

# **Internationalization, Key to Educational Development**

## **--- Retrospect and Perspective of Educational Cooperations**

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### **<Abstract>**

Globalization of economy calls for internationalization of education. In the past few decades, much attention has been paid to international exchanges and cooperation in education in all countries. In the new century, internationalization of education will gain new development.

Key Words: internationalization of education; exchange and cooperation; institution of higher education

## **1. Background Significance of International Institutional Cooperations**

As the mankind has crossed the threshold of the new century, the rapid development of the knowledge-based economy of the world necessitates globalization of selection criterion for personnel of various kinds, thus pushing forward globalization of the higher education to a very large extent.

When transnational corporations make their entrée into a country, they need a large number of local scientists, engineers, managers as well as ordinary workers. Needless to say, the criterion for selecting and employing these personnel must interface with the internationally accepted criterion, especially for those enterprises of high science and technology. The first thing that they should take into serious consideration is the quality and quantity of the available local personnel in science and technology and management, and technical workers.

The last two decades or so saw the establishment of an enormous number of well-known foreign and transnational corporations and enterprises in the mainland China, mostly in areas along the coastal line where economy is highly developed. Take Suzhou, a medium sized city in Southeast China, for example. At present, there exist in the city more than 7,000 foreign-invested enterprises, 77 of which are among the Fortune 500 [1]. There has been a huge demand and an intense competition for qualified personnel.

In the era of economic globalization, it is impossible for any country to develop its economy independent of others. Instead, there should be a high level of mutual dependence and influence among countries for mutual benefits and development. Foreign trade is a case in point. In 2000, with the rapid economic development of the country, import and export value in China's foreign trade reached 474.3 billion US dollars, accounting for 44% of the country's GDP, and the percentage of foreign trade in China's GDP was even higher due to the successful acquisition of the WTO membership in 2001.

A country's economy has never been so closely related with that of the whole world as it is today. It is, therefore, greatly important for everyone of us to be knowledgeable about the rules and conventions of international business interactions and be familiar with the international level of science and technology and their trend of development.

To meet the needs of economic globalization, institutions of higher learning, where personnel of talents of all kinds are trained, should make timely changes in their educational structure, including the level structure, faculty structure and knowledge structure. The standard of their education should also be restructured so that it is internationally recognized. For this purpose, all colleges and universities must conduct a serious study of institutions of higher learning in other countries, especially those most renowned ones, in educational criterion, mode of education, teaching plans, teaching material and teaching methodology. Only by learning the merits of all others is it possible to overcome demerits of their own and upgrade their own education levels to the international level. And this can only be made possible by internationalization of higher education.

The nature of running an institution of higher learning is internationalization which is determined by its academic nature. Internationalization of higher learning should have the following features:

- an increasingly extensive exchanges and cooperations among institutions of higher learning of all countries;

- an increasingly higher awareness to learn from other institutions their experience in development and reform;
- a compatibility of levels of education in degree and non-degree programs as well as a matching of teaching courses among colleges and universities of different countries, and, on the basis of these, recognition of course credits given and degree conferred by colleges and universities in other countries;
- an increasingly higher awareness of the importance of training all kinds of personnel of talents for a proper interface with the economic and technological development of the whole world.

## 2. A Review of Internationalization of Higher Education

Internationalization dates back to the Middle Ages in Europe. However, it did not develop into a trend until 1960s and 70s after the Second World War. In 1980s, especially after the “Cold War” between the East and the West had come to an end, internationalization of higher education gained a high speed.

In 1965, in the review report issued by the Central Review Committee of Japan, it was pointed out explicitly that it was imperative to educate people with an international perspective. In 1966, the United States of America promulgated the “Act of International Education” [2]. After the mid-1970s, an oil crisis and the economic depression that followed suit prevailed the whole world. More and more countries were made to realize that, in the era of economic globalization, training people with a “global vision” should be the primary strategy that will enable a country to gain superiority in the international economic competition. With this realization, they have been making great efforts in pushing forward the internationalization of education.

With the appearance of the knowledge-based economy, much more importance has been attached to and more concrete measures have been taken in internationalization of education.

In 1966, the Japanese government advocated strengthening of education of international understanding for the Japanese students in three aspects. Firstly, students should have a broad perspective, a deepened understanding of foreign cultures, a respectful attitude towards them and the ability to live with them. Secondly, for a better understanding of and broad mind for foreign cultures, the Japanese students were expected to have a good understanding of their own country and of themselves. It was firmly believed that only with a thorough understanding of their own history and traditional culture was it possible for people to have a broad vision for understanding foreign cultures

and respectful attitudes towards them. Otherwise, there can be no mutual understanding. Thirdly, students were supposed to obtain proficiency in foreign languages, so that they would be able to express their viewpoints and wills while showing respect for others.

In 1992, the 12 countries of the European Economic Community (EEC) began to implement "the College Student Exchange Program Among EEC Countries", and the governments of these countries allocated a special fund to assist student and faculty exchanges among the member countries, and they recognized credits, diplomas and degrees mutually.

In 1993, shortly after Clinton took office, he revised "Educational Strategies of the United States for 2000" outlined by the Bush government, adding two more goals to the 6 goals for educational reforms of the country. Then, after he won the presidential election for the second term in 1997, President Clinton claimed that the priority of the government was to "enable all Americans to receive the best education in the world." [3] And he put forward the three major goals for education: (1) All school children at the age of 8 should be able to read and write, and adolescents at 12 should receive education of the internet multi-media; (2) All the 18 year olds should be at college; and (3) Every American citizen should be entitled to a life-long education.

Faced with the challenge of the knowledge-based economy, the Japanese government adjusted its state policies, and put forward the concept of "science and technology for a new Japan". In 1997, the Japanese government outlined educational reforms, the main content of which included: establishment of school systems that develop individualism and provide multiple choices, advancement of reform of higher education, promotion of scientific research of universities and strengthening of "education of the mind" [4].

In the white paper "Our Future of Competition: Building Up Knowledge-Based Economy" published by the British government in December 1998, it was pointed out that "in the world market, what is most needed for an advantageous position of Britain is knowledge, skills and creativity. All these are the essence characteristics of the knowledge-based economy" [5].

Korea, a newly emerged industrialized country, has attached tremendous importance to science and education. Its developmental strategies of "science and technology for prosperity" and "Education for Prosperity" have lent two wings to economic development of the country. From 1994 to 1996, Korea issued 3 research reports: "For a New Korea: Orientation and Themes of Educational Reforms", "Implemental Schemes for Promoting Educational Reforms" and "Plans for Reforms of Educational System in the Era of Internationalization and Information". These reports outlined developmental

strategies of education for the 21st century: At the beginning of the 21st century, Korea is to be among the developed countries not only economically but also educationally. The new educational system is to educate a generation with basic qualities of the 21st century, that is, (1) a high morality, a sense of collectiveness and willingness to tolerate others; (2) ability and wisdom to learn new knowledge, new information and new technology; (3) ability to live in the era of internationalization, openness and information; and (4) diligence and a full awareness of the value and significance of labor.

There have also been great efforts made on the part of institutions of higher learning and other institutions and organizations concerned.

In recent years, a large number of famous universities are taking further measures to speed up the process of internationalization. In early 2001, MIT of the United States announced that in the next 10 years, it would put, on the internet, all its course material including course descriptions, lists of the textbooks and distribution of courses in different faculties, free of charge.

Back in the fall of 1992, MIT and other institutions sponsored "the Symposium on the International Challenge for American Higher Education". The symposium discussed strategic plans for developing higher education in the future. President West of MIT, President Lehmann of Stanford University and others pointed out that internationalization had become the key to strategic plans for the development of higher education.

In 1995, the World Trade Organization (WTO) was formally founded. Since educational services are an integral part of world trade, WTO's member countries have been encouraged to open up their educational market to foreign educational institutions. They are also encouraged to accept schooling records obtained in other countries, to support flows of professionals and to reduce government subsidies for their own educational institutions. Although most developing countries have not made their commitment to trades in education due to some factors, they have been very active in introducing into their own countries good quality educational resources such as curriculum, teaching methodology, teaching mediums, management models, and assessment systems, for speeding up educational reforms and development in their own countries.

In October 1998, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) convened a conference in Paris on higher education of the world. The declaration it issued put forward a very important perspective that internationalization is an inherent part of the quality of higher education. This is to say that internationalization is indispensable for the development and upgrading of higher education.

### **3. International Exchanges and Cooperation in Education in China**

The year of 1978 saw China enter a completely new era of open-up and reform, after 10 years' turmoil caused by the Cultural Revolution. It was also in the same year that open-up and reform in education began in China, which was characterized by dispatching large numbers of Chinese students abroad. Now, more than 20 years have elapsed. When we look back, we are very proud to see that great achievements in China's education have been made thanks to open-up and reform. China's success in opening up to the outside world in all fields including internationalization of education has attracted great attention of the whole world.

International exchanges and cooperation in China were carried out mainly in the following respects.

A. Bilateral and multilateral exchanges and cooperations between China's educational institutions and those of other countries were frequently carried out. During the 20 years between 1978 and 1998, China established educational exchange and cooperation relationships with more than 150 countries and regions in the world. There were mutual visits of delegations consisting of university presidents, professors and administrative members. Chinese colleges and universities sponsored thousands of international conferences and symposiums. In addition, every year China sent large number of experts and teachers to work in foreign colleges and universities and invited experts and teachers from foreign universities to work in China. The number of both sent and invited experts and teachers were on the increase each year. There were also cooperative educational programs with international institutions and organizations such as the UNESCO and the World Bank.

A new aspect in personnel exchanges is the exchanges of administrative personnel and school leaders. They can be carried in different forms. In one exchange program between Suzhou University and Hokuriku University of Japan, one staff member from each university spent one semester in the host university working in the Registrar's Office of the university just like other members of the office. At the end of the semester, the two persons on the exchange program met and exchanged ideas and they jointly submitted a report making suggestions for the improvement of the office work.

One good illustration to show that exchanges will promote internationalization of higher education is that the former president of Fudan University of China and academician of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, Prof. Yang Fujia was offered the position at Nottingham University of UK as its fifth president in 2001. This was the

first time that Nottingham University, a world known institution of higher learning with a history of more than 100 years, gave this important position to a foreigner. The reason for the offering was, as was explained in the news bulletin of the University, to advance internationalization of the University.

B. Student exchange programs developed rapidly. In 1978, Mr. Deng Xiaoping, the late leader of China, made a talk on increasing the number of government-sponsored students to study abroad. Guided by the talk, the government outlined policies for the work of sponsoring students for studying abroad, that is, support for plans to study overseas, encouragement for students to return to China after completing studies and freedom for returned students to leave the country again. During the 20 years before 1998, as many as 320,000 Chinese students were sponsored either by the Chinese government or their universities to study in more than 100 countries and regions, covering almost every program of study. This number is unprecedented in Chinese history. During this period, Chinese colleges and universities accepted more than 300,000 students from other countries to study on the campus. The majority of them were enrolled into the Chinese language program, but quite a number of students also took up courses in other disciplines such as the traditional Chinese medicine, history, economics, business, and painting.

C. Study programs through international cooperation were booming. With the deepening of the implementation of the open-up and reform policies, people began to show a great interest in and eagerness for the learning of international knowledge. Contents of courses taught at foreign universities began to be incorporated into the classroom teaching and curriculum of Chinese universities. Original foreign textbooks were introduced. In addition, Sino-foreign jointly run schools and study programs emerged and developed rapidly. In general, these programs focused on subjects in applied liberal arts and management. By 2000, the number of such programs had increased to 200, among which 30 were degree programs approved by the State Council.

D. Sister relationships were established between Chinese and foreign universities. This has proved to be very helpful for exchanges and cooperations, since exchange and cooperation programs on the basis of sister relationships are easier to carry out and will last long. Suzhou University, which I am working for now, has established sister relationships with more than 80 colleges and universities in the US, Japan, Korea and other countries. Agreements or MODs were signed with each university and have served as guidelines for substantial exchanges and cooperations that followed.

Here, it is worthwhile to mention, in particular, our relationships with Korean universities, which started even before the diplomatic relations were established between China and Korea. As early as in 1990, some professors of Suzhou University

in China and Chonbuk National University in Korea, foreseeing the very large possibility of the two countries' establishing diplomatic relations in a short time, were already planning some informal academic exchanges. The day the formal diplomatic relations were announced, they extended congratulations on each other, and in April 1993, just a few months later, the two universities signed a formal agreement on academic exchanges and cooperations. Then in the next few years, sister relationships were established between Suzhou University and Taegu University (in May 1994), Chongju University (in May 1994), Ulsan University (in November 1997), Korean National Open University (in January 1998), Hanshin University (in July 2000), Juseong College (in March 2002) and Dongju College (in April 2002) respectively.

E. Much attention has been given to foreign language teaching and learning on part of the government, the university and every individual. A foreign language fad is spreading across the whole country. English, as the universally useful language, has become a required course from elementary school pupils to university students. Some more advanced schools and universities are teaching other courses bilingually, both in Chinese and in English. There are also numerous English training programs for those who are already working but weak in English.

Another fervor which is closely related to foreign language learning is to sit for the test introduced from foreign testing services, like TOEFL, GRE, GMAT and TSE from the US, BEC, KET and PET from UK, and the Japanese Language Competency Test which was introduced from Japan a little later.

F. The teaching of the Chinese language for foreigners is in full swing. Someone once said that the globalization of a country will definitely be accompanied by revival of its language and emphasis on its characterized culture. With the rapid economic growth of China and its stronger influence in international affairs, the Chinese language, as one of the five working languages of the United Nations, is gaining a popularity from people all over the world who are learning it not just for fun as was the case for many learners in the past. Rather, they now have a very practical purpose in mind when they take to the language.

#### **4. Developing Trends of International Exchanges and Cooperation of Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

(1) The primary goal of internationalization will be to turn out personnel of excellence. 20 years ago, someone pointed out that the key to success of a country in the new century is the internationalization of ideology of its people in the first place.



In other words, our final goal is not internationalized education itself, but to turn out personnel with an international vision who will make great contributions to the solution of the various problems of the world and to peace and prosperity of the mankind as a whole.

With this goal in mind, governments of all countries are attaching greater importance to the training of internationalized personnel for the new century. In the proposal that President Bush submitted to the congress on June 23, 2001, it was proposed that the government make every effort to set up a system that is favorable for achieving world-class research progress and producing world-class personnel, and that young research fellows be provided with more chances to bring into full play their skills and potentials in the competition of researches and development.

In Japan, it was planned, in the second phase of the Science and Technology Development Program that started in early 2001, to push ahead educational reforms in personnel training and to turn out 30 Nobel Prize winners in the next 50 years[6].

(2) Developing countries will play an important role in international education. Developing countries have fully realized that, in order to get rid of poverty and develop their own economy and education, they must take an active part in the process of internationalization of education. In doing so, they will be benefited by inviting foreign capital, introducing advanced teaching materials, curriculum, teaching methodology and management experience from advanced countries into their countries, and conducting exchanges of teachers, students and scientific research persons.

However, it is possible that internationalization of education will have a negative impact on the education of the traditional cultures of the developing countries, and will cause, to a certain extent, a loss of the finest personnel of their own. Therefore, it is advisable for the developing countries to keep international exchanges and cooperation and their dependence on developed countries at a moderate level in order to reduce the risk of colonialism of education. What is needed is the type of internationalization that will enable all countries to win and to develop on the basis of equality.

(3) Education will come in many forms and modes. In the new century, demands for education will be more varied than now. This is the inevitable result of the social development. Therefore, to facilitate educational exchanges and cooperation, schools of all countries should be very flexible in terms of their systems and teaching modes, including the teaching structure, curriculum design, and teaching techniques. In addition, education will not only be provided by the traditional schools. Transnational schools and internet schools, which take the advantages of speediness, convenience and high efficiency of the information technology, will constitute competition and challenge

for traditional schools. Also, libraries, museums and other media featured by the internet facilities will play the role of an educator.

## **5. Measures That will Be Taken in China for the Enhancement of Internationalized Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

China is a developing country and is in bad need of developing its education through exchanges and cooperation with other countries on the basis of mutual benefit. Measures that Chinese universities will take for internationalization of education will mainly fall into 6 points.

(1) Revise the existing courses and offer new ones. More attention will be given to the teaching of foreign languages, with emphasis on the enhancement of abilities of oral expression and paper writing, as proficiency in foreign languages is an important aspect of internationalization and plays an important part in international competition. At the same time, courses related to internationalization will be offers, such as international relations, world politics and economy, modern history of the world, economic geography of the world, cross-cultures, international organizations and intra-national corporations, international laws and norms, practical international fiancé and intellectual property.

In addition, it is beneficial for colleges and universities to invite well-known people both at home and abroad and successful returned students to give series lectures related to internationalization.

(2) Create a multi-cultural campus environment. Universities should have, on the campus, foreign students, especially graduate students from foreign countries, which is in good proportion to Chinese students. Having high level foreign students on campus not only helps upgrade reputation of the university and create a multi-cultural environment, but is also beneficial for increasing Chinese students foreign language skills.

(3) Invite famous professors and experts from foreign universities to teach or be involved in joint research projects on the campus. The multi-nationality composition of the teaching staff is also a remarkable symbol of internationalization and provides opportunities for Chinese teachers and students to be exposed in an international atmosphere for learning and research.

(4) Establish research projects or laboratories jointly with famous universities and

corporations of foreign countries.

(5) Strengthen student exchanges. Student exchange programs will be more beneficial and effective if they are included in the students program of study as a whole at college, that is, they can study or have internship in one of the famous foreign universities for a period (one semester or just for the holiday) and when they return to their home universities, they will continue their study program.

(6) Encourage students to be involved in international cultural activities or sports games or science and technology innovation projects. By doing so, students' international consciousness and insights will be raised.

To meet the ever pressing needs for personnel of the 21st century, it is imperative that we have breakthroughs in terms of our objectives and ways of thinking. We are bound to achieve progress in international education.

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