

## *Original Paper*

# Research on Improving the Teaching Quality of International Students in Universities from a Convergence Perspective

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### ***Abstract***

*As the internationalization process of higher education in China continues to accelerate, the convergence-based educational management of international and Chinese students has become an inevitable trend. The original "separated" educational management model is gradually evolving towards a "convergence" educational management model. Establishing work goals with an "international perspective, Chinese-foreign integration, local action, and Chinese characteristics," and*

*conducting conceptual innovation and practical exploration of convergence-based educational management, is a beneficial attempt by Chinese universities to implement convergence-based education management for Chinese and international students.*

### **Keywords**

*Education, teaching quality, convergence perspective, international students*

### **Introduction**

Convergence-based educational management is a management approach proposed on the principle of strictly following the basic laws of international educational development, targeting the different characteristics of Chinese and international students. This is also a universally recognized basic educational management method for international students worldwide. Convergence does not mean treating Chinese and international students exactly the same in education and culture, but recognizing the objective differences in culture, language, and educational backgrounds. Under the convergence-based educational management model, the basic principles are to fully respect ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity and to approach with fairness, reasonableness, and prudence. The goal is to help international students fully understand China's rich historical culture and diverse national conditions, enabling them to quickly integrate into the learning and life of their respective universities. Therefore, the current convergence-based cultivation concept should be: culturally inclusive, mutually respectful in living habits, and strict in academic requirements. The aim is to ensure that regardless of an international student's nationality, ethnicity, or religious belief, they acquire solid professional knowledge and skills in China, along with an attitude of respect and tolerance towards different ethnicities and cultures.

### **1. Research Significance on Improving the Teaching Quality from Convergence Perspective**

1) Improving the teaching quality of international students' courses is a crucial lever for resolving the contradiction between university student enrollment expansion and teaching quality, and achieving the convergence goal.

Since the opening up policy, the scale of international students in China has continuously expanded, greatly promoting international exchange and cooperation. As socialism with Chinese characteristics enters a new era, the study-in-China industry has entered a stage of "quality improvement and efficiency enhancement." The Ministry of Education has proposed that the development of international students should prioritize quality, strictly regulate management, pursue content-driven development, and accelerate the healthy and sustainable development of international student education. Improving the teaching quality of international students' professional courses is the core driving force for achieving "quality improvement and efficiency enhancement" in international student education and an important support for addressing the convergence management issues.

2) Improving the teaching quality for international students is necessary to enhance the

competitiveness of universities in the international student education market and improve their operational efficiency

In today's highly competitive international student education market, developed countries like the United States and the United Kingdom maintain absolute advantages primarily because their course and talent cultivation quality are universally recognized, with their graduation certificates becoming "keys" to high-salary and preferential treatment. With the gradual establishment and improvement of China's market economic system, international student education in universities has been placed on the global stage of market competition. Professional course teaching quality has become the lifeline of developing study-in-China education. To maintain and expand the markets for student enrollment, employment, and funding, it is essential to improve teaching quality by focusing on the quality of professional courses for international students. Only by enhancing the quality of education in this area can we gain an advantage in the student recruitment market, which will, in turn, further improve operational efficiency and create a positive cycle.

3) Promoting "two-way convergence" between Chinese and international students under the convergence-based educational and teaching model

Given the objective differences between Chinese and international students in language, living habits, and cultural backgrounds, convergence management of international students should not simply apply the management and service methods used for Chinese students. Instead, it should establish a "two-way convergence" concept, conduct an overall optimization design of educational management systems, and promote knowledge and cultural exchange between Chinese and international students through this "two-way convergence" process, truly reflecting the cultural value of international student education. Through the design and practice of "two-way convergence", barriers between Chinese and international students can be broken down. This approach allows foreign students studying in China to deeply learn about Chinese cultural history and contemporary social development, increasing their identification with China and cultivating more international talented people who "understand and are friendly towards China". Simultaneously, it helps Chinese students develop an international perspective and understand diverse cultures.

4) Improving the teaching quality for international students can drive universities to develop all English courses

Internationalized teaching is an important way to establish a university's international influence and enhance national soft power. It is also a key indicator reflecting the influence of universities and academic disciplines.

Currently, English still dominates as the primary language for international student training. As the scale of international students continues to expand, universities will inevitably need to increase the number of all English courses offered. All English course development is a critical lever for internationalized teaching and an important component of improving the student training system in the new era. The improvement and optimization of an all English curriculum system can enhance a

university's international competitiveness, while also benefiting international student recruitment and improving the quality of admissions.

5) Improving the quality of teaching for international students can facilitate top-level design and strengthen the management team

To advance convergence-based management for international students, universities must establish a mature management organization, create an educational and daily management system that adapts to convergence-based management, actively conduct management team training, and deepen understanding of convergence-based management among faculty and students. In this convergence process, universities should invest financial and material resources to enhance the internationalization capabilities and strengths of their management teams, cultivating a workforce with "global competence."

## **2. Existing Problems on Improving the Teaching Quality from Convergence Perspective**

### *2.1 Teaching Organization and Management*

#### 2.1.1 System Construction

The document of the Ministry of Education has proposed that the development of international students should prioritize quality, strictly regulate management, pursue content-driven development, and accelerate the healthy and sustainable development of international student education. Improving the teaching quality of international students' professional courses is the core driving force for achieving "quality improvement and efficiency enhancement" in international student education. System construction serves as the benchmark for ensuring teaching quality and standardizing management. Currently, most universities have issued documents such as detailed rules for international student cultivation and degree conferral, convergence education and management plans, international student scholarship evaluation methods, and course exemption management regulations.

While these documents broadly cover most aspects of international student teaching, they lack provisions for management and supervision during the teaching process and quality control of teaching staff. The absence of such documents will constrain the content-driven development of international student education and make it difficult to effectively implement convergence management.

#### 2.1.2 Training Program

The *Higher Education Quality Standards for International Students in China (Trial)* stipulates that higher education institutions should develop clear and applicable professional training plans for international students based on educational and teaching standards corresponding to different levels and majors, taking into account the cultivation objectives and developmental characteristics of international students. The professional training plan for international students should include cultivation goals, curriculum systems, teaching plans, and practical teaching content. These plans must meet the educational and teaching standards for the respective professional fields, align with talent cultivation objectives for international students, and accommodate their learning characteristics. Due to multiple

constraints such as limited class enrollment, course content, and teaching staff, the number and variety of all English courses remain restricted, with most being limited courses within the existing training plan. Additionally, insufficient promotion of new optional English courses and incomplete alignment with international students' language proficiency levels result in low participation rates among international students.

Moreover, there are significant differences in the basic educational levels between Chinese and international students. In core courses of engineering majors that require high levels of mathematical and physical knowledge, international students often struggle to keep up with the learning pace of Chinese students when taught in the same classroom. Additionally, there are substantial variations in English proficiency between Chinese and international students, making it difficult for students to effectively comprehend the teaching content during all English classes.

### 2.1.3 Teaching Management

Currently, under the policy background of convergence management for international students, some secondary schools are responsible for organizing and managing the teaching and training of international students, while the School of International Education is in charge of the overall management of international students. Due to differences in affiliated units, student cultivation and management are conducted separately, with minimal communication between schools. Insufficient information exchange makes it difficult to achieve a win-win outcome and foster coordinated development. Moreover, organizing and managing the education of international students requires close engagement with them. With the majority of students being taught entirely in English, this poses significant challenges to the English proficiency and communication skills of college administrators.

## 2.2 Teaching Support and Research

### 2.2.1 Faculty

Teachers, as the leaders of teaching activities, determine teaching methods, progress, assessment approaches, and the entire teaching process. Therefore, their role in teaching cannot be overlooked. In order to ensure that instructors are prepared to teach international students, higher education institutions must set up requirements for teaching credentials, professional levels, foreign language proficiency, and cross-cultural competency, according to the *Higher Education Quality Standards for International Students in China (Trial)*. Research shows that only a small number of instructors are willing to take on mentorship roles for international students. Additionally, the significant differences in training methods for international and Chinese students can lead to resistance among some instructors. More importantly, during the recruitment of international students, some universities face resource shortages and overcrowding, making it difficult to properly accommodate them, which ultimately causes teachers to give up on recruiting international students.

### 2.3 Cross-cultural Exchanges

The Ministry of Education's *Higher Education Quality Standards for International Students in China (Trial)* defined the talent cultivation goals for international students. Beyond basic academic and

disciplinary education requirements, universities should emphasize Chinese language ability development and popularization of Chinese national conditions and cultural knowledge. More importantly, the goal should be to achieve "cross-cultural and global competence"—meaning developing an awareness, knowledge, attitudes, and skills that enable inclusivity, cognition, and adaptation to cultural diversity, and the ability to play a role in mutual respect, understanding, and solidarity across different ethnic groups, societies, and countries. Cross-cultural communication ability refers to the capability to effectively and appropriately communicate with members of different cultures using suitable language and cultural knowledge. It is a complex, multidirectional conceptual system. Among these, language education is considered the primary channel for cultivating cross-cultural communication skills. The Ministry of Education's documents explicitly require that professional training plans for international students must include Chinese language proficiency level requirements and mandatory courses on Chinese national conditions. Universities should arrange sufficient and appropriate Chinese language courses and courses on Chinese national conditions to meet international students' learning needs.

Currently, most universities offer comprehensive Chinese language, Chinese national conditions, Chinese overview, and world cultural experience courses for international students. Universities also continuously organize various field trips and exchange activities focused on history, culture, rural revitalization, technological development, and ecological civilization. These courses and activities have greatly enhanced international students' ability to engage in cross-cultural communication, both in theory and practice. However, the implementation of the above activities is usually limited to a specific time frame, with content presented in a fragmented manner and often repeating. There is a lack of a comprehensive and systematic educational framework that spans the entire learning process of international students.

#### *2.4 Practice and Internships*

Through practical experiences, international students are given the opportunity to understand China. The campus serves as a platform for their learning and daily life, but it is only by stepping outside the campus and engaging with society that international students can truly and comprehensively experience Chinese culture and gain a deeper understanding of China. Specialized programs are organized for international students to visit and study in regions that reflect China's traditional culture and development, such as areas focused on history, culture, rural revitalization, new rural construction, pandemic response, technological development, and ecological civilization. These visits offer international students a well-rounded view of China, showcasing both its historical depth and modern vitality. This also creates an excellent learning experience model that integrates "professional education + general education + social practice." As for internships, due to language and cultural differences, as well as the low likelihood of international students working in China after graduation, most universities have not systematically organized internship programs for them.

### **3. Strategies and Recommendations for Improving Teaching Quality in International Student Education from a Convergence Perspective**

#### *3.1 Improving Institutional Development and Enhancing Quality Control*

In line with the educational and teaching guidelines for Chinese students, and considering the specific circumstances of international students in universities, it is essential to improve relevant educational documents and regulatory systems. A reasonable teaching supervision system should be established, with management and oversight plans for the teaching process. Additionally, the recruitment and evaluation system for faculty should be refined, and new regulations and documents related to ensuring the quality of online education in the post-pandemic era should be introduced.

#### *3.2 Convergence Management in Curriculum Development to Enhance the Quality of International Student Education*

When revising curriculum plans, universities should require collaboration between departments to ensure that the training programs for Chinese and international students are "planned, developed, and implemented simultaneously." Based on the characteristics of student sources, universities should proactively serve the Belt and Road Initiative, draw upon advanced educational concepts from both Chinese and international contexts, and focus on the unique characteristics of international students. The curriculum should be comprehensive, cutting-edge, practice-oriented, and internationally focused. In terms of the course structure for international students in each discipline, the overall requirements, excluding English and ideological courses, should align with those for Chinese students to lay a solid foundation for convergent training. Additionally, textbooks should be selected flexibly, with a focus on improving course quality and teaching standards. It is essential to adopt an individualized teaching approach, offering tiered and categorized instruction to cater to the diverse needs of international students. By developing more scientifically targeted curriculum plans, universities can offer international students a diverse range of high-quality courses with distinct features. Educational activities should be designed with consideration for the psychological and cultural characteristics of international students. While ensuring teaching quality, it is important to appropriately adjust the structure and proportion of mandatory and elective courses for international students. This approach should adhere to the principle of combining internationalization with local features, and continue to deepen reforms in international student education.

#### *3.3 Strengthening Faculty Development and Improving Management and Service Quality*

First, measures such as assessments and incentives should be implemented to encourage and enhance teachers' engagement in teaching international students and improving teaching effectiveness. Secondly, training and exchange programs should be organized to improve teachers' foreign language proficiency and cross-cultural skills, raising the internationalization level of the faculty. Additionally, incentive policies should be introduced to support the development of faculty for foundational courses such as Chinese language and Chinese overview. Instructors should be encouraged and supported in conducting research on international student education, updating course content, and improving teaching methods

and techniques to better suit the learning characteristics of international students. At the same time, communication between professional schools and the School of International Education should be strengthened, and research and practical exploration in the management of international student education should be encouraged and supported. The skills and language proficiency of staff responsible for managing international students should be enhanced, and the school should appoint full-time counselors for international students.

### *3.4 Developing Cross-cultural Learning Materials that Reflect the Characteristics of the University and the Region in Which it Is Located*

Developing cross-cultural learning materials that reflect the unique characteristics of the university and the region in which it is located is a crucial step in improving the quality of international student education and enhancing the features of a university's international student programs. For example, universities can create unique reading materials on their history, such as their long-standing educational legacy, and the development of characteristic disciplines. This would allow international students to gain an understanding of China's significant progress in science and technology.

At the same time, universities can develop cross-cultural textbooks that are based on the history, culture, and development of the city or province where the university is located. This would allow international students to explore Chinese culture and stories through historical sites, idioms, and cultural references. International students can experience the charm and vibrancy of China's modernization through the city's development. At the same time, it's important to emphasize the exchange and integration of Chinese culture with global cultures, helping international students from various backgrounds find shared cultural connections.

The convergence management of international students is not only a key aspect of university education in the new era but also an important means of supporting national strategic goals. Convergence does not imply uniformity, nor does it mean simply integrating international students into the existing teaching and management systems. Instead, it requires adhering to the principle of "finding unity in diversity and seeking convergence amid differences." Only through the guidance and influence of "shared rules, culture, and expectations" can international students truly appreciate the essence of Chinese higher education and grow into ambassadors of its achievements beyond China's borders.

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