



RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Study of the Specific Features of the Internationalization of Higher Education in China

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ABSTRACT

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The higher education system in the modern world is subject to various developmental trends, such as globalization, fundamentalization, humanization, technologization, and computerization. Among these, the process of internationalization holds a significant position. The relevance of studying the internationalization process is driven by a dual necessity: to establish theoretical foundations for harmonizing the desire to align with global educational trends on the one hand, and to preserve the unique features of one's national higher education system on the other. The study employed theoretical methods, including analysis of scientific literature (in original languages), and the comparative method, which aids in identifying specific and general patterns in the internationalization process, as well as similarities, differences, and development trends in this process in China and our country. The study concludes that a key feature of the internationalization process in the higher education systems of China and Russia is the recognition of cultural pluralism, an intensive dialogue of cultures, the development of multicultural competence, and the promotion of tolerance toward other countries and peoples. This is driven by the need to expand access to sources of advanced knowledge, establish new partnerships worldwide, and develop intercultural communication skills, as well as the aspiration to foster civil society. Another significant outcome of the research is the postulate that the internationalization of higher education is a systemic project involving government bodies, universities, and public institutions. The Chinese model of internationalization has its distinctive characteristics: state leadership and control over the internationalization process, integration of Western values with the traditional values of Eastern countries, and the creation of a modern higher education system that combines the best of Eastern and Western cultures. The results of this study can be applied in teaching pedagogical courses in universities and elective courses, such as "Education in the Asia-Pacific Region," among others.

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INTRODUCTION

The internationalization of higher education is one of the critical aspects of educational modernization and is expected to improve the quality of education across all levels of educational institutions. Russian researchers note that internationalization is an objective process of stable interaction and mutual influence among national higher education systems, based on shared goals and principles that meet the needs of the global community and reflect the progressive trends of the new century [1]. According to the renowned Canadian scholar Jane Knight, internationalization at the national, sectoral, and institutional levels is defined as the process of integrating international, intercultural, and global dimensions into the objectives, functions, and missions of higher education

[2].

Aligning education with contemporary requirements that correspond to the country's primary economic development directions, while preserving and enhancing the best traditions of national education, are challenges addressed through the internationalization process. This article examines how these objectives are implemented in China and Russia. It is important to note that both countries strive to maintain a balance between the harmonious development of material and spiritual culture during modernization. A person without a spiritual foundation is unstable, and a state without a spiritual foundation cannot be strong. Properly defining the relationship between material and spiritual culture from the perspective of dialecticality, comprehensiveness, and balance becomes an effective method for states to address new challenges in the internationalization process.

The modern world and socio-political conditions are undergoing unprecedented changes. Risks and challenges emerge successively, often raising the question: what will happen to our civilization, and how will the future of humanity unfold? China and Russia strive to build a world not based on the principle of a single hegemon but advocate for countries with different social systems, ideologies, histories, cultures, and development levels to enjoy equal rights and share responsibilities in international affairs. Establishing a new type of international relations founded on mutual respect, equality, fairness, cooperation, and shared benefits creates substantial prerequisites for the development of domestic higher education in the global context, sparking interest among researchers from diverse countries.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Numerous studies indicate that the processes of globalization and internationalization are developing rapidly in the modern world and have become subjects of research for educational scholars. These circumstances necessitate the examination of the internationalization of higher education in the contemporary world, taking into account new political and socio-economic realities.

Both Russian and international scholars have extensively explored the theoretical foundations of this issue. For example, the theoretical justification of the concepts of internationalization and international cooperation in the education system is addressed in the works of N.E. Borevskaya [12], Yang Rui [9], Han Guanshuang [4], and Jane Knight [2, 8]. A comparative analysis of the Russian and Chinese higher education systems is presented in the works of V.P. Borisenkov [15], Li Mei [10], while the tools of internationalization in higher education are substantiated in the studies of A.V. Melikyan and B.V. Zhelezov [6]. The internationalization of higher education and international activities of universities in Russia's Far East are explored by L.N. Garusova [1].

The analysis of scientific literature reveals that there is a sufficient body of research devoted to the issue of internationalization, but the high dynamics of ongoing changes in the education system in China and abroad require the improvement of existing scientific knowledge. The specific features of the internationalization process in modern China, as well as the cooperation between Russian and Chinese regional universities, the mechanisms for entering the international educational space, and ways of preserving China's national identity, account for the scientific novelty of the issue under investigation.

METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH METHODS

The study employs theoretical methods, including the analysis of scientific literature, including works in original languages.

The primary method used in this research is the comparative method. It helps to identify both specific and general patterns in the internationalization process, as well as similarities, differences, and trends in the development of this process in China and Russia.

RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

The rapidly changing economic situation within each country and in the world as a whole presents a challenge for scholars and education leaders today: to identify untapped potential and new incentives for the internationalization of higher education, and to determine the advantages and limitations of each national system's participation in integration processes. In this context, it is essential for the Russian side to first clarify the latest trends in the internationalization of higher education in the

People's Republic of China [12].

The main actors in the internationalization of higher education are the state (at the macro level of the global economic system) and universities (at the micro level). These two actors initiate internationalization within the higher education system. Specifically, the state's actions are aimed at forming and implementing concepts and strategies for the internationalization of the national higher education system, while universities focus on developing and implementing concepts, strategies, and programs for the internationalization of their own activities [11].

In 2019, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council of China adopted the document "Modernization of Education in China 2035," which sets the task of "developing high-quality education with Chinese characteristics at the forefront globally, creating a new model of opening education to the outside world, and strengthening the cultivation of world-class talents and innovative potential" [3]. Indeed, in the context of deepening globalization, higher education in both of our countries must actively respond to the intensifying competition in the global higher education system. At the same time, it is crucial to enhance the internationalization potential of the country's higher education system to ensure its competitiveness.

Inter-university cooperation is the key foundation for advancing the substantive development of the internationalization of higher education in China and Russia and for its integration into the global higher education system. As is well known, during the process of internationalization, China has focused on sending its students abroad, so that upon returning home, they can disseminate the experiences of foreign countries in their own universities.

However, one of the core ideas that must be recognized in the process of internationalization is the difference between Eastern and Western cultures. In this regard, internationalization provides an opportunity not only to focus on the values and meanings of other countries but also to view oneself from an external perspective and clearly define one's own priorities.

Therefore, two vectors of internationalization can be distinguished in China's education system – Eastern and Western.

In the Western vector, the idea of internationalization in higher education is largely associated with Jane Knight, who examines internationalization from the standpoint of integrating international educational programs through the curriculum, research departments, and service technologies of higher educational institutions [8].

According to Yang Rui, until recently, China was more oriented towards America and Western countries in matters of educational internationalization than towards Southeast Asia and the CIS countries. After studying the internationalization processes at universities in the Guangxi and Yunnan provinces, Yang Rui concluded that the modern academic environment in Chinese universities is heavily influenced by foreign discourses, while insufficient attention is paid to educational concepts at the national, local, institutional, and individual levels [9].

Chinese scholars emphasize that the Western approach to internationalization lacks a systemic view of the issue and is more focused on the global education system that reflects Western values, which generates inequality, injustice in politics, and bias in culture [9]. Researchers note that contemporary Chinese universities have become a reflection of Western ideas, with their theoretical foundations entirely based on Western experiences. This leads to a situation where, despite significant achievements in China's higher education system in many areas, there is a weakening of the connection with national cultural traditions. Therefore, further reliance on the theories and methods of developed Western countries could lead to more serious problems, including issues with national identity. Scholars argue that it is necessary to strive for change rather than simply imitate others, while remaining faithful to national values. As a result, one of the main tasks of internationalization is the integration of Western values with the traditional values of Eastern countries. However, the process of harmonizing Western and traditional national cultural values has yet to achieve real success. Japan, Singapore, and other countries are often cited as successful examples, but in reality, the situation is not as simple as it may seem. The examples of these countries vividly illustrate how important internationalization is on one hand, and how complex it is on the other [9].

As early as 1917, Wang Guowei noted: "There is no new or old science, no Eastern or Western science,

no useful or useless science," but his following words were: "Those who adhere to this view are not scholars, they are simply learners, but do not truly understand knowledge." He stated: "In today's world, to speak of modern science, there is no situation in which Western science cannot thrive, but Chinese science can, nor is there a situation where Chinese science cannot thrive, but Western science can" [9]. Wang Guowei's statements remain relevant today: in a society where there is fierce conflict between traditional Chinese teachings and Westernized ideas, it is essential not to divide into new and old, East and West, but only into truth and falsehood, since true knowledge knows no boundaries.

Following Wang Guowei, Fu Xinyan noted, "If you study Chinese literature but do not know foreign literature, or if you write the history of Chinese literature but have never read a foreign literary work, you will never understand the truth."

It is worth noting that in Anglo-American countries themselves, internationalization processes are often not synchronized. For example, the works of Stephen Ball are widely cited in the educational policy research of Commonwealth countries, but American scholars rarely mention his name. Of course, it is important to study developed societies and understand them deeply, but it is impossible to use them as a standard.

Currently, the Eastern vector clearly prevails, and the focus on cooperation with Asian universities has become a trend in internationalization in this direction.

Since 2008, China's educational policy towards Russia has significantly changed, with the government taking control of the main lines of educational cooperation, primarily to gain significantly more influence over Russia as a whole through the Russian educational environment. Internationalization of education between Russia and China has been most actively pursued since 2010, when a network of Confucius Institutes began to be established in Russia. Today, Russia ranks first in Europe and among the leading countries globally in the number of Confucius Institutes [7]. At Buryat State University, the Confucius Institute has also been established and is actively working to promote Chinese "soft power" through education.

For example, at Buryat State University, students from China are studying at the Institute of Pedagogy and Psychology. This year, university faculty and higher education school teachers representing various provinces and universities of China completed their master's degrees. Chinese students are also enrolled in postgraduate studies, with three of them, including one of the authors of this article, representing the university of Qiqihar.

Additionally, Buryat State University has signed an agreement with the Pedagogical University of Yancheng, located in southern China. We are currently seeking to define the advantages of developing each university, conducting overall and long-term planning for key areas of inter-university cooperation. Strong long-term relationships have also been established with universities in Changchun, Dalian, Xi'an, and several other provinces of China.

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Alongside positive changes, there are a number of issues that act as limiting factors in the process of internationalization.

Firstly, cooperation between universities does not yet have an institutional foundation. Among the faculty members, there is insufficient motivation and a lack of a clear understanding of the necessity to develop cooperation ideas that are not directly related to the study of foreign languages. There are also difficulties beyond the control of the universities, such as issues with migration registration, visa acquisition, etc. [6].

Secondly, significant differences in the structure of curricula, teaching methods, and assessment techniques, as well as the inefficiency of mechanisms for mutual recognition of courses and credit transfer, negatively affect the implementation of inter-university cooperation. As a rule, the euphoria following the signing of agreements and the mutual desire for collaboration immediately encounters these problems, and the path to mutual recognition of diplomas and the implementation of formats

such as "2+2" remains just an intention.

Thirdly, inter-university cooperation currently does not meet the demand for academic exchanges. University exchanges, which are a primary practical platform for enhancing international literacy among faculty and students, face issues due to the lack of a professional support system for all parties involved in this process. This results in a decrease in the effectiveness of inter-university cooperation. The intense competition among applicants for educational services, the perceived difficulties in employment after graduation from national universities, as well as the influence of parents, are pushing young Chinese people to consider the possibility of studying abroad. Over the past 10 years, the number of Chinese citizens studying at foreign universities has more than doubled, reaching 662,100 in 2018 [16, p. 153].

Another aspect that has influenced the process of internationalization in recent years is COVID-19. As a result of the forced, total control over the movement of people across borders, the forms of teaching and learning in international education have changed. Distance learning formats have gained an advantage, becoming a serious alternative to traditional international education. Online courses, hybrid online and offline teaching, as well as online conferences and lectures, quickly became important forms of education and academic exchange. Consequently, the number of students studying abroad and the number of student exchange programs have decreased.

On the other hand, large-scale online education has raised issues regarding the quality of education, as online courses lack effective interaction and are less attractive to international students compared to traditional face-to-face courses [5]. The quality of education, in particular, is a concern for mid-level faculty members. While more than 70% of presidents of top-tier universities, 80% of academics from the two national academies of sciences, and 90% of scholars at Yangtze University have experience studying or working abroad, the professional competencies of the core faculty members at Chinese and foreign universities often do not meet the requirements for the internationalization of higher education. Not all faculty members are prepared to develop course programs with an international context, nor do they possess the foreign language skills necessary for studying abroad. The system for faculty professional development is far from perfect, as it does not take into account the need to incorporate modern educational technologies that promote communication skills in the international academic space. Not every university has the resources to organize faculty participation in international exchanges, conferences, and research projects, which would contribute not only to the development of professional competence but also to a broader perspective on global educational issues [4].

It is important to note that with the development of the international higher education market, the significance of the fundamental quality of university education is gradually diminishing, and commercial interests are coming to the forefront. In some English-speaking countries, the internationalization of higher education is reduced to the competition for international students, who bring in a significant portion of revenue for universities. For example, on the official website of Griffith University in Australia, the university's mission is stated as aiming to achieve a higher position in the international higher education market.

As noted by renowned Canadian researcher J. Knight, "many universities in the Pacific region, although they recognize that the internationalization of education helps increase revenue, do not prioritize this benefit above all else," as we mentioned earlier — improving the overall quality of education [11].

In order for China to play a unifying role in the creation of a new civilization, it is essential to have a deep understanding and experience in interpreting Chinese philosophy, knowledge of Western philosophy, and the competence to make Chinese philosophy accessible for broad academic discussions and understanding. The future of China depends on whether we understand the West, whether we define the West correctly, and whether we allow the West to understand China properly. The world is our stage, but we must have the ability to transform the world into our stage [10].

Thus, Chinese culture and experience are valuable resources in global society, and the Chinese are eager to contribute to the integration of Chinese culture into the world culture. However, in this direction, it is necessary and important to adhere to the principle of the golden mean; otherwise, the

positive trends of internationalization may have the opposite effect, which could lead to serious conflicts in the future.

The modern unification of various communities occurs on the basis of minimizing cultural differences that define the uniqueness of these peoples. The world is losing its main wealth – the diversity of cultures that exist within it; entire nations are being assimilated and disappearing, and some are on the brink of extinction. Therefore, the primary task of modern educational institutions is to preserve and develop cultural values, to prevent the fragmentation of cultures, and to foster active engagement with the best examples of both global and national cultures [13].

CONCLUSION

Higher education is tasked with shaping the values and ideology of citizens and preparing personnel for the socio-economic development of countries. The market for economic development and personnel in each country is not a completely open market, but one that reflects the interests of sovereign states and is governed by both international and internal regulations. In recent decades, developed Western countries have dominated many global processes. However, today the socio-political landscape is changing, and many countries are striving for political multipolarity and even more intensive value-based interaction, including through the active use of information technologies.

In this context, China is becoming one of the main driving forces behind a new phase of internationalization. Studying abroad remains the main form of higher education service trade.

The research conducted reveals the following features of higher education internationalization in China:

1. The focus of faculty and students on world-class education, improving the quality of teaching, research, and the professional competence of teaching staff and educational programs. The creation of an effective system for improving the qualifications of university faculty, establishing conditions for their growth, and offering opportunities for overseas internships.
2. The functions of higher education in generating knowledge, preparing personnel, and providing social services are both national and international in nature, as evidenced by the unique characteristics of higher education development in China.
3. With the active integration of Chinese universities into the global higher education system, the emphasis is placed on maintaining cultural identity, which combines the best of both Eastern and Western cultures.
4. The institutionalization of inter-university cooperation as a key actor in internationalization, including the development of mechanisms for mutual recognition of courses, credit transfer, and teaching evaluation.
5. The focus on the Eastern vector of internationalization, particularly on cooperation with Russian universities. Since the education systems of Russia and China are largely similar, this creates a solid foundation for collaboration.

Education and science in both countries, with their millennia-old histories and cultures and shared socialist past, will, according to one of the leading researchers in this field, V.P. Borisenkov, reveal significant cultural, methodological, and instructional differences in education, while maintaining the main achievement – the preservation of socially oriented educational policies in the context of a market economy [15].

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