



---

## **The Internationalization of Higher Education in China: A Case Study of A University**

Meng Lin WANG<sup>a\*</sup>, Tong Wooi CHOW (Jerry)<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a,b</sup>*Malaysia University of Science and Technology (MUST), Block B, Encorp Strand Garden Office, No. 12,  
Jalan PJU 5/5, Kota Damansara, 47810 Petaling Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia*

<sup>a</sup>*Northwest University of Political Science and Law (NWUPL)*

<sup>a</sup>*Email: wang.menglin@phd.must.edu.my*

<sup>b</sup>*Email: jerrychow@must.edu.my*

### **Abstract**

This study focuses on analyzing the internationalization of higher education in a specific university in China during the 13th Five Year Plan Period (2016-2020). The purpose of the research is to collect, classify, and sort literature related to the topic and discuss the development context and implementation status of higher education internationalization. The study uses document analysis and case interviews to conduct a case study of the university. In the document analysis, university affairs materials, subordinate school data statistics, and other relevant documents are examined to understand the current practice of education internationalization of the university. The study then proposes a development path for the university's internationalization, which includes talent training, faculty members, scientific research, and people-to-people exchange. Overall, the study provides insights into the internationalization of higher education in a specific university in China and presents a potential pathway for the university to enhance its global engagement.

**Keywords:** talent training; faculty members; scientific research; people-to-people exchange; global engagement.

---

*Received: 3/30/2023*

*Accepted: 4/29/2023*

*Published: 5/22/2023*

---

\* Corresponding author.

## **1. Introduction**

Higher education internationalization refers to the process of integrating international, intercultural, or global dimensions into the purpose, functions, or delivery of post-secondary education [1]. It is a necessary means for universities to cope with the challenges brought by the globalization of the world economy and improve the quality of education and enhance their own competitiveness [1]. It is regarded as an important manifestation of the essential characteristics of universities to create knowledge and cultivate talents [2].

Internationalization of higher education has grown in importance due to changes in world politics and scientific policy, making it increasingly competitive for universities to participate [3]. Countries have also listed the internationalization of higher education institutions as an important national education policy [1].

Knight describes four modes of internationalization of higher education: (a) Import of Ideas; (b) Outsourcing; (c) Insourcing; and (d) Foreign Direct Investments. It is concluded that the most significant mode of internationalization in higher education is constituted by the Import of Ideas [4].

Internationalization is generally regarded as a process that involves increasing the range of international activities within universities and between universities and other educational institutions [3]. This process leads to transformational institutional change [3]. Universities and governments often initiate the internationalization process voluntarily [1].

Overall, internationalization of higher education is a complex process with many themes and rich content, making it an important aspect of modern universities.

## **2. Significance of Higher Education Internationalization**

Higher education has been constructed as an important way of national competition [5,6] Larkin (2015) and Stein (2018) have explored the importance of higher education as a means of national competition, while [7] Fisher and his colleagues (2014) highlight the role of growing tuition costs and declining public funding [8,9]. Knight (2011) has also examined the benefits and significance of internationalization research, which includes strengthening human resources, intensifying strategic alliances with neighboring countries, increasing commerce and trade, establishing national cultural identity, and promoting cultural understanding among nation states [10]. Gacel-Avila (2005) also provides insight into the importance of higher education in developing countries.

## **3. Related Methodology**

In order to achieve the purpose of the study, this research is conducted by the case study method, which means that in the field of higher education, the practical problems are discussed from the perspective of the case as a whole, and the practice of educational problems is discussed through the findings and results of the research (Lin, 2000). This case study takes a public university as the research scope, and explores various aspects of the internationalization of higher education of the case university by means of literature analysis, data investigation

and document analysis.

The three stages mentioned are part of the research process for conducting a study on the internationalization of education in a university. Here's a brief explanation of each stage:

Stage 1: Literature review - In this stage, the researcher collects and reads relevant literature, which includes academic articles, books, and other sources related to the topic of internationalization of education. The objective is to gain a thorough understanding of the theoretical basis for internationalization and to establish the research object and plan.

Stage 2: Document analysis - In this stage, the researcher collects and analyzes documents related to the case university's regulations and implementation plan for internationalization, annual survey reports, statistical data, and other relevant information. The researcher uses the document analysis method to explore the internationalization situation in the case university.

Stage 3: Case interview - In this stage, the researcher conducts case interviews with teachers, administrators, and students from the case university to understand the situation of internationalization implementation and the coping strategies employed by the university. The goal is to provide suggestions and strategies for the future internationalization development of the university.

Overall, these three stages are essential for conducting a rigorous and comprehensive study on the internationalization of education in a university. They help the researcher to gain a deep understanding of the research topic, to identify research gaps, and to provide recommendations for future research and policy-making.

#### **4. Internationalization Achievements During the 13th Five Year Plan Period of A University**

##### ***4.1. Actively Integrate into the New Landscape of the Belt and Road Initiative***

The Belt and Road Initiative is a massive international development project. The A university has taken steps to support this initiative, including establishing cooperative partnerships with universities and research institutions in 10 countries along the Belt and Road, hosting international conferences themed on the Belt and Road, carrying out talent training for Belt and Road countries, and establishing internship and training bases for students from these countries. These efforts have resulted in more than hundreds of experts and scholars from countries along the Belt and Road visiting the university, and dozens of faculty members from the university going to countries along the Belt and Road for exchange and study [11].

##### ***4.2. Breakthroughs in the Internationalization of Talent Training***

This section discusses about the cooperative partnerships established by A university with more than 50 universities and research institutions outside China. The partnerships involve more than 60 sino-foreign joint training programs, including undergraduate double-degree programs, bachelor's and master's double-degree

programs, and master's double-degree programs. Additionally, the university has sent hundreds of students abroad for exchange and study. The education for international students covers the three levels of bachelor's degree, master's degree, and doctoral degree and the university has improved the education management and service system for foreign students, and completed the construction of English-taught courses.

According to the research, industry and academia stand to benefit from long-term cooperation, and companies will gain greater access to cutting-edge research and scientific talent at a time when corporate R&D budgets are being squeezed [12]. Additionally, collaborations come in all shapes and sizes, and societal impact was identified by academic research leaders as one of the benefits of collaboration with industry [13]. In higher education, this organizational form was originally designed to foster interinstitutional cooperation among a group of colleges and universities for the purpose of enhancing services within a geographic region [14].

Moreover, the role of higher education institutions is to catalyze change on issues affecting communities and society as a whole. Specifically, the focus was to develop and strengthen an understanding of how higher education might work more effectively [15]. Furthermore, cooperative learning skills are crucial for students, especially as globalization and technological and communication advances continue to increase the quantity of accessible information and the need for collaboration [16].

The university's success in building cooperative partnerships may have been due to its commitment to partnerships, curriculum, communication, resources, and support. These are the five determinants of successful partnerships, as identified in a model of educational partnership [17].

#### ***4.3. Distinctive Scientific Research Internationalization***

The A University has been actively participating in academic and research activities, including hosting the International Forum, academic lectures, and bilateral/multilateral meetings, cooperative research with partnership universities. However, it is important to note that universities often engage in international collaborations to enhance their academic and research capabilities, and these collaborations can have various benefits such as knowledge sharing, networking, and funding opportunities [18]. Universities also play an important role in promoting cross-cultural dialogue and understanding through these collaborations. It is also important to note that international collaborations should be conducted ethically and with transparency, taking into account potential risks and benefits for all parties involved [19]. Therefore, it is important for universities to have clear guidelines and policies in place for international collaborations.

#### ***4.4. Actively promote high-quality people-to-people exchanges***

University has engaged in cross-cultural exchange activities with foreign practical institutions, and has held cultural and art activities for Chinese and international students as well as exchange meetings for young students.

By cooperating and exchanging with foreign practical institutions and promoting cross-cultural exchange activities, the university is unifying the direction of the organization towards a common goal of promoting

cultural and people-to-people exchanges.

Additionally, the university's efforts can be seen as a form of organizational learning, as they are engaging in activities that promote the development of intercultural competence and the sharing of knowledge and experiences [21]. This type of learning can benefit the organization by improving its ability to work across cultures and to adapt to changing environments.

#### ***4.5. Actively promote high-quality people-to-people exchanges***

The A university has been carrying out cooperation and exchanges with foreign practical institutions. This has been achieved through large-scale cross-cultural exchange activities, such as cultural and art activities for Chinese and international students, as well as exchange meetings for young students. These activities have been aimed at vigorously promoting cultural and people-to-people exchanges. Universities around the world have been actively participating in various cross-cultural exchange activities to promote cultural understanding and people-to-people exchanges. For instance, some universities have established partnerships with foreign institutions to facilitate student exchanges, joint research, and faculty collaborations. These partnerships provide opportunities for students and faculty to experience different cultures, gain new perspectives, and build international networks.

Furthermore, universities often organize cultural and art activities, such as music festivals, art exhibitions, and film screenings, to showcase the diversity of cultures represented on their campuses. These events provide a platform for students, faculty, and members of the community to come together and learn from each other's cultures, actively engaging in cross-cultural exchange activities to promote cultural understanding and people-to-people exchanges.

### **5. Problems and Challenges of Higher Education Internationalization in A University**

The 13th Five-Year Plan is a comprehensive plan for China's national economic and social development from 2016-2020. During this period, the A university has achieved rapid development in the field of international education, but it also faces some problems and challenges. The concept of running an international university needs to be strengthened, and the mechanism needs to be improved. Departments have to really establish the concept of internationalization to promote connotative development. The international exchange and cooperation working mechanism has not been effectively played. The internationalization construction operation mode based on disciplines and supported by projects has not been established [20].

Moreover, the 13th Five-Year Plan emphasizes innovation-driven emerging industries as the main driving force for global economic recovery and growth, triggering an international division of labor and restructuring of international trade, which includes higher education institutions' internationalization [21]. It outlines measures for economic and social development, including improving the quality of education, promoting international cooperation and exchanges, and enhancing cultural soft power [21].

## **6. Higher Education Internationalization Strategies of A University**

This section discusses about a plan for promoting internationalization in education, with a focus on establishing international education as a concept and improving the level of education through strategic planning. The text emphasizes the need for systematic planning for internationalization development and warns that enthusiasm alone is not enough [22].

The plan also includes the promotion of international services throughout the entire process of discipline construction, talent cultivation, scientific research, and team building. The construction and operation model would be led by the school, with disciplines as the backbone and students and teachers as the core [22].

In order to improve the management system and mechanism for Sino-foreign joint training of students, the text suggests strengthening the construction of relevant systems for students' overseas exchange study. This includes improving specific work such as curriculum connection, credit transfer, and student management, standardizing and promoting the management of students' overseas study, and encouraging students to go abroad for exchange study. The plan also calls for the integration of international resources and the creation of an "International Exchange Month" brand activity [22]. To further promote internationalization, the plan suggests expanding the channels for students to go abroad for exchange and further study. This can be done through various forms such as "Sino-foreign cooperation in running schools," "joint training," and "short-term exchange visits." The plan also suggests coordinating inter-university exchange programs and continuously improving the service system for students to study abroad [23].

In summary, the plan for promoting internationalization in education outlined in the text involves systematic planning for internationalization development and strategic height, promoting international services throughout the entire process of discipline construction, talent cultivation, scientific research, and team building. It also includes improving the management system and mechanism for Sino-foreign joint training of students, expanding channels for students to go abroad for exchange and further study, and coordinating inter-university exchange programs. Finally, the plan calls for the integration of international resources and the creation of an "International Exchange Month" brand activity [24].

## **7. Conclusion**

As a conclusion, the A university plans to focus on various aspects to strengthen its international education program. The study concludes that the university should strengthen its global vision and improve its competitiveness in the international education market by implementing internationalization strategies. To achieve these goals, the university will focus on the following aspects:

1. Strengthening the concept of international education: This involves raising awareness about international education among the faculty, students, and staff of the university.
2. Improving the working mechanism of international exchanges: This involves streamlining the process of international student exchange and cooperation with international institutions to make it more efficient and effective.

3. Improving talent training levels: This involves improving the quality of education offered to students by providing them with better resources and training opportunities.
4. Maintaining a stable scale and reasonable structure of overseas students: This involves ensuring that the number of international students admitted is reasonable and that they are distributed across the various faculties of the university in a balanced manner.
5. Improving mechanisms for studying abroad and increasing the number of overseas study programs: This involves creating more opportunities for students to study abroad by establishing partnerships with international institutions and offering a wider range of overseas study programs.
6. Strengthening the construction of international courses and promoting the construction of English-taught courses: This involves designing and delivering courses that are more relevant to the needs of international students and that are taught in English.
7. Fully implementing long-term training programs and short-term exchange programs for teachers abroad: This involves providing opportunities for faculty members to engage in international exchange programs to improve their teaching skills and broaden their perspectives.
8. Enhancing the ability to serve the Belt and Road Initiative.
9. Cooperating with international organizations: This involves establishing partnerships with international organizations to facilitate international cooperation and exchange.
10. Expanding the areas of people-to-people exchanges and cooperation between China and other countries: This involves creating more opportunities for people-to-people exchanges between China and other countries by promoting cultural exchange programs.
11. Establishing a stable mechanism for people-to-people and cultural exchanges between China and other countries: This involves establishing a long-term mechanism for people-to-people and cultural exchanges between China and other countries to ensure sustainable cooperation and exchange.

By focusing on these aspects, the A university aims to respond to globalization and strengthen its global vision, improve its competitiveness in the international education, enhance its ability to serve the Belt and Road Initiative, and expand people-to-people exchanges between China and other countries.

## **References**

- [1] Ismail Hussein Amzat, Abdul Hakeem Alade Najimdeen, Lynne M. Walters, Byabazaire Yusuf, Nena Padilla-Valdez. (2023) Determining Service Quality Indicators to Recruit and Retain International Students in Malaysia Higher Education Institutions: Global Issues and Local Challenges. *Sustainability* 15:8, pages 6643.
- [2] Vavrus, F., & Pekol, A. (2015). Critical Internationalization: Moving from Theory to Practice. *FIRE: Forum for International Research in Education*, 2(2). Retrieved from <http://preserve.lehigh.edu/fire/vol2/iss2/2>
- [3] Ghaderi, C. (2021). Internationalization in Higher Education—The Universities’ Definitions, Motivations, Concepts, and Perspectives. In: Ghaderi, C., Sonnenberg, K., Saleh Karim, L., Namiq

- Sabir, N., Abbas Qader, Z., Dünnebacke, L.M. (eds) *Social Work at the Level of International Comparison*. Springer VS, Wiesbaden. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-30394-5\\_28](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-30394-5_28)
- [4] Engwall, L. (2016). The Internationalisation of Higher Education. *European Review*, 24(2), 221-231. doi:10.1017/S1062798715000575
- [5] Larkin, J. H. (2015). *The idea of higher education: Higher education in global perspective*. Johns Hopkins University Press.
- [6] Stein, S. J. (2018). *Higher education and the creation of the American citizen*. Johns Hopkins University Press.
- [7] Fisher, D., Rubenson, K., Shanahan, T., & Trottier, C. (2014). Growing tuition costs and declining public funding in Canada: Impacts on affordability and accessibility. *Canadian Journal of Higher Education*, 44(1), 1-23.
- [8] Johnstone, D. B., & Lee, E. S. (2014). The political economy of global higher education: The new dynamics of imperialism and domination in the 21st century. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 12(1), 1-13.
- [9] Knight, J. (2011). Education hubs: A fad, a brand, an innovation? *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 15(3), 221-240.
- [10] Gacel-Avila, J. (2005). Higher education and the challenge of development: The case of developing countries. *Higher Education in Europe*, 30(1), 35-50.
- [11] Kim, T., & Locke, W. (2010). Transnational academic mobility and the academic profession.
- [12] Lutchen, K. R. (2018). Why companies and universities should forge long-term collaborations. *Harvard Business Review*. <https://hbr.org/2018/01/why-companies-and-universities-should-forge-long-term-collaborations>
- [13] EY. (2017). Strategies for collaborating in a new era for higher education. Retrieved from [https://www.ey.com/en\\_gl/strategy/strategies-for-collaborating-in-a-new-era-for-higher-education](https://www.ey.com/en_gl/strategy/strategies-for-collaborating-in-a-new-era-for-higher-education)
- [14] Ho, H. F., Lin, M. H., & Yang, C. C. (2015). Goals, strategies, and achievements in the internationalization of higher education in Japan and Taiwan. *International Education Studies*, 8(3), 55.
- [15] Pasque, P.A., Mallory, B.L., Smerek, R.E., Dwyer, B., & Bowman, N. (2005). *Higher Education Collaboratives for Community Engagement and Improvement*.
- [16] W. Johnson, D., & T. Johnson, R. (2019). *Cooperative Learning: The Foundation for Active Learning*. IntechOpen. doi: 10.5772/intechopen.81086



- [17] De Luce, D. (2021, December). U.S. universities retain ties to Chinese universities that support Beijing's military buildup, new report says. AOL. <https://www.aol.com/news/u-universities-keep-ties-chinese-170014259.html>
- [18] Huang, Y. (2019). International collaboration in research and development: An empirical analysis. *Journal of Business Research*, 99, 404-413.
- [19] Raza, S. A., & Osterrieder, K. (2020). International scientific collaboration during the COVID-19 pandemic: benefits and potential challenges. *The Lancet Global Health*, 8(11), e1399-e1400.
- [20] China Daily. (2020, December 16). Here are China's achievements in economic aggregate, resident income, urbanization, poverty elimination, transportation, research and development, jobs, education, elderly care, medical care and health, and environmental protection during the 13th Five-Year Plan period (2016-2020) [Infographic]. Retrieved April 30, 2023, from [http://english.scio.gov.cn/infographics/2020-12/16/content\\_77018409.htm](http://english.scio.gov.cn/infographics/2020-12/16/content_77018409.htm)
- [21] Original CSET Translation of "National 13th Five-Year Plan for the Development of Strategic Emerging Industries," Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China, November 29, 2016, <https://cset.georgetown.edu/research/national-13th-five-year-plan-for-the-development-of-strategic-emerging-industries/>.
- [22] Du, J., Zhu, S. & Li, W.H. Innovation through internationalization: A systematic review and research agenda. *Asia Pac J Manag* (2022). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10490-022-09814-z>
- [23] Ho, H. F., Lin, M. H., & Yang, C. C. (2015). Goals, strategies, and achievements in the internationalization of higher education in Japan and Taiwan. *International Education Studies*, 8(3), 55.
- [24] Sala-i-Martin, X., Bilbao-Osorio, B., Blanke, J., Hanouz, M. D., Geiger, T., & Ko, C. (2013). The global competitiveness index 2013–2014: sustaining growth, building resilience. *The Global Competitiveness Report*, 3-52.