

# Challenges and Countermeasures for Private Universities in Providing Education for International Students

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**Abstract:** Private universities are one of the forces driving the internationalization of higher education in China. Private universities are taking advantage of the trend to provide education for international students, playing an important role in the high-quality development of higher education in China. However, they also face challenges such as insufficient policy support, lack of management experience, and limited enrollment channels. Breakthroughs can be made through methods such as refining content, expanding enrollment channels, and attracting talent.

**Keywords:** Private universities; Education for international students; Internationalization of higher education

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## 1. Introduction

The education for international students in China is an important path to promote the international development of China's higher education, an important measure to implement the "Belt and Road" initiative and comprehensively expand opening up, and a foundation project to establish China's international image in the new era, which has been highly valued and actively supported by the Party and the country<sup>[1]</sup>. In recent years, China's economy has developed rapidly, and its international status has been constantly improving, attracting more and more foreign students to work and study in China. Although private universities in China have played an important role in receiving foreign students, due to their short history and low popularity, they also face challenges in providing education for international students, such as insufficient government policy support, lack of management experience, and limited enrollment channels. This article will use this as a research question to conduct an in-depth analysis and attempt to propose effective countermeasures.

## **2. Challenges of private universities in providing education for international students**

### **2.1. Insufficient policy support**

At present, there are relatively few private universities with qualifications for international student education, and there is a lack of supporting policies at the national and local levels to support the development of international student education in private universities <sup>[2]</sup>. This has led to a lack of sustained development momentum in private universities. In a broad sense, private universities can provide education for international students simultaneously with public universities and should enjoy the same treatment in terms of funding support and resource allocation. However, the overseas Confucius Institutes or Confucius classrooms undertaken by private universities are limited, and the allocation of government scholarships and student recruitment for international students in private universities is relatively weak. Public universities and private universities have not yet reached the same level of success in providing education for international students. In addition, in terms of cultivating international students in private universities, the government has not introduced corresponding support policies, making it difficult for some private universities to fully leverage their advantages in international education.

### **2.2. Lack of management experience**

The management team for international student education in private universities is not yet mature. Firstly, the teaching management system and mechanism still need to be improved. Compared with developed countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom, China's teaching and talent management model for international students is still relatively backward, and the internationalization level of the curriculum system and daily teaching is still relatively low. A complete university preparatory system and language skills training system have not yet been formed <sup>[3]</sup>. Secondly, the professional level of the international student education management team still requires improvement. At present, most of the teaching management teams for international students in private universities are held by language full-time teachers. They bear a certain amount of teaching tasks for a certain period of time, with insufficient professionalism in management, making it difficult for high-level management teams to meet the needs of international students. Thirdly, the education level of the living management team for international students is relatively low, which makes it difficult to meet their daily language communication needs. Private universities in our country have not yet fully established a self-service and self-management system for international students. Generally, private universities often hire older individuals to be responsible for international students' clothing, food, housing, and transportation. This type of service team lacks sufficient knowledge of cross-cultural communication. Fourthly, the management of international students in private universities often lacks coordination and joint participation from all school departments, resulting in a separate cycle that operates independently of the overall teaching management system. There are problems in various aspects such as international student enrollment, teaching management, and daily management. The school has not been able to truly serve international students from a people-oriented perspective, leading to the infringement of their legitimate rights and interests, and there are still deficiencies in the management of international student education. Although the country has successively issued a series of documents to clarify and standardize the management of international students, the teaching quality, daily management, and services of private universities for international students in China still need to be enhanced. It is necessary to continuously strengthen their management and service capabilities, develop their connotations, and improve their quality and efficiency in order to gradually achieve the goal.

At the same time, there is a lack of experience and research on the management of international students in private universities in China. There are not many private universities in China that have the qualifications to conduct academic education for international students, and their enrollment scale is limited. They lack

the necessary reference in international student management experience, making it difficult to leverage their institutional advantages and truly achieve international education. Due to the lack of experience, there is a lack of communication channels for management experience among private universities and a lack of reflection on the development of international student education in private universities. The education regulatory authorities lack a grasp of the current situation, and the academic community lacks precise analysis and guidance on this. Private universities lack sufficient momentum to effectively manage international student education.

### **2.3. Limited enrollment channels for international students and low quality of student recruitment**

The limited enrollment channels indirectly lead to lax quality control of international students. However, the quality of students is limited, making it difficult to connect with the domestic higher education system, which directly leads to higher training costs for international students in the later stage<sup>[4]</sup>. This puts higher demands on the teaching and management teams of international students.

The enrollment channels for international students in private universities in our country are limited and generally rely on passive methods such as intermediary agencies, cooperative universities, and acquaintances for enrollment. There is a lack of enrollment brochures and promotional plans that match their own educational advantages and resources. China's higher education lacks sufficient appeal to students from developed and moderately developed countries, coupled with limited enrollment channels and insufficient promotion, it is difficult to provide the most intuitive introduction of enrollment goals. The quality of student recruitment is generally lower than that of Chinese international students with equivalent academic qualifications, and the main recruitment is from developing countries.

The admission threshold for international students in private universities is low. In the process of recruiting international students to China, there is often a blind expansion of enrollment scale, repeated relaxation of admission conditions, and a lack of strict control over student quality. At present, the recruitment of international students is only evaluated based on their language proficiency and adaptation to studying in China, with insufficient requirements for their professional abilities. In addition, the basic education received by students from their home country is vastly different from that in China, and there are also significant differences in the construction of knowledge systems and the development of learning habits.

## **3. Improvement measures for private universities to provide education for international students**

In response to the above issues, private universities should take the following measures based on their situation to improve the education for international students.

### **3.1. Consolidating connotation to build a first-class private university with distinctive characteristics**

The distinctive professional characteristics and the effectiveness of connotation construction are key measures for private universities to improve their international market competitiveness. Private universities with rapidly advancing strength in the world are the first to achieve breakthroughs in one or two fields<sup>[5]</sup>. The current international student education market is ultimately a competition of characteristics and quality. For private universities to distinguish themselves in the international study abroad market, they must leverage the advantages of their education systems for international students. This includes aligning majors with market demands, focusing on excellence in program offerings, competitiveness, and distinctive characteristics. They

should leverage strong disciplines to bolster the school's reputation, enhance attractiveness through specialized selection processes <sup>[6]</sup>, and utilize educational resources to establish a presence in the international market. By emphasizing the school's academic achievements and building upon its educational content, it can increase the value of professional brands and strive to achieve excellence that stands out in the global arena, meeting the evolving needs of society.

Private universities should pay attention to coordinating several types of relationships when actively condensing their characteristics. Firstly, they should coordinate the relationship between private universities and education authorities, actively seek policy support for the development of the school, and strengthen the organic interaction between international student education and local governments. Secondly, they need to coordinate the relationship between private universities and society, create an open and inclusive social environment for international student education, and serve the needs of local regional development. Thirdly, it is important to coordinate the relationship between local and international students in private universities, to ensure the basic needs of international students living and studying in China in accordance with the general practices of international student education, while also paying attention to balancing the gap between the two in terms of living and studying facilities.

### **3.2. Innovating methods to expand overseas publicity channels for private universities**

Private universities should open up their foreign affairs management ideas, strengthen overseas information exchange, actively expand overseas publicity channels, and make good use of word-of-mouth and brand effects. It is also necessary to choose suitable publicity partners and plans based on the overseas environment and formulate practical and feasible enrollment strategies.

Firstly, private universities should establish overseas offices to promote enrollment policies and educational models for domestic and international students and address communication biases caused by information asymmetry both domestically and internationally. Foreign students studying in China need assistance in resolving cultural misunderstandings arising from information asymmetry, which can increase their chances of being admitted to schools. Relying solely on national foreign affairs agencies limits communication channels and reduces efficiency in candidate selection. Secondly, private universities should coordinate the information resources of domestic and foreign cooperative universities. They can leverage mutual recommendations and alumni referrals to expand foreign information channels. By establishing reciprocal recommendation systems with similar institutions, private universities can enhance the credibility and attractiveness of their programs to international students. Thirdly, private universities should make good use of online promotion methods, establish overseas construction and regulatory channels according to the practices of overseas website construction, highlight the characteristics of private universities, and design overseas entrances.

### **3.3. Recruiting talents and introducing intelligence to consolidate the foundation of international student management in private universities**

In the education and management of international students, in addition to possessing certain professional qualities, they also need to be guided to become people who understand contemporary Chinese national conditions, develop an appreciation for China, foster friendship with China, and maintain a friendly attitude towards China <sup>[7]</sup>. This requires a teaching team engaged in the management of international student education to have a firm political stance, strong language and cross-cultural communication skills, a solid professional foundation, rich international education experience <sup>[8]</sup>, and a good understanding of Chinese politics, history, and cultural traditions. In this way, only with a high-quality and professional teaching team can we provide strong support for students in terms of international student management, teaching, and service.



### **3.3.1. Management of international students**

Firstly, it is necessary to combine social and economic benefits, reasonably set up enrollment majors, guide and regulate student structure, and encourage more high-level, high-quality, and diverse recruitment of international students for further education and learning in China. Secondly, it is necessary to establish a professional management team, expand ideas in the curriculum and daily management of international students, and improve the language preparation and professional skills training system. Thirdly, we must strictly control the intake and outflow of international students, improve the quality of student recruitment, and enhance the management level of international students. Fourthly, effective process supervision and evaluation should be carried out on the enrollment, teaching, and management of international students in universities.

### **3.3.2. Teaching for international students**

Firstly, it is imperative to develop a scientific and standardized training plan and specify training objectives, study duration, curriculum design, training methods, etc. Secondly, private universities should establish a high-level teaching team, hire foreign teaching staff with a solid professional foundation, introduce high-level overseas talents with an international perspective, and establish a stable channel for talent promotion, continuing education, and overseas further education. Thirdly, it must firmly grasp our stance and combine it with the social background of the country where international students are studying. We should conduct ideological and moral education for international students in a serious and engaging manner, using both individual and collective, formal and informal approaches. It should be imparted respectfully, without imposition, while also implementing strict management and providing attentive care. Fourthly, we need to actively leverage the incentive effects of government scholarships, Confucius Institute scholarships, regional scholarships, and institutional scholarships, and based on students' performance in various aspects such as curriculum learning, cultural exposure, and practical experience, construct a three-dimensional evaluation system for international students, maintain their learning motivation, and ensure their learning outcomes<sup>[9]</sup>.

### **3.3.3. Services for international student**

Firstly, we should develop a comprehensive plan for international students based on their cultural characteristics and professional development needs, including specific initiatives such as international student training programs, career planning, and life guidance throughout their stay in China. By offering practical, reliable, and engaging life guidance, we can effectively support international students during their time in China. Secondly, training should be provided for the service team to anticipate and address common cross-cultural communication barriers<sup>[10]</sup>. Thirdly, we should establish a self-management and self-service system for international students, stimulate their subjective initiative, and improve their adaptability to new environments. Fourthly, it is imperative to strengthen hardware construction, collaborate with the resource advantages of private universities, and form a service network for resource and information sharing.

## **4. Conclusion**

Education for international students in China is one of the important tasks to expand China's influence and spread Chinese culture. Private universities are one of the forces that showcase modern China and stimulate intellectual collision. Through official policy guidance and support from the public, private universities can be further incentivized to provide international student education, deeply reflect on the problems in the management of international student education in private universities, and fully tap into the vitality of the educational system and mechanism of private universities. This is also an important path to enhance the

internationalization of education in China.

## Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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