

Original Paper

Balancing the Localization and Internationalization of Higher Education in the Context of Globalization

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Abstract

In the tendency of globalization and internationalization, higher education is facing unprecedented opportunities and challenges. On one hand, the internationalization trend continuously prompts universities to expand international cooperation and exchanges, attracting talented researchers worldwide. On the other hand, the intrinsic localization requires universities to maintain their own cultural characteristics and educational traditions. How to enhance international competitiveness and global influence at keeping their national cultural features and educational traditions has become a critical issue for universities in various countries. This paper aims to explore the balance between localization and internationalization of higher education in the context of globalization. By defining the concepts of localization and internationalization, we comprehensively discussed their interaction and identify key factors to affect their balance. This paper would suggest strategies helping universities to achieve a better coordinated development of localization and internationalization.

Keywords

Higher education, Localization, Internationalization, Coordinated development

1. Introduction

With constant promotion of globalization, higher education is encountering unprecedented opportunities and challenges (Knight, 2004). Globalization not only promotes the exchange of economy, culture and information, but also has a profound impact on the education field. On one hand, the trend towards internationalization drives universities to actively expand international cooperation and exchanges, attracting top talents worldwide and meanwhile enhancing the international reputation

and competitiveness of the institutions. On the other hand, the need for localization requires universities to reserve their own cultural characteristics and educational traditions, thereby training the talents to meet the demands of local society and economic development. In the context of globalization, pursuing a balance between the internationalization and localization has become a crucial issue for higher education. The achievement of balance is not only about to improve the quality of education, but also critically regards how to cultivate future leaders possessing a deep cultural foundation and a capable global competition.

Because of the increasingly frequent exchanges between countries, the sharing of educational resources has become more convenient, which provides universities with broad international visions and cooperation opportunities. However, the unique value of local culture cannot be overlooked at all. Universities must, on basis of keeping their own characteristics, actively take in advanced international educational concepts and technologies to ensure the innovativeness and competitiveness of the ongoing educational system. This process is not just a simple matter of “bring-in” and “output”, but rather a deep-level cultural integration and wisdom collision. In recent years, many universities have neglected the importance of localization in the pursuit of internationalization, which leads to overly Westernized content and teaching methods, and unfortunately loses their own cultural identity. For example, some universities blindly adopt Western teaching models and curricula, completely ignoring their own history, culture, and pedagogical traditions. This phenomenon not only directly weakens students' sense of local identity, but may also cause a waste of educational resources and a decline of teaching quality. By contrast, some universities overemphasize localization, but overlook the necessity of internationalization, which severely limits students' international perspective and competitiveness. As a consequence, the students lack opportunities for cross-cultural communication and find it quite difficult to adapt themselves to the job market and social needs under the backdrop of globalization. Therefore, balancing the localization and internationalization of higher education is of utmost importance in the context of globalization.

This paper aims to explore the connotations and characteristics of localization and internationalization of higher education in the context of globalization, and to clarify the definitions, contents, and features of localization and internationalization. These will lay a solid foundation for further research. Specifically, to systematically analyze the interaction between localization and internationalization, we can identify the key factors affecting the balance between them. Through case studies and empirical research, we rationally propose effective strategies and recommendations to guide university practices. This will not only help universities to better address the globalization-induced challenges, but also significantly assist them in enhancing the overall quality and international competitiveness of higher education at keeping their local characteristics.

2. Connotations and Characteristics of Localization and Internationalization

The internationalization and localization of education are important and complex topics in the current

education field. In the context of globalization, the education system is faced with the big challenge how to maintain its own characteristics and advantages under the joint influence of global educational philosophies and local cultures. How to balance the localization and internationalization of higher education in the background of globalization not only concerns the education quality, cultural inheritance and innovation, but also puts forward new requirements for the cultivation of future talents. Localization and internationalization in higher education are two significant concepts, which are interrelated with each other and yet have different connotations and features. In-depth understanding of the connotations and characteristics of these two concepts is crucial for exploration to find a significant balance between them.

2.1 The Connotations and Characteristics of Localization

A famous contemporary American political theorist, Samuel Huntington, deemed that localization is "the self-assertion of indigenous, historically rooted customs, languages, beliefs, and regimes", and "Higher education localization can also be referred to as the nationalization or personalization of higher education (Huntington, 2004)". The localization of higher education emphasizes that universities must maintain and promote the cultural traditions and educational characteristics of their local country in the educational process, and the talent training should meet the needs of local social and economic development. Its core objective is to establish an ideal higher education system, which can feature national characteristics, satisfy the practical needs of the country, and also can cultivate professional talents competent to meet the needs of local social and economic developments.

Localized education focuses on teaching the history, culture, values, and social norms of one's own country. By offering relevant courses and activities such as politics, history, philosophy, and literature class, it strengthens the students' sense of cultural identity. In the form of teaching, it adopts approaches that are more suitable for the local culture and educational traditions, such as case-based teaching, on-the-spot investigation, and traditional cultural experiences. These allow students to deeply understand and experience their own culture. Based on the needs of local social and economic development, the curriculum can be adjusted to ensure the matches of education contents with the practical needs. For instance, the specialized courses closely related to local characteristic industries are set up to cultivate practical talents with local features. At the same time, it emphasizes on the improvement of students' practical and application abilities through school-enterprise cooperation, internships, and other forms. These enable students to learn and grow from systematic practices. To form a campus cultural atmosphere with local characteristics, universities always organize traditional culture festivals, lectures, exhibitions, and other events to strengthen students' sense of local identity. Moreover, universities actively encourage students to participate in the research and dissemination of local culture, such as establishing student clubs, conducting volunteer services, etc., ultimately promoting students' love and respect for local culture. In terms of teacher team reconstruction, the teachers who are familiar with local culture and educational traditions are hired, and further training for localized teaching is conducted to improve teachers' ability to teach in a localized manner. Then, nearly

all the textbooks that reflect the cultural and social needs of the country are compiled and adopted to ensure the localization of the teaching content. Additionally, the government enacts relevant policies and/or provides necessary financial and resources to support the integration of local cultural elements into education. Universities also make out the corresponding policies and carry out measures to boost the development of localized education, such as setting up research centers for localization, funding the localized projects, etc. Through these comprehensive measures, the localized education not only maintains and promotes the cultural traditions of one's own country, but also trains talents to meet the needs of local social and economic development.

2.2 The Connotations and Characteristics of Internationalization

Higher education expert, Jane Knight, believes that the internationalization of higher education is a process of integrating a cross-cultural global perspective into the functions of higher education (Knight, 2005). It is also a way for a country and a nation to address the challenges of globalization while maintaining their own characteristics. The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) deemed that higher education can promote the mutual understanding and progress among different races and cultures, and further set specific goals of internationalization: it should reflect the common aspirations, issues and trends of all countries, and promote their exchange and cooperation with a true international spirit on the basis of eliminating prejudice and barriers. Internationalization emphasizes openness and inclusiveness, aiming to cultivate talents with an international perspective and cross-cultural communication skills.

Specifically, internationalization is achieved by establishing partnerships with overseas institutions, conducting joint research projects, mutual exchange between faculties and students, and academic exchanges, which promote the sharing and optimal allocation of educational resources. At the same time, it is necessary to organize and participate in international academic conferences, invite renowned international scholars to give lectures and seminars, and finally broadens the international perspectives of faculty and students. In terms of international admissions, universities recruit international students, provide a diversified learning environment, promote cross-cultural exchange, offer language support and cultural adaptation services, and ultimately help international students to better integrate into campus life. In addition, governments and/or universities set up scholarships for international students and attract outstanding students, significantly enhancing the school's international influence. In the curriculum design, the universities introduce advanced international curriculum system and offer internationalized professional courses to improve students' international competitiveness. In practice, universities carry out bilingual teaching in multiple courses and increase the proportion of courses taught in English or other foreign languages to enhance students' language abilities. For the faculty development, universities will hire the internationally renowned scholars and experts to enrich the teaching content and improve the teaching quality. Meanwhile, universities will encourage teachers to participate in international exchange programs, greatly broadening their horizons and bringing back advanced international experiences. Universities also strengthen

international training for teachers to enhance their international perspective and cross-cultural communication skills for continuous improvement in teaching quality. To increase the international reputation and influence, many universities actively seek international accreditation, such as AACSB (for business school), ABET (for engineering school), etc., and establish scientifically reasonable teaching quality assessment systems to ensure the quality of internationalized education. In the construction of campus culture, students are encouraged to participate in international exchange programs, such as overseas internship and student exchange program, significantly improving their cross-cultural communication skills and international competitiveness.

3. Interaction between Localization and Internationalization as Well as the Key Factors to Affect Their Balance

The localization and internationalization of higher education not only have their unique connotations and characteristics, but in practice, they are also intertwined and influence each other. Localization focuses on the inheritance and promotion of country's own culture, cultivating talents to meet the needs of local social and economic development (Altbach, 2003), while internationalization emphasizes the strengthening of cooperation and exchange between countries, attracting top talents worldwide and enhancing the school's international reputation and competitiveness (De Wit, 2019). Their interaction is complementary and also features a certain degree of competition and conflict. To achieve a balanced development between localization and internationalization, it necessitates comprehensive consideration and plans from diverse aspects. This section will provide a detailed analysis of the interaction between localization and internationalization, identify the key factors affecting their balance, and offer references for universities to practically better promote localization and internationalization.

3.1 The Interaction between Localization and Internationalization

Internationalization and localization, as two aspects of the development options for higher education, are driving forces with opposite emphases. Localization in education focuses on imparting the history, culture, and social norms of one's own country, aiming to strengthen students' cultural identity and sense of belonging, and to cultivate talents who can serve the local society and economic development needs. At the same time, international education helps to broaden students' global perspectives, understand other cultures around the world, and develop cross-cultural communication skills and global competitiveness. The internationalization of higher education should be built upon a foundation of localization. Without a solid local base, true internationalization cannot be achieved, and the unique characteristics of domestic higher education would not be manifested. "Only the nation is the world", it is precisely that the unique localized education of each country constitutes the rich and diverse picture of world culture, making understanding, development, and exchange between different cultures necessary and possible. This diversity makes internationalization an inevitable choice for the higher education development. Localization can be considered as a form of execution, while

internationalization brings the advanced foreign educational concepts, providing a broader space for the localization development. By absorbing and digesting these international educational ideas, our country can retain its own characteristics and advantages, and further optimize the development model of higher education. This not only enriches the cultural personality of our country, but manifests the cultural charm of the Chinese nation, promoting the localized higher education development in our country.

However, in the process of advancing localization and internationalization, universities may encounter contradictions in resource allocation. Funds, faculty, facilities, and other resources may not meet all the needs of localization and internationalization, leading to their mutual competitions. For example, schools may need to make a choice between supporting local cultural research projects and attracting internationally renowned scholars, thereby causing resource strain. Additionally, localization emphasizes maintaining and promoting the cultural traditions of one's own country, while internationalization advocates openness and inclusiveness. These two different cultural orientations sometimes generate conflicts. For instance, some traditional cultural values may not fully align with the open attitude promoted by internationalization, which could result in disagreements in curriculum design, teaching methods, and even the campus cultural construction.

Thus, there does exist a complementary, contradictory yet unified relationship between internationalization and localization. The internationalization process needs to be based on the localization, while the localization can be further strengthened through international exchange and progress. In the field of higher education, internationalization and localization are two non-substitutable aspects. We cannot refuse to adopt advanced international educational ideas just because we insist on protecting the cultural characteristics of our own nation. Meanwhile, we cannot blindly pursue internationalization and neglect the unique value of our local culture. These two aspects should be well combined to jointly promote the comprehensive development of higher education. The harmonious development of educational internationalization and localization is the critical key to improve the educational standards of developing countries.

3.2 Key Factors to Affect the Balance between Localization and Internationalization

In the context of globalization, the balance between localization and internationalization in higher education is a complex and multidimensional issue. There are many key factors to affect their balance in university education, which will intertwine and collectively shape the direction of higher education development. The government's policy orientation and support are crucial for the localization and internationalization of universities (Marginson, 2011). The strength of government's support for international exchanges, regulations on the introduction of foreign students and faculty, and the funding for international cooperation projects all directly impact a university's global positioning. Moreover, the cultural traditions and social values of a country also subtly influence the selection and presentation of educational content, prompting universities to uphold their own culture essence at pursuing internationalization (Ge, 2022). It has to be noted that the economic condition is also one of

crucial nonignorable factors. Sufficient funding is the foundation for achieving a balance between localization and internationalization, which not only enables universities to attract excellent teachers and students all over the world, but provides possibility for high-level research collaboration. However, with limited resources, universities need to reasonably allocate funds, carefully weigh the investment ratio between the quality improvement of local education and the expansion of international influence, and finally find the optimal balance point for sustainable development. Technological progress, particularly the application of information technology, have greatly promoted the global sharing of educational resources, reduced the cost of cross-border learning, and enabled more students to access knowledge systems from different cultural backgrounds. This requires universities to have the corresponding infrastructure and technical capabilities to support the implementation of new teaching models such as online courses and virtual laboratories, ensuring all participants' benefits. The quality of faculty is also an important indicator: whether a university successfully integrates local characteristics with an international perspective. Overall, a team of teachers who are familiar with the local situation and can adapt to the challenges of multiculturalism will help to cultivate talents that are both rooted in local culture and internationally competitive.

Hence, universities need to enhance the localization and internationalization teaching abilities of their faculty by means of recruitment and training, such as by hiring teachers who are familiar with the country's culture and educational traditions, introducing internationally renowned scholars and experts, and broadening the local teachers' horizons via international training. On the other hand, students' experiences and needs are also key determinants of the education direction. With the acceleration of globalization, more and more students desire a more open and inclusive learning experience. This will prompt universities not only to provide high-quality professional education, but to create ideal diverse growing conditions for students, which finally enhance students' cross-cultural communication skills and global awareness. Besides, for the curriculum, universities need to fully consider students' interests and development goals, and design flexible and varied programs for their specific choice, thereby promoting the maximization of individual potential, and also driving the entire education system towards a more harmonious direction (Wen & Wang, 2023).

4. Strategies and Suggestions for Balancing Localization and Internationalization

Based on the different emphases of localization and internationalization in education, it is concluded that they have a complementary, contradictory yet unified relationship. In response to the key factors affecting the balance between localization and internationalization, different strategies and suggestions are proposed (Figure 1).

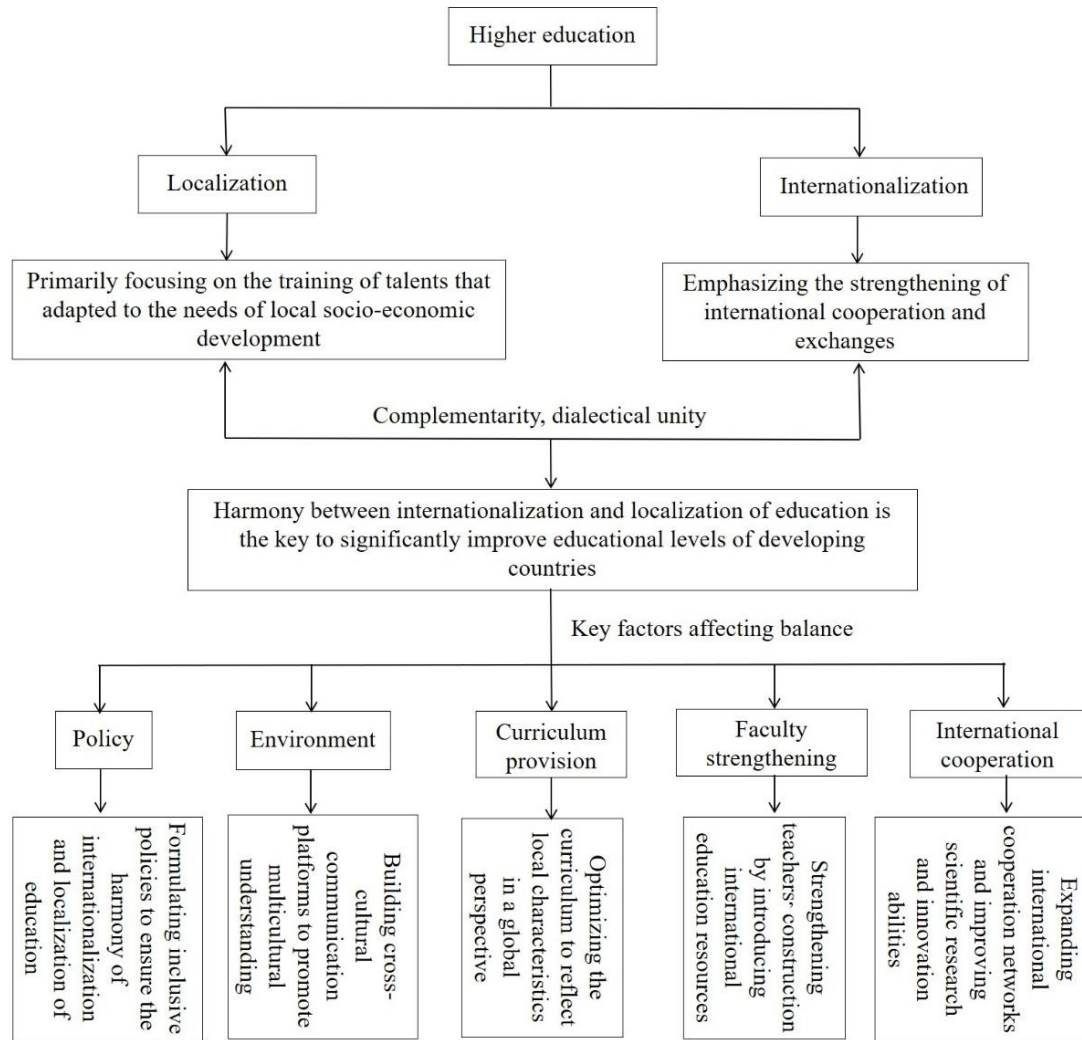


Figure 1. Mind Map to Achieve the Balance between Localization and Internationalization

4.1 Formulating Inclusive Policies to Ensure the Harmony of Internationalization and Localization of Education

To achieve a balance between localization and internationalization in higher education, it is first necessary to establish an inclusive policy framework. This not only includes the support and guidance at the governmental level, but requires the institutions to formulate their corresponding strategic planning. The government can promote the internationalization process by setting up special funds to support international exchange programs, simplifying visa procedures for foreign students and teachers, and advocating cross-border collaborative researches. Moreover, the government can provide financial subsidies, tax incentives, and other motivational measures to encourage universities to invest and develop in both localization and internationalization. At the same time, universities should clearly define their positions within the global higher education network, and then formulate specific measures such as establishing an international cooperation office to coordinate overseas partnerships and manage affairs related to international students (Harman G, 2005). Universities should also set up

inter-departmental coordination mechanisms to plan the overall layout of localization and internationalization, practically avoiding the resource wastage and redundant construction.

4.2 Building Cross-cultural Communication Platforms to Promote Multicultural Understanding

Higher education institutions should create an open and inclusive environment, aiming to promote the students' interaction and understanding from different backgrounds (Brandenburg U, 2020). This does not only mean providing students with opportunities to study abroad, but creating a space for cultural exchange where the students can participate and benefit. For example, Peking University organizes the Global Youth China Forum every year, invite students worldwide to share the economic development experiences of their respective countries or regions and the stories about their personal growth. In addition, the establishment of dual-degree programs or cooperation programs between Chinese and foreign universities are effective ways to enhance the students' cross-cultural communication skills. The Institute of Global Public Policy, Fudan University and the Department of European Studies, London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), have cooperated to organize a full English Master's degree program in Global Political Economy. This aims to make full use of the research and teaching resources of Fudan University and LSE. Through interdisciplinary curricula, the leading experts in the related fields of the two universities will teach to provide high-level and international interdisciplinary education and trainings, systematically cultivating talents with international visions in the field of politics and economy. Moreover, Xinjiang Agricultural University cooperates with the Russian State Pacific University to jointly carry out the "3+2" undergraduate education program of Transportation (Logistics Engineering). The program fully utilizes the rich faculty resources and the advanced teaching and experimental facilities of the Russian State Pacific University, and is dedicated to cultivating talents in the field of logistics engineering. The program not only serves Xinjiang region, but does serve the Central Asian countries, actively responding to the demand for applied talents in transportation under the strategic concept of "Silk Road Economic Belt". The employment prospects of graduates are good with an expected employment rate beyond 90%.

4.3 Optimizing the Curriculum to Reflect Local Characteristics in a Global Perspective

When developing the curriculum, it is important to balance the global perspective with the local characteristics, ensuring students to master cutting-edge disciplinary knowledge and to gain a deep understanding of their country's historical and cultural traditions. To this end, on one hand, universities can set up elective courses to specifically introduce the essence of Chinese traditional culture and its contemporary value; on the other hand, students should pay high attention to areas such as the international relations and the world economy, developing their abilities to analyze and solve complex problems. For instance, Tsinghua University launches courses like "Modern Chinese Philosophy" and "Cultural China Through Artifacts", highly popular among students, and also offers a series of specialized courses for future, including "Economic Governance in the Age of Globalization" and

"International Organizations and Foreign Policy", to cultivate new-era talents who possess both a solid cultural foundation and an international perspective.

4.4 Strengthening Teachers' Construction by Introducing International Education Resources

To better integrate local characteristics with an international perspective, universities must prioritize the diversification of their faculty teams. On one hand, various seminars, workshops, and other forms of activities should be organized to promote experience sharing and academic exchanges among teachers in campus. On the other hand, external recruitment should be strengthened to attract more outstanding scholars worldwide. At the same time, young teachers regularly selected to study abroad at renowned institutions is also a necessary measure. This not only enhances the individual teachers' professional qualities, but also helps them incorporate more international elements into their teaching. In recent years, Shanghai Jiao Tong University has successively appointed several Nobel laureates as honorary professors and established joint laboratories with multiple world-class universities. These actions have significantly enhanced the university's academic influence and provided more opportunities for students and faculty to engage with cutting-edge scientific achievements. Additionally, the university has set up special funds to support young teachers in attending international conferences, further broadening their international horizons.

4.5 Expanding International Cooperation Networks and Improving Scientific Research and Innovation Abilities

Scientific research is a key force driving social progress. Universities should actively seek opportunities for cooperation with excellent research institutions in other countries and regions, developing in-depth collaboration in the mutually interested areas. This cross-border cooperation model not only accelerates the technology transfer speed, but helps to form a more closely-knit international academic community. For a long time, Tsinghua University has been actively establishing international research cooperation networks with the world-class universities and research institutions to promote cutting-edge fundamental scientific research. By the end of 2023, Tsinghua University had signed strategic research cooperation agreements with 16 universities and research institutions, including the University of Cambridge, Imperial College London, the University of Tokyo, Tohoku University, the University of Toronto, the University of Alberta, St. Petersburg State Polytechnical University, RWTH Aachen University, and the University of New South Wales, and launched nearly 200 joint seed fund projects. Such international cooperation not only improves the scientific research level of Tsinghua University, but also trains outstanding talents with an international perspective, and enhance its international influence as well as academic research reputation.

By systematically implementing the above-mentioned strategies and recommendations, universities can not only effectively promote the organic integration of localization and internationalization, but also cultivate batches of high-quality talents who possess both a profound cultural heritage and a broad international vision for society.

5. Conclusion

In the context of globalization, research on balancing the localization and internationalization of higher education not only unveils the complex challenges encountered by the higher education (Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2010), but also points out the effective pathways to achieve the balance. This article systematically explores the connotations and characteristics of localization and that of internationalization, analyzes their interactions and the key factors to affect their balance, and finally proposes specific strategies and suggestions for balancing the localization and internationalization. Specifically, by means of building platforms for cross-cultural communication, optimizing the curriculum, strengthening faculty development, and expanding international cooperation networks, universities can maintain their national cultural characteristics and educational traditions, and further enhance their international competitiveness and global influence.

In future educational practices, universities should continuously deepen these strategies applications and make adjustment and innovations on basis of the fast changing international environments and social needs. Through sustained efforts, universities can not only create an ideal learning environment for students, which is rooted in local culture and has an international perspective, but also cultivate more high-quality talents capable of addressing the challenges of globalization. Ultimately, all these strategies and executions will drive the entire education system towards a more open, inclusive, and sustainable direction, making positive contributions to the development of countries and even the world.

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