

Original Paper

Practice and Reflection on the Introduction of Overseas Talent in Chinese Universities under Globalization

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Abstract

In the context of globalization, introducing overseas talent is a key driver for the connotative development of higher education and the establishment of national strategic technological capabilities. By continuously optimizing talent introduction policies and improving the talent ecosystem, universities can take the initiative in the global allocation of intellectual resources, providing strong support for achieving high-level technological independence and self-reliance.

Keywords

Overseas talent, talent introduction, universities

Talent is the primary resource, and innovation is the primary driving force. The report to the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China clearly outlines the strategic goals of "moving faster to build world hubs for talent and innovation, promoting better distribution and balanced development of talent across regions, and striving to build up our comparative strengths in global competition for talent." The introduction of overseas talent has become a key focus in the reform of higher education. The introduction of overseas talent in universities refers to the recruitment of high-level professionals who are knowledgeable about international rules and have expertise in advanced scientific and technological fields from around the world. The targets for recruitment include foreign experts, overseas students, and Chinese scholars living abroad. By offering competitive salaries, research start-up funds, and other attractive policies, universities aim to attract these individuals to work on a full-time or flexible basis. Enhancing discipline construction and research innovation through the introduction of overseas talent is significant for the rapid development of first-class universities and disciplines.

1. Necessity of Introducing Overseas Talent for Universities

The introduction of overseas talent in universities is an inevitable choice for enhancing the quality of higher education and promoting technological innovation in the context of globalization. This move holds profound strategic significance and practical necessity.

1) Introducing overseas talent is a key measure to address international competition and narrow research gaps. Currently, a new wave of technological revolution is accelerating, with such cutting-edge fields as artificial intelligence and quantum information becoming focal points in global competition. Developed countries have long dominated research by relying on the agglomeration effect of top talent. By recruiting overseas scholars with experience in world-class laboratories and expertise in advanced technologies, Chinese universities can rapidly address key technological shortcomings and achieve breakthroughs in critical fields.

Moreover, an internationalized talent structure is a core element in building world-class universities. Statistics show that top universities around the world typically have more than 30% of their faculty composed of foreign teachers, while the proportion of foreign teachers in key Chinese universities is less than 5%. Introducing overseas talent not only brings advanced teaching concepts and cross-cultural perspectives but also promotes interdisciplinary integration, leading to the generation of original research outcomes. This "catfish effect" can invigorate the local research ecosystem, creating a dynamic innovation landscape that links internal and external resources.

2) Overseas talent can provide crucial support for cultivating international innovation talent. A diverse faculty team with multicultural backgrounds can integrate cutting-edge international topics and innovative methodologies into teaching, helping students build global competencies.

3) Introducing overseas talent is deeply in line with the needs of national development. The "Double First-Class" construction initiative has explicitly included the staffing of international faculty as an evaluation criterion. Overseas talent possesses unique advantages in connecting with international research networks and participating in significant international cooperation projects.

2. Current Situation of Overseas Talent Introduction in Universities

At present, the introduction of overseas talent in Chinese universities has entered a systematic and precise phase, becoming an effective boost for higher education reform and technological innovation. However, there is still room for optimization in areas such as the structure of talent introduction and institutional adaptation.

2.1 With the Improving Policy System, the Talent Introduction Scale Is Expanding

At the national level, the National High-level Talent Support Program and other special policies have been adopted. The visa upon arrival and other facilitation measures have been gradually implemented. All these have streamlined the approval processes and timelines for foreign talent to work in China. A three-tier talent introduction system has been established, comprising national, local, and university levels. Local supporting policies are also being upgraded, such as the "Pearl River Talent Program" of

Guangdong and the "Sanqin Talent Program" of Shaanxi, which further attract talent through generous research start-up funds, housing subsidies, tax incentives, and other combined incentives. Additionally, universities have rolled out various distinctive talent introduction programs. Beyond offering high salaries and substantial research start-up funds, these programs even include benefits such as housing arrangements, educational opportunities for children, and job placements for spouses, alleviating concerns for incoming talent. Some universities have partnered with enterprises to offer talent program bonuses, promoting the practical application of technological achievements.

2.2 Structural Contradictions Are Still Prominent, and the Sustainable Development Force Is Insufficient

Significant regional imbalances are identified in the introduction of overseas talent. In China's eastern regions, universities can attract the majority of overseas talent with generous compensation packages, higher economic levels, and more favorable living conditions. In contrast, in western regions, geographic and economic issues make talent introduction increasingly challenging. Furthermore, homogeneous competition in some disciplines also leads to a high premium of talent in some fields, far exceeding the market average. Ultimately, introducing talent in such a context may fail to achieve the expected effect. Additionally, some universities merely emphasize introduction while not paying enough attention to cultivation. Some overseas talent complain that the institutions where they are recruited don't have reasonable assessment and development mechanisms. As a result, they have to face excessive pressure on short-term assessment, which indirectly hinders the accumulation of long-term results. Lastly, with the diversifying types of introduced talent, challenges in cultural integration are becoming more pronounced. Most universities need to strengthen their bilingual teaching, research, and management environments in case some talent may leave due to difficulties in integration and collaboration.

2.3 Emerging Trends in Overseas Talent Introduction and Transformation Exploration Are Accelerating

The introduction of young talent has been accelerated. With the increasing global influence of the "Excellent Young Scientists Overseas Project," the number of supported individuals has continued to grow. Most universities have begun piloting the "tenure-track" system reform and established long-term talent assessment systems. Their approaches fully respect the rules of scientific research and technological innovation, break down rigid frameworks, and reform institutional mechanisms. They have eased funding management, delegated project management authority, reduced burdens on researchers, and granted innovation teams and leading talent greater control over resources and decision-making power regarding technical directions. Instead of forcing immediate results, these universities allow for longer timeframes and more space for trial and error. By doing so, they have fostered an environment where researchers can pursue original and pioneering studies. With earnestness and sincerity, they expect achievements from overseas talent.

Overall, the introduction of overseas talent in Chinese universities has shifted from mere scale expansion to quality improvement. However, breakthroughs are still needed in areas such as talent

ecosystem construction and innovative evaluation mechanisms to achieve the sustainable development mode.

3. Work Paths for Introducing Overseas Talent in Universities

Chinese universities have formed a multi-level and multi-dimensional systematic method system for introducing overseas talent. Through approaches, such as platform building, mechanism innovation, and ecological optimization, they have gradually established internationally competitive talent attraction networks.

3.1 Building a Targeted Global Talent Introduction Network

First, universities should actively engage in targeted recruitment. They can assign dedicated personnel to continuously focus on scholars publishing articles in high-level journals and accurately identify talent that aligns with their academic development. Professional faculty members should facilitate connections, understand the development needs of talent, and actively help introduce them. Additionally, universities can allocate funds to hire headhunting firms for precise matching talent, further increasing the success rate of talent introduction.

Second, universities should implement a talent-driven recruitment strategy. Through alumni associations, they can set up talent service centers by establishing a network of domestic and overseas alumni and an academic community recommendation mechanism. By organizing academic exchanges and other events, designated personnel can inform scholars in specific regions about talent introduction policies, achieving precise matching and successful recruitment.

Lastly, universities should leverage conferences and competitions to attract talent. For instance, they can regularly host international academic forums and invite overseas talent to attend. This process should involve smart matching before the events, in-depth connections during the events, and follow-up tracking and implementation afterward, thereby enhancing the efficiency of talent introduction. Moreover, universities should establish mechanisms such as "Talent Introduction Ambassador" and "Bole Award," encouraging faculty to attend high-level domestic and international conferences and competitions to bring in talent in a targeted manner.

3.2 Innovating Differentiated Talent Introduction Models

Universities should implement a talent classification evaluation system to achieve breakthroughs across three dimensions: disciplines, stages, and types. In terms of disciplines, they should set an "academic influence index" for humanities and a "technology transformation index" for engineering. Regarding stages, a long-term assessment system should be implemented, dividing the evaluation period into an adaptation phase, an output phase, and a maturity phase. As for talent types, "strategic scientists" and "young potential scholars" should be differentiated, with the former focusing on strategic consulting and other contributions while the latter emphasizing the assessment of innovative potential. Additionally, universities should implement the tenure-track system, utilizing a diversified evaluation mechanism to create an environment where everyone has the opportunity to succeed.

For high-level talent who cannot work full-time on campus, flexible recruitment methods such as "dual employment" and "seasonal scholars" can be adopted, leveraging their significant academic influence to support the development of disciplines and research.

3.3 Optimize the Scientific Research Platform and Institutional Environment

Establishing high-level research platforms: Universities should set up frontier interdisciplinary research institutes to fully leverage the advantages of overseas talent who are well-versed in international regulations and advanced scientific technologies. These institutes should gather outstanding talent from home and abroad, focusing on the world's technological frontiers, key economic battlegrounds, and major national needs. On these platforms, limitations of traditional departmental structures and disciplinary divisions can be broken, facilitating prospective and innovative research, nurturing significant original innovation, incubating major projects and technological achievements, cultivating exceptional innovative talent, and forming disciplinary strengths and characteristics.

Innovating the project management mechanisms: Universities should implement the "lump-sum project-funding system" for the use of research funds, maximize the innovation vitality of scientific and technological personnel, and incentivize the output of technological innovation achievements.

Establishing the "Special Academic Zones for Innovative Talent": Universities should manage overseas talent in special academic zones, where discipline leaders are granted significant autonomy in management. By doing so, they can build a healthy disciplinary ecosystem and innovate and improve discipline and personnel management systems and evaluation mechanisms, thus creating a favorable institutional environment that promotes the growth and success of overseas talent.

3.4 Improving the Full-cycle Service Guarantee System

Universities should build a full-chain talent ecosystem that encompasses "attracting, developing, retaining, and utilizing" talent to create top-tier faculty teams. They should continuously deepen reforms in talent introduction, cultivation, evaluation, and management. During the recruitment phase, talent service personnel, preferably faculty members in specific disciplines, should be assigned for one-on-one communication with talent, helping them understand the situations of related universities and design academic and research development paths. In the onboarding phase, talent should be provided with one-stop services, including fund collection and utilization, and experimental equipment purchase etc. The existing faculty should pass on experience, help, and guide newly recruited talent. Moreover, specialized training sessions should be organized for overseas talent to enhance their teaching, and research capabilities, facilitating their adaption to and integration into new environments. A selection and evaluation system oriented toward innovation capabilities should be improved, and an ecosystem conducive to stimulating innovation among scientific personnel should be created, thus paving the way for outstanding talent to emerge and provide more opportunities and larger platforms for individuals to showcase their competencies.

5. Conclusion

The overseas talent introduction program is shifting from scale expansion to quality enhancement, featuring the establishment of a flexible talent ecosystem, the reconstruction of the governance system for higher education, and the in-depth integration of overseas talent with local resources. By improving the national innovation chain, introduced talent can truly become strategic pivots for key technological breakthroughs. Only in this way can the advantages of talent be transformed into sustainable momentum for building China into a leading country in education.

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