though ideal in many respects, there are several potential limitations to the methodology, particularly with regard to the objectivity of case studies, generalizability, and sampling.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS

In order to understand the data collected for the present study, it is first important to provide an overview of the characteristics of the 12 universities. After comparing and contrasting these characteristics via the use of tables, two key overarching themes emerged with regard to the internationalization of universities in Shandong Province: the “bringing in” strategy and the “going out” strategy.

#### **4.1 Description of the Targeting Universities**

According to the MOE, China (2020c), as of June 30, 2020, there were just over 3,000 higher education institutions in China, including nearly 1,300 undergraduate universities, almost 1,500 (vocational) colleges, and over 250 institutions of higher education for adults (MOE, China, 2020c). In general, Chinese universities are mainly concentrated in the central and eastern coastal areas of China. Shandong Province is a coastal province in East China, bordering Hebei, Henan, Anhui, Jiangsu, and other regions in the north. As of June 2020, Shandong Province had 16 prefecture-level cities and 26 county-level cities under its jurisdiction, with a permanent resident population of over 100 million (National Bureau of Statistics, 2020). As a strong economic province in China, Shandong Province is also a major province in education. Shandong Province ranks third in China for the number of higher education institutions with a total of 152: 70 universities and 82 colleges (MOE, China, 2020c).

In terms of educational tradition, Shandong is the birthplace of Confucian culture. The founders of Confucianism—Confucius, and Mencius—were both born in present-day Shandong Province. Confucianism has been regarded as the official ideology by the

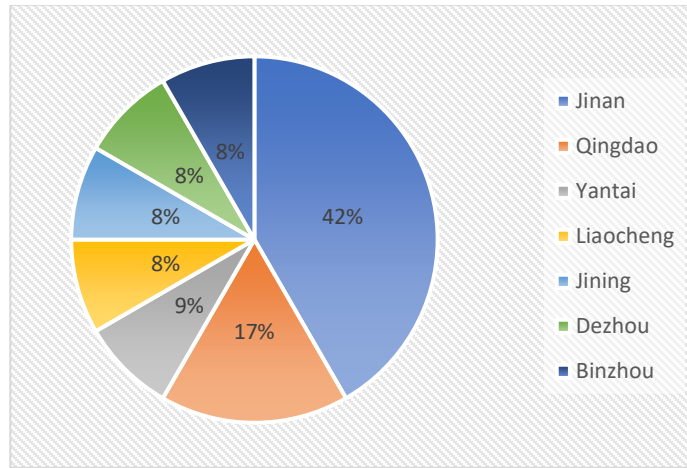


government since the Han Dynasty (206 bce–220 ce), which is of great significance to China’s pedagogical, ideological, and cultural development. Confucianism emphasizes humanitarianism, maintains social order and system, attaches importance to the social function of education, and emphasizes moral cognition in education (Yao & Yao, 2000).

This study selected 12 universities in Shandong Province, all of which have English and Chinese versions of official websites for summary and analysis. Among the universities, there are two under the MOE’s direct jurisdiction and nine under the jurisdiction of Shandong Province. All of the universities were state-run by nature. In terms of research scale and the proportion of disciplines, two of the universities were research-oriented and had first-class research status in China, while others are non-research-oriented. Divided by geographical area, there are five universities in Jinan, the capital city of Shandong Province, and the others are scattered in six other cities in Shandong Province. Figure 3 shows the location of Shandong Province in China, while Figure 4 depicts the specific distribution of the 12 universities in Shandong Province.



**Figure 3.** *The Location of Shandong Province in China*  
Source: China sage (Shandong, China).



**Figure 4.** *The Specific Distribution of the 12 Universities in Shandong Province*

#### 4.2 Themes Discovered

In June 2020, China promulgated the opinions of the MOE and other eight departments on speeding up and expanding the opening up of education in the new era. This document points out that education opening to the outside world is a distinctive feature and an important driving force of education in modernization (MOE, China, 2020b). Under the guidance of the thought on socialism with Chinese characteristics for a new era, China will unswervingly open up its education to the outside world and take the initiative to enhance mutual learning, mutual inclusiveness, and communication with other countries so as to open education to the outside world in a more all-directional, wide-ranging, multi-level and proactive manner (MOE, China, 2020b).

Through the comprehensive data collection and analysis on the official websites of the 12 target universities in Shandong Province which have carried out the two-way strategy of “bringing in” and “going out” at the specific practice level of higher education internationalization. “Bringing in” means to introduce advanced international teaching concepts, teaching methods, training models, and management methods, actively attract foreign high-quality educational resources, and learn from the experience

of advanced countries in higher education. “Going out” means to promote China’s high-quality educational resources and talents to go global and to carry out various forms and levels of international cooperation in running schools and educational exchanges with other countries (MOE, China, 2020b).

#### **4.2.1 “Bringing in” strategy**

At present, the “bringing in” strategy of these 12 universities mainly includes two forms: study programs in China for international students and Chinese-foreign cooperation in running schools.

**Study programs for international students.** According to the data from the 12 universities, nine of the 12 targeted universities in Shandong Province show on the English versions of their official websites that they offer programs related to the education of international students. However, there are some differences between local non-research-oriented universities and research-oriented universities in the specific programs setting.

The programs for overseas students can be roughly divided into: degree programs, non-degree programs and Chinese language programs (MOE, China, 2017). On the report of the regulations on the admission and training of international students jointly formulated by the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Public Security in 2017, international students studying in China can be divided into two categories: degree students (doctoral, master’s and undergraduate students) and non-degree students (preparatory students, advanced students and research scholars).

Of the nine universities, eight offer both degree, non-degree and language study programs for international students. There is one university that offers only degree

programs for international students. The specific classification and number of study programs provided by different types of universities can be seen in Table 1.

**Table 1.** *Specific Classification and Number of Programs Offered by Different Types of Universities*

	<b>The Number of Study Programs</b>				
	<b>Degree Program</b>			<b>Non-degree program</b>	<b>Language training program</b>
	<b>Undergraduate's</b>	<b>Master's</b>	<b>Doctoral</b>		
<b>Research-Oriented Universities</b>	99	251	151	8	21
<b>Non-Research-Oriented Universities</b>	336	636	53	14	18

The study programs offered by two research-oriented universities which are directly under the MOE, cover multiple categories of study programs, including degree programs, preparatory undergraduate programs, language education programs and professional study programs, with strong academic strength. Local non-research-oriented universities offer a wide variety of study programs for international students, mainly degree programs, with well-defined details. Six universities in the degree program differentiate between teaching in Chinese, where international students join classes with Chinese students, and teaching in English.

In addition, the local non-research-oriented universities in Shandong reflect two new features in the overseas study programs for international students, which are

different from the research-oriented universities directly under the MOE. First of all, flexible study programs are set up according to the actual needs of international students.. Two universities have set up undergraduate programs in Chinese language specially for international students. For example, one of the university's official web sites specifically mentions the following in its admissions brochure:

Separate Teaching:

Full-time Chinese language undergraduate program for international students (It requires HSK4 (210+); CIS Available; CIS requires HSKK (Intermediate)60+)

Full-time Dual-degree in Chinese language& Business undergraduate program for international students (It requires HSK4(180+); CIS Available)

Secondly, the local non-research-oriented universities actively cooperates with local enterprises to seek further links between overseas study programs and local economic development. For instance, one university offers an internship in China for international students. Its enrollment brochures show the relevant requirements for the internship of cooperative enterprises:

Position: overseas development manager

Job description: 1) new customers development management and channels development; Differentiated markets development and market information collection, implement market planning and sales strategies in different countries; Ability to carry out differentiated product marketing and promotion; Site visit and customers relationship maintenance; Follow the other instructions from the country manager.

2) familiar with foreign trade procedures, good in English to communicate with

customers, reply to foreign trade letters and telegrams; Achieve regional business operation targets.

Job requirements: 1) Bachelor degree or above in international trade, English or science and engineering. 2) Fluent English; Love sales, pioneering spirit, hard-working, strong learning ability, business trip in the country of birth or surrounding countries, communication skills.

In the case of international study programs involving degree programs, through information gathering, the program information provided by these nine universities through its official website is different in terms of details. Only two of the universities fully provided program details, including the name of the program, duration of study, tuition fees, language of instruction, departmental contact information and tutor information. Several other universities have specific admissions information that only reflects part of the above categories (see Table 2 for detailed information).

**Table 2.** *Detailed Information about Degree Programs Provided by Seven Universities*

	<b>Program Name</b>	<b>Length of Study</b>	<b>Tuition Fee</b>	<b>Instruction Language</b>	<b>Department Information</b>	<b>Tutor Information</b>
1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓
5	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗
6	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗
7	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗

Of the three remaining schools, the English homepages do not offer any information or introductions about the study program for international students. There is only a brief introduction about the school or department on the English website. If there is a button or link related to the recruitment of international students, the page will also appear blank.

Non-degree programs for international students mainly include Chinese language courses, exchange programs and summer camp activities. Two universities mentioned that the content of the program involves the introduction and study of traditional Chinese culture, such as Peking Opera, Tai Chi, tea art, Chinese calligraphy, Chinese painting, and paper cutting.

In the link of applying for these study programs, these nine universities all have introduced the application qualifications of international students and project application procedures in detail. Three universities have set up their own online application system for international students, while for other universities, students need to download the application forms from the university's websites and then send the completed application forms via email. In terms of scholarships, six universities have introduced in detail the types and application conditions of scholarships for studying in China. According to the different providers, the scholarships that international students can apply for can be simply divided into national, provincial, municipal, and university-level scholarships. Six universities have introduced on their websites the accommodation arrangements, insurance, and other aspects of daily life for international students after they arrive in China.

**Sino-foreign cooperative education.** The 12 universities in Shandong all show on their websites that they have carried out cooperative projects involving Sino-foreign cooperative education. It can be seen that under the strong advocate and policy support of the state, the forms of Sino-foreign cooperation in running schools are diversified, and the admissible qualification is lowered correspondingly. As a result, the program is offered at 12 universities, both the first class research universities, local non-research-oriented universities, and general local colleges. From the perspective of the level categories of cooperative schools, these projects can be divided into two categories: academic education and short-term visiting programs. Ten of the 12 universities' cooperative programs can provide academic education, among which 6 offer undergraduate education (See Table 3).

**Table 3.** *Sino-foreign Cooperative Undergraduate Program*

	<b>Program Name</b>	<b>Academic Degree Level</b>	<b>Duration (Year)</b>	<b>Tuition Fee (RMB/ Academic Year)</b>	<b>Issue the Certificate</b>	<b>Cooperative Country</b>
<b>1</b>	Logistics Management	Bachelor Degree	4	*	China	Korea
	Financial Management	Bachelor Degree	4	*	China	U.S.
	Music Performance	Bachelor Degree	4	*	China	U.S.
	Mathematics and Applied Mathematics	Bachelor Degree	4	*	China	Australia
	Applied Physics	Bachelor Degree	4	*	China	Australia
	Applied Chemistry	Bachelor Degree	4	*	China	Australia



2	Bioscience	Bachelor Degree	4	*	China	Australia
	Finance	Bachelor Degree	2+2	China: 28000 Australia: *	China	Australia
	Computer Science	Bachelor Degree	2+2	China: 28000 Australia: *	China	Australia
	Mechanical Design, Manufacturing and Automation	Bachelor Degree	2+2	China: 28000 Australia: *	China	Australia
3	Mechanical Engineering	Bachelor Degree	4	*	China	U.K.
	Environmental Engineering	Bachelor Degree	4	*	China	U.K.
	Network Engineering	Bachelor Degree	4	*	China	U.K.
	Finance	Bachelor Degree	4	*	China	U.K.
4	Co- education	Bachelor Degree	2+2	China: * U.S.: *	China U.S.	U.S.
5	Electrical Engineering and Automation	Bachelor Degree	4	18000	China	Korea
	Mechanical Design, Manufacturing and Automation	Bachelor Degree	4	18000	China	Korea
	Ship and Marine Engineering	Bachelor Degree	4	18000	China	Korea

	Social Sports Guidance and Management	Bachelor Degree	4	18000	China	Italia
	Bioscience	Bachelor Degree	2+2/ 3+1	China:18000 U.S.:*	China U.S.	U.S.
<b>6</b>	Mechanical Design, Manufacturing and Automation	Bachelor Degree	4	*	China	Germany
	Bioscience	Bachelor Degree	4	*	China	Korea
	Broadcast and Television Editing	Bachelor Degree	4	*	China	Korea

There are 4 universities that offer junior college education (See Table 4 for specific information).

**Table 4. Sino-foreign Cooperative Junior College Program**

	<b>Program Name</b>	<b>Academic Degree Level</b>	<b>Duration (Year)</b>	<b>Tuition Fee (RMB/Academic Year)</b>	<b>Issue the Certificate</b>	<b>Cooperative Country</b>
<b>1</b>	Business Administration	College Degree	2.5+2	85000	China Australia	Australia
	International Business	College Degree	2.5+2	85000	China Australia	Australia
	Accounting	College Degree	2.5+2	85000	China Australia	Australia

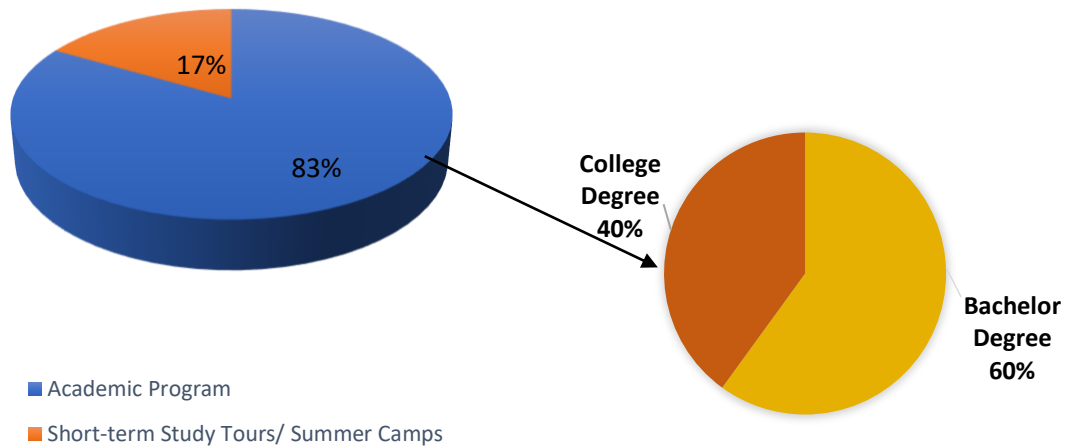
2	International Business and Trade	College Degree	3	*	China	Korea
	Art and Design	College Degree	3	*	China	U.S.
3	Marketing	College Degree	3	*	China	France
4	International Business and Trade	College Degree	2+1	China:18000 Russia:20000	China Russia	Russia

One university within this range offers two non-degree programs in addition to the undergraduate degree cooperative program (See Table 5 for specific information).

**Table 5.** *Sino-foreign Cooperative Non-academic Program*

	<b>Program Name</b>	<b>Academic Degree Level</b>	<b>Duration (Year)</b>	<b>Tuition Fee (RMB/Academic Year)</b>	<b>Issue the Certificate</b>	<b>Cooperative Country</b>
1	Engineering Science	Non-Academic Degree	2	73500	China	Canada
	Business Administration	Non-Academic Degree	2	73500	China	Canada

The remaining two universities only offer short-term study tours or summer camps, according to their official websites (See Figure 5 for specific information).



**Figure 5.** *The Distribution of 12 Universities Cooperation Programs*

The Sino-foreign cooperation in running schools of the 12 universities in Shandong Province presents the following characteristics: First, compared with research-oriented universities, local universities or colleges offer more kinds of foreign cooperation projects, more diversified forms, and very clear orientation of economic interests. In these local universities and colleges, they can provide foreign educational resources, assist students to complete their studies in China, and issue diplomas. Under this model, students still study in China, but the tuition fees are much higher than those of students with the same degree in China. Co-operative study abroad programs are also available, offering students the opportunity to study abroad voluntarily for one or two years, during which both Chinese and foreign tuition fees are charged.

Secondly, the universities or colleges located in the economically developed areas of Shandong Province show more vitality and innovation in the cooperative education. The universities located in the economically developed areas are mostly concentrated in the coastal areas of Shandong Province, and the foreign-funded enterprises are widely distributed. The cooperation between universities and local enterprises is more extensive.

The full development of cooperative resources and the scientific cultivation of cooperative relations have established a sustainable resource sharing and development platform for the internationalization of universities. For instance, a university in Shandong Province collaborated with a local South Korean foreign-funded enterprise, opening up a variety of paths to internationalization.

The university has established a long-term cooperative relationship with Hyundai Automotive Research and Development Center (China) Co., Ltd. Its technicians, as part-time professors of the university, give lectures to the students of the school. The cooperative education program is closely aligned with the strategic emerging industries established by the country and the Shandong Peninsula Blue Economic Zone, and can provide talent support for relevant enterprises. The cooperation with Ulsan University, which is affiliated to Hyundai Group, has created favorable conditions for the introduction of scientific and technological talents and research achievements in automotive and shipbuilding. With the help of the influence of Ulsan University in South Korea, it has built a bridge for the communication between China and South Korea in relevant fields.

In terms of cooperation institutions, according to the data, the international cooperation programs carried out by the 12 universities involve countries such as Australia, Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Russia, South Korea, Japan, Malaysia and Vietnam.

#### **4.2.2 “Going out” strategy**

In the “going out” strategy, the 12 universities mainly include three forms: Confucius Institutes (CIs), study abroad and teacher overseas visiting.

**Confucius Institutes.** Table 6 shows the current distribution of Confucius

Institutes around the world.

**Table 6.** *The Distribution of Confucius Institutes Around the World*

	<b>The Number of Confucius Institutes</b>	<b>The Number of Confucius Classrooms</b>	<b>The Number of Countries</b>
<b>Asia</b>	138	117	39
<b>Africa</b>	64	45	46
<b>Europe</b>	190	346	43
<b>Americas</b>	138	563	27
<b>Oceania</b>	20	101	7
<b>The total number</b>	550	1172	162

According to the data, among the 12 universities a total of eight universities have set up 23 Confucius Institutes overseas, covering nearly 20 countries in five continents (See Table 7 for specific information).

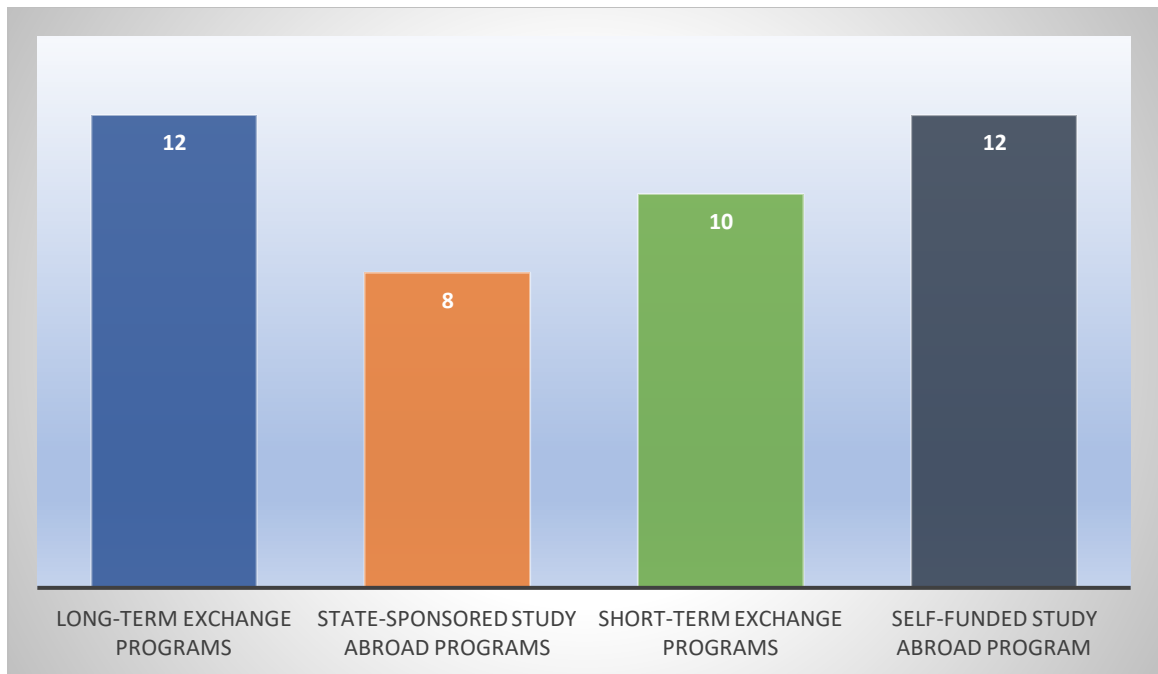
In addition, two of the four universities that did not set up Confucius Institutes in cooperation with overseas institutions recommended and encouraged current teachers to actively respond to the call of Hanban to send teachers to teach in overseas Confucius Institutes. The Office of Chinese Language Council International (known colloquially as Guojia Hanban, or in its short version, Hanban), is responsible for developing Chinese language and culture teaching resources worldwide, as well as recruiting and training volunteer Chinese teachers.

**Table 7.** *The Distribution of Confucius Institutes in Eight Universities around the World*

	Asia	Africa	Europe	Americas	Oceania	Total
1	5		2	1	1	9
2		1		1		2
3	1	1		2		4
4				1		1
5				1		1
6			1			1
7	1				2	3
8	1			1		2

**Study abroad.** At present, the overseas exchange and study programs provided by the 12 universities for students can be divided into four categories according to the classification of a university. First, long-term exchange programs, which are signed with overseas universities on behalf of the school or college for more than three months. Second, state-sponsored study abroad programs refer to overseas exchange programs independently sponsored by the China Scholarship Council. Third, self-funded study abroad program. Students can contact with overseas universities independently, and the program is recognized by universities upon application. Four, short-term exchange programs means the exchange programs of less than three months signed by the school or college with overseas universities (Shandong University, 2015).

According to the data, the proportion of programs provided by 12 universities for students in the above four types of overseas study is as shown in Figure 6.



**Figure 6.** *Distribution of Four Types of Study Abroad Programs*

**Teacher overseas study.** According to the official websites of 12 universities studied, there are two main ways for teachers to study abroad: visiting scholar programs and government-sponsored study abroad programs. According to the website, eight of the 12 universities each offer visiting scholar programs and study abroad programs for teachers.



## CHAPTER V

### INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

The themes in the findings and the literature review guided me to understand the development and influence of internationalization of higher education in the target universities. Based on the evidence presented in the previous chapters, this chapter is an interpretation of the findings and the topics discussed in the analysis of this study, with the purpose to understand and derive conclusions from the themes that emerged from the analysis of data and my initial evaluation. In this chapter, when revisiting my research questions, I outline four dimensions of the process of internationalization of the target universities: (1) the significance of the internationalization of universities; (2) the main form of the internationalization of universities; (3) the implementation path of the internationalization of universities, and (4) difficulties in integrating with the world.

#### **5.1 The Significance of the Internationalization of Universities**

The internationalization of higher education is the trend of education development in the world today. The degree and level of internationalization have become an essential dimension in measuring and evaluating higher education institutions (Altbach & Knight, 2007). Zeng and Xu (2009) assert that “looking at higher education institutions around the world today, we usually find that there has been a considerable consensus on the internationalization of higher education and the specific measures to promote it” (p. 149 ).

In terms of the significance of universities themselves, the increase of running costs and the change of enrollment sources make internationalization become an essential way for universities to generate revenue and increase enrollment sources. According to

Wang (2014), during the decades of continuous development of internationalization of higher education in China, economic factors and government regulations are the two main motivations. Since the 1990s, due to the challenges of globalization and transnational competition, the internationalization of higher education in China has moved towards marketization (Huang, 2003). With the introduction of the “Tenth Five-Year Plan” and the significant policy changes of the State Council, the higher education system in China has formed a major push to be market-oriented (Huang, 2003). But in a more substantive sense, internationalization is an important means to improve the quality and competitiveness of universities. It is of great significance to attract outstanding scholars and students from all over the world, to promote international exchanges, and to enhance the teaching, research and service capabilities of the university.

So far, however, internationalization seems to be largely reserved for research-oriented universities, especially high-level ones. Research university’s natural advantages do make it easier to go global. However, this does not mean that local non-research-oriented universities do not need to be internationalized. On the contrary, the analysis in this study found that effective internationalization is more urgent for local colleges and universities. This was not reported in the literature reviewed for the study, which primarily analyzed the internationalization of world-class research-oriented educational organizations. However, in comparison with ground realities based on this study, with the emergence of critical needs, local institutions have been involved in the internationalization of higher education in creative ways. Hence, they should receive more attention than before. Successful internationalization can help local universities increase their financial revenue, expand their enrollment resources, connect with

international advanced concepts and experiences, and innovate their talent training models. Therefore, it is of great value and function for local universities to enhance their competitiveness and improve their education quality.

Moreover, through continuous innovation in internationalization, local universities can also serve the local economic and social development more presently. With the advancement of China's economic internationalization development strategy, more and more enterprises and institutions have started internationalization. The international cooperation between local universities and enterprises will help promote the international expansion of local enterprises and provide more support for regional economic internationalization. As mentioned, a targeted university provides international human resources support for the enterprise by linking up the international student program with the off-campus cooperative enterprise and also provides the international students with the opportunity to apply the practice and the cooperative development environment.

## **5.2 The Main Form of the Internationalization of Universities**

According to the findings of the previous chapter, the internationalization of higher education is mainly manifested in the following forms: (1) student mobility: including recruiting international students and sending domestic students to study overseas for degree programs and short-term study; (2) teacher mobility: similar to student mobility, it includes two directions: inflow and outflow; (3) the establishment of overseas branches and the development of cooperation in running schools, and (4) cooperation in research and development, including international conferences and scientific research institutions and laboratories.

At present, international communication and cooperation have become one of the important tasks and functions for Chinese institutions of higher education, and the concept of internationalization of education has been initially formed. As discussed before, from 1978 to 1992, the policies of the Ministry of Education of China focused on attempting to “walk on two legs”, the two important elements are “bringing in” and “going out” strategy (Wang, 2014, p. 17). Up to China’s Thirteenth Five-Year Plan, the construction of Double-First Class university has made more detailed planning. It also focuses more on attracting international students, adapting to their needs, forming cooperative alliances with foreign institutions, promoting partnerships and serving the diverse needs of the market (MOE, China, 2016a). From the practice of universities, internationalization has become one of the core requirements for the development of universities of different types and levels, and presents the following characteristics and trends.

Firstly, in the aspect of student mobility, there is a trend towards focusing on providing professional education and degree education. Whether it is an overseas study program for local students or for international students, they have formed a pattern of combining two types of general higher education and short-time training, and two forms of academic education and non-academic education. More and more, universities are increasingly offering degrees and professional programs than the other one. Among them, the level of diploma education also covers all levels of undergraduate, master and doctoral students.

Investigate its reason, satisfy the market demand is the primary reason. Both domestic and international students pay more attention to the value of education.

Professional degree education can ensure that students' time and money are invested in more valuable education programs, and this is why universities continue to expand the breadth and depth of their degree and professional programs for both domestic and international students. Another reason is that the academic capacity of the school is constantly improving and strengthening. As Chen (1996) asserts, since the early 1980s, China has gradually built a modern university model by formulating and improving higher education policies. Through the development of Project 211, Project 985, as well as the construction of Double-first class universities currently under way, The quality and international influence of China's higher education institutions have been increasing (State Council, 2015).

Secondly, the enthusiasm and potential of cooperation in running schools gradually emerged. Cooperation in running schools is an important means for universities to improve the quality of education by utilizing foreign high-quality resources. In order to further support and regulate Sino-foreign cooperation in running schools, China issued the opinions of the Ministry of Education and other eight departments on accelerating and expanding the opening up of education in the new era in 2020 (MOE, China, 2020b). The document calls for efforts to remove institutional barriers in China and step up reform of Sino-foreign cooperation in running schools (MOE, China, 2020b).

All the universities studied have carried out international programs involving cooperation in running schools. The reasons for the rapid emergence of this form of collaboration can be summed up as follows. First of all, the policy support and encouragement of the state make cooperative education appear in various forms, which reduces the admission qualification of the schools. A series of favorable opening-up

policies in China have made it open more widely and actively to the world, opening the way for China's higher education to connect with the international community (Chen, 2002). Secondly, Sino-foreign cooperation in running schools enables universities to quickly understand, absorb and practice the experience and lessons of internationally advanced school models, professional courses, and teacher training, conducive to cultivating competitive talents at home and abroad and accelerating the development of the internationalization of schools. This is in line with Cudmore's (2005) proposal that the internationalization of a university is more reflected in "in the recruitment of the staff, students, and the curriculum" (p. 44). Third, the tuition fee of Sino-foreign cooperation projects are generally much higher than that of the same degree in the university, and higher economic benefits can be obtained. Fourth, students who choose this program can choose to complete all their studies in China can save the foreign exchange costs of studying abroad. At the same time, the university also offers the opportunity to study abroad voluntarily and can further their studies in a foreign partner institution to obtain a higher degree, which students prefer. Therefore, cooperation in running a school can be said to be a shortcut to promote the internationalization of higher education.

Finally, the mobility of teachers and international research and development cooperation have not been given enough attention. According to Li (2020), the internationalization of university teachers is one of the core contents of the internationalization construction of higher education. There are few researches on this aspect, but with the development and advancement, it is becoming an important part of universities' internationalization. The quality of teachers is the key to guarantee the quality of education. Compared with research-oriented universities, local colleges and

universities are relatively weak in teaching staff, and more attention should be paid to the cultivation of teachers' international vision. By letting teachers "going out" and by setting up international cooperative research and development laboratories and related platforms, teachers' horizons can be broadened and teachers' ability can be enhanced (Li, 2020). Therefore, it is an effective means to promote teachers' professional development. In addition, "bring in" high-level international teachers not only contributes to the structure and overall strength of the superior teacher team, but also bring international advanced knowledge and practice into the classroom, which is of more substantive significance to improve the level of students' knowledge and ability and enhance their global employability. However, neither of these forms has received enough attention from universities. There are a limited number of international exchange programs for teachers, and information on international conferences and international co-labs can only be found on the home pages of individual high-level universities.

### **5.3 The Implementation Path of the Internationalization of Universities**

In the process of internationalization of universities, each university has its own degree of development, and its demand and response to internationalization are different. The concept of internationalization has taken shape in both research-oriented universities and local non-research-oriented universities and colleges. Through actual research on target universities, the internationalization of universities can be roughly divided into the following three different implementation paths:

- 1). To meet the lower level of external communication, based on the basic needs of the internationalization. This implementation path is suitable for non-research-oriented universities with weak internal foundations and only a tiny amount of work related to

foreign affairs, such as the four colleges among the 12 target universities. For these universities, the internationalization of the school cannot fully meet the market demand, for example, there is no program to recruit international students, there is no cooperative education program, and so on. In this way, the implementation strategy of internationalization of colleges is to strengthen foreign language teaching, carry out relevant international communication and training for teachers and staffs, and cultivate the awareness of internationalization. As Zhou (2010) maintains, the internationalization of higher education will lose its essential significance if the university staff lacks the international flow of learning and research. With the deepening of internationalization, such colleges are not only faced with the improvement of talent requirements from foreign enterprises, but also face the competition from other universities.

2). To link up its own characteristics with the international and establishing cooperation mechanism. This implementation path is suitable for universities with a solid internal foundation of internationalization and has formed its own characteristic advantage in China. For this kind of university, its goal is to grasp its own characteristic advantage, which is the strategic focus, and bring its own character into line with international practice. For example, the six local universities among the 12 target universities, based on their own steady development needs, attach importance to and expand their own characteristics of the international scope. As Knight (2015) proposes, the internationalization of higher education is a mutually beneficial process. While universities have their own characteristics, on top of that, they can ensure that they effectively use internationalization to address global challenges and share benefits with partners. The university can fundamentally connect different civilizations, and this



connection is also an essential factor to support the further development of the university (Hayhoe, 1995). The way to implement the internationalization strategy of this kind of universities is as follows: the universities carry out cooperation in teaching, scientific research, or social service through various forms and relevant institutions abroad, focusing on expanding their advantages and giving full play to their characteristics, this kind of cooperation can be at home or abroad, through cooperation as soon as possible to improve their own characteristics of international competitiveness and influence. While cooperating with foreign countries, they pay close attention to the development trend of the characteristic advantages of foreign universities and convey relevant information to them.

3). To highlight the key points and improve the comprehensive internationalization implementation of the cooperation mechanism. This implementation path is suitable for universities with robust, comprehensive strengths, most of which are research-oriented universities with a solid internal internationalization foundation. Van der Wende(1997) regards internationalization as “any systematic effort aimed at making higher education responsive to the requirements and challenges related to the globalization of societies, economy and labor markets” (p. 18). This type of university happens to be more focused on actively establishing contact networks with relevant foreign institutions, forming an international and systematic development, cooperation and exchange in the field with its own characteristics. The direct establishment of overseas contacts is an essential element in the implementation of this approach.

Many high-level universities in China have set up Confucius Institutes overseas in the name of a university, or branches have been set up in foreign partner institutions.

Adopting this method is beneficial to enhance the initiative of universities' internationalization so that universities can more timely and effectively obtain the information of internationalization development and integrate the information into the university's overall international strategy. Thus, through continuous international development and communication, these high-level universities have realized the concept proposed by Maringe (2010) that the word "university" can be extended to an international space in which individuals and groups develop universal knowledge. Under this implementation approach, universities are investing more and more resources in developing the international education market. Through organization integration, resource integration, and policy integration, the internationalization process of the university is integrated into a more efficient network. By learning, absorbing, and innovating the international experience of other universities, more institutions and personnel will be involved in the internationalization of universities and form their international development path with their characteristics (Wang, 2014).

As shown above, China's higher education internationalization policies are constantly being reformed and reshaped to adapt to changing domestic and foreign economic and political circumstances.

#### **5.4 Difficulties in Integrating with the World**

In the context of internationalization, China's higher education is no longer closed to the outside world but is growing in the face of various opportunities and challenges and gradually connects with the international track. However, compared with the more developed country's higher education, China's higher education is not yet mature. There is still a long way to go. Findings in this research show the following problems: Firstly,

the centralization of power is apparent; Secondly, the internationalization strategy of some universities shows a typical pattern; Thirdly, the enthusiastic attitude and innovative behavior of some universities in the process of internationalization are still worth discussing. Fourth, many universities lack benign maintenance of the official webpages.

***Centralized management.*** In recent years, the reform of China's higher education system has been pushed forward in an all-around way (Kang, 2004). As Kang (2004) discusses, the management system has changed from centralized management to the enhancement of the autonomy of colleges and universities, but it is still necessary to further implement and perfect the autonomy of running schools and management. The problem that has emerged at present is that many colleges and universities need to strictly follow the documents of the Ministry of Education and the opinions of the competent departments at higher levels when they decide on cooperation projects, enrollment plans, and so on. The subject of education and the actual needs of the market development are in the second place. This kind of planning management system has left a hangover in the ideas and thoughts of running a university, which has restricted the university's development. For example, several target universities emphasize that they have passed various government approval procedures in their international cooperation programs, which restricts universities' flexibility, enthusiasm, and initiative in carrying out international cooperation.

Secondly, the internal management system of universities is reversed. The objects of running schools are all functional departments, and teachers' autonomy is limited. The external administration of Chinese universities belongs to the centralized and local

hierarchical decentralization mode (Zhu & Lou, 2011). Correspondingly, the internal management model of universities also follows the operating rules of national administrative organs in terms of institutional setup, school operation, and decision-making management and is constructed and operated following its system and operation mode (Zhu & Gao, 2011). Each of the 12 target universities has an “international communication and cooperation” department responsible for the university's unified docking of all foreign affairs exchanges. On the one hand, the personnel structure of many universities has not gotten rid of the idea of running a school based on the official standard and lacks the attention to the principal part of the school teachers. For instance, the official websites of some universities are full of introductions of university leaders, but the descriptions of academic leaders or leading professors in scientific research are hard to find. On the other hand, the lack of autonomy of each college is not conducive to developing the breadth and depth of international cooperation.

*Convergent development.* The most important thing about higher education is its diversity (Stromquist & Monkman, 2014). However, it seems that the internationalization strategies formulated by some institutions of higher education in this study more generally form a convergent internationalization model. For example, different types of institutions emphasize the number of international students and teachers, international conferences, cross-border education projects, overseas branch schools, and other key indicators to measure the degree and level of internationalization. These increasingly generalized and institutionalized measurements have gradually evolved into a convergent institutional structure of higher education internationalization and become a series of model actions to measure the degree of internationalization. These

measures with uniform internationalization advantages and indicators will strengthen the homogeneity trend of internationalization of higher education in the development process of the higher education system.

Internationalization is not a homogenization process but a process full of differences and even tension (Hershock, 2010). In the process of higher education internationalization, it is equally crucial for higher education institutions in different regions to maintain their local differences and characteristics. The standardization and diversification of higher education also need balanced development under the internationalization flow (Hershock, 2010). As Stromquist and Monkman (2014) warned, if all higher education institutions have to respond to the same global trends, local development models will become less responsive to the demands of local specificities.

*Off-center innovation.* As Altbach (2002) points out that internationalization is a voluntary and possible creative way for universities to respond to the violently changing social environment, reflecting an enthusiastic attitude and subject behavior of higher education institutions to integrate into the global knowledge society increasingly. In recent years, many colleges and universities have used all possible energy and resources to make internationalization an increasingly important way of operating strategy. In concrete practice, some institutions have taken the initiative and innovative behavior to adapt to internationalization. Some have enriched the breadth and depth of higher education internationalization in multiple ways, and some have caused disputes, reflecting the complexity of higher education internationalization. For example, in 2016, a university in Shandong Province introduced a “buddy” program for international students to have Chinese student “buddies” to study language or participate in activities

together. In 2018, the university assigned each international student three buddies, and it happened that some international male students had Chinese female students as their buddies, which caused a lot of controversial discussions in the media (Inkstonenews.com, 2019; The PIE News, 2019). Soon after, China's Ministry of Education announced that it would further promote the management and service integration of international students and Chinese students and carry out the whole management process for international students (MOE, China, 2019b).

In the process of exploring internationalization, it is a positive action for universities to innovate as the subject of implementation. However, the focus of attracting foreign scholars and students should be concentrated on the academic level of a university, which can obtain the affirmative appraisal in internationalization, demonstrating that this university's education, research function, and system are scientific and advanced. Moreover, in the process of internationalization, universities should ensure that they can enhance communication among scholars, international students, and local students of different nationalities. Internationalization is not a specialization, treating foreign individuals and organizations with different cultural backgrounds as equally as native nationals so that foreign teachers could enjoy the same qualifications and treatment as local teachers in universities, international students are treated equally regardless of nationality and origin, but without excessive policy favoritism or unnecessary assistance.

***Imperfect website.*** It is noticeable that the official websites of many target universities are not well operated and maintained, making the content provided by these platforms outdated or burdensome to analyze and apply. The first is the poor design and

operation of the website, with fewer data integration, visualization, analytics, and other applications. For example, most of the target universities' recruitment campaigns for international students only provide information about the program in a written and tabular format. As mentioned in the previous discussion, the information provided is sometimes incomplete. There are no relevant recruitment promotional videos, virtual visual activities, such as virtual campus tours or virtual open days, etc. Secondly, the official website lacks online promotion links to various social networking platforms. In addition, there is a lack of official application development. For instance, only three universities have developed and designed educational administration systems for international students for the registration, management, and other daily teaching activities among the target universities.

The second is that the official websites of many target universities are not well maintained and managed. First of all, the content is not updated in time. For example, the enrollment brochure for the Sino-foreign cooperative program provided by a target university on its official website is still the 2019 enrollment brochure. Second is the lack of routine maintenance and management. Take the English version of the official website of universities as an example. Some hyperlinks on the home pages of universities cannot be opened correctly. Some pages have no content, and some links on the English home page, which should open another English page, will take the viewer to the Chinese page. These webpages can only provide limited helpful information to the outside world.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

Currently, internationalization has transformed higher education systems and institutions around the world. China's higher education system has been accelerating its efforts to internationalize. In conducting this research, I intend to investigate how higher education institutions in Shandong Province proceed with their internationalization process. I searched and sorted out the official English and Chinese websites of 12 target universities and relevant literature and documents. In this chapter, I summarize the findings of the previous chapter and draw conclusions based on what is discussed before.

#### **6.1 Summary of Findings**

With regard to the first research question: How do universities implement their internationalization? Based on the analysis of the major policy documents concerning the internationalization of higher education in China since 1978 and the investigation of target universities, this study finds that the organizational arrangements for the internationalization of higher education in China are diversified and improving gradually. The economic development of a country is closely linked to the internationalization of higher education institutions. With a strong foundation and national economic and policy support, first-class research-oriented universities are in the leading position in the process of internationalization and its breadth and depth. In contrast, local non-research-oriented universities are more flexible and innovative in the specific organization and arrangement of internationalization. At present, the internationalization of higher education in China mainly takes student mobility, teacher mobility, the establishment of overseas branches,



the cooperation in running schools, and the research and development cooperation, such as international conferences and scientific research institutions and laboratories.

The second research question attempted to examine what could be done to strengthen internationalization in higher education in China? The findings based on the case study indicate that compared with China's national policy, internationalization at the university level has a more structured path planning and implementation process. Political and economic forces, as well as the foundations of the university itself, have driven its internationalization. More specifically, universities located in different economic development regions and their need for financial resources are the main drivers behind internationalization initiatives. The internationalization of universities can be roughly divided into three different implementation paths. As participants, their understanding of internationalization contributes to the formation of the implementation path in the process of internationalization. Even the lowest level of implementation path also believes that the internationalization of Chinese universities is a necessary condition. In addition, through the analysis of the official websites of target universities, the results also show that there are many difficulties and conflicts between academic and cultural integration in the internationalization of universities. These conflicts and difficulties are reflected in centralized management, convergent development, off-centre innovation, and imperfect website construction.

## **6.2 Limitations**

The limitations of this study first lie in that due to the limitation of time and resources, I cannot carry out a long-term survey, and I cannot collect more variable information through the school websites to observe the update of data and the

maintenance of the website. Another limitation is the limited nature of targeted universities. The practice and experience of universities in one province cannot adequately reflect the current situation of all Chinese universities participating in international practice. Therefore, the conclusion of this study is only an exploration of the internationalization of higher education in Chinese universities. In addition, there are some limitations in the process of selecting a target university. For example, as mentioned earlier, in order to understand the development of university internationalization under relevant institutional mechanisms, private universities in China were excluded from the scope of this study.

### **6.3 Recommendations for Future Research**

After more than 40 years of reform and opening-up, China has provided an unprecedented macro perspective and a vast horizon for higher education to implement the active international participation strategy and push forward higher education's opening-up more confidently. Based on universities' practices and experiences, internationalization at a Chinese higher education institution does not come easily. As Knight (2004) points out, working in the field of internationalization requires an additional set of knowledge, attitudes, skills, and understandings about the international/intercultural/global dimension of higher education.

As a research area of higher education, internationalization has been paid more and more attention. In order to enrich the internationalization of higher education research, based on my research, I suggest the future study could focus on the following aspects: (1) to examine the internationalization practice of universities and institutions more widely, especially for local non-research-oriented universities; (2) to examine more

broadly the international differences in academic and cultural communication among institutions of higher education, (3) to evaluate the quality of internationalization initiatives of universities as participants, and (4) to evaluate the response that countries apply to the changing internationalization of higher education after the pandemic.

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## VITA AUCTORIS

NAME: Ying Zhu

PLACE OF BIRTH: Shandong, China

YEAR OF BIRTH: 1985

EDUCATION: Shandong University, MTC SOL, Shandong, China, 2013  
University of Windsor, M. Ed., Windsor, ON, 2021

ProQuest Number: 28547883

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