

The Innovative Research on the Convergence Management Mechanism for International Students in Vocational Colleges in China

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ABSTRACT

With the continuous acceleration of the internationalization of vocational colleges in China, optimizing the convergence management of international students coming to China has become an important task for these institutions. This article elaborates on the connotation of convergence management from the aspects of cultural environment, educational resources, and management models, and analyzes the dilemmas in ideological recognition and management systems that vocational colleges face in convergence management. Vocational colleges should enhance their understanding of convergence management for international students coming to China, and take innovative measures in three aspects: the cultivation of an international teaching staff, the construction of a long-term management mechanism, and the improvement of the quality of international student training throughout the entire chain. This will enhance the reputation of international education and better serve the realization of the goal of becoming an educational powerhouse.

Keywords: *International students in China, Convergence management, Talent cultivation of international students.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The state has called for the coordinated development of "bringing in" and "going out" in education, making China a world-renowned education hub with significant influence. An important measure is outlined in the report of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, which points out the need to improve the strategic layout of talent, accelerate the construction of world-important talent centers and innovation hubs, and strive to form a comparative advantage in international talent competition, gathering outstanding talents from all aspects to the cause of the Party and the people. In 2023, the "Notice from the General Office of the Ministry of Education on Accelerating the Key Tasks of the Modern Vocational Education System Construction Reform" proposed to speed up the construction of vocational colleges with a high level of internationalization. The internationalization of vocational colleges is increasingly becoming an important part of building a modern vocational

education system with Chinese characteristics. Doing a good job in education for international students coming to China is an important aspect of enhancing China's international influence in education and creating the "Study in China" brand. According to the Ministry of Education's statistics for 2022, more than 400 vocational colleges in China have cooperated with foreign educational institutions to run schools, with a full-time international student scale reaching 17,000. Against the backdrop of the international situation, which is undergoing profound changes unseen in a century, the structure, quantity, and level of international students coming to vocational colleges in China are changing, posing new requirements for Chinese vocational colleges to improve the management level of international students and enhance the attractiveness of the "Study in China" brand.

The Ministry of Education issued the "Quality Standards for Higher Education of International Students in China (Implementation)" in 2018, proposing to gradually achieve convergence in teaching management between Chinese and

international students. At this stage, overall, Chinese vocational colleges are gradually exploring the convergence of international students in teaching, management, and service dimensions, and have preliminarily established a management and service system for international students. However, there is still a significant gap from achieving the goal of "convergence." How to break through the bottleneck in the cultivation of international students in vocational colleges, release the dividends of vocational education "bringing in" through well international student management, and support the "going out" of vocational education joint ventures has become one of the important tasks that vocational colleges urgently need to address in their international education endeavors.[1]

2. CONNOTATION OF CONVERGENCE MANAGEMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN CHINA

The convergence management of international students coming to China refers to the practice of universities incorporating the education of these students into the overall educational quality assurance system. It involves implementing uniform standards for teaching management and assessment, providing equal and consistent teaching resources and management services, and safeguarding the cultural exchanges and legal rights of both Chinese and international students. The aim of convergence management is to provide an environmental and institutional guarantee for students from different cultural backgrounds to perceive and accept Chinese culture, improve their study efficiency in China, and promote cultural and academic exchanges between China and other countries. The convergence management of international students in vocational colleges should abandon the past single-minded approach that is solely rule-oriented and also avoid catering to international students by adopting a cultivation method that offers special privileges. Instead, it should strive to create an educational environment that respects cultural diversity and efficiently trains students with excellent skills and outstanding qualities, ensuring equal educational opportunities for international students. By achieving convergence management, it can effectively promote cultural and academic exchanges between international and Chinese students, and fully leverage the function of attracting and utilizing

talent in the education of international students in China.

2.1 Convergence in the Cultural Environment

The acceptance and deep integration of culture is key to whether international students can adapt smoothly to a new foreign environment, and it is also an important cornerstone for improving the quality of education and training for these students. This process is not static or one-way but is a dynamic, interactive, and two-way process that includes stages such as deep cultural understanding, active adaptation, and ultimately harmonious integration into a new environment.

In this process, on one hand, international students need to maintain an open and enterprising attitude, actively learn and experience Chinese culture and academic atmosphere, and try their best to adapt to the new environment. At the same time, vocational colleges also need to actively create an open, equal, respectful, and diverse inclusive cultural environment to provide strong external support for the cultural adaptation process of international students.

It is important to note that the pursuit of convergence in the cultural environment is not a one-way requirement for international students to accept and integrate into Chinese culture. On the contrary, achieving cultural exchange and coexistence on the basis of respecting and understanding the original cultural background of international students is even more important. In other words, the "convergence" of the cultural environment is by no means the pursuit of "assimilation" of international students. Instead, it is about actively promoting cultural exchange and mutual learning between China and other countries through a variety of activities such as cross-cultural communication courses and multicultural exhibitions, creating a diverse and inclusive cultural environment on campus. By using "culture" to "cultivate" "people," international students can integrate into this environment, thus achieving true convergence management. This not only enhances the cultural literacy of international students but also strengthens their sense of belonging and identification with the new environment. [2]

2.2 Convergence in Educational Resources

The convergence of educational resources does not simply demand that international students

coming to China receive identical courses and examinations as domestic students, nor does it advocate for "specialized" care or extra privileges for these students. Its core concept revolves around equality and sharing, aiming to provide all students with high-quality teaching and practical training opportunities both inside and outside the campus, thereby promoting the cultivation of international talents [3]. To achieve this goal, vocational colleges should prioritize the introduction and cultivation of international talents, comprehensively planning and designing every aspect of talent cultivation, including enrolment, teaching, and internships.

However, it is a reality that must be faced that international students at vocational colleges generally have weaker language skills and foundational subject knowledge. In light of this, vocational colleges should adopt more targeted strategies, especially providing international students with necessary language training and academic tutoring to help them quickly close the knowledge gap and better integrate into the overall teaching environment of the school. Such tutoring and training are not only conducive to enhancing the academic abilities of international students but also a key measure in promoting the convergence of educational resources and educational equity. By achieving convergence in educational resources, vocational colleges can effectively promote the cultural and academic exchanges between international and Chinese students, fully leveraging the function of attracting and utilizing talent in international student education.

2.3 Convergence in Management Models

In the context of the internationalization of higher education today, the convergence management model is increasingly recognized by various vocational colleges. This model advocates for the integration of the management functions of overseas education colleges into the relevant functional departments of the school, achieving unified management. For instance, teaching functions are handed over to the academic affairs office, and international students are managed in a manner similar to Chinese students. This approach not only simplifies the management process and improves efficiency but also helps to promote exchanges and integration between Chinese and international students. [4]

The core concept of the convergence management model is not to emphasize the differences of international students coming to

China but to incorporate them into the educational management system of Chinese students. This breaks away from the traditional specialized management approach towards international students, allowing them to better integrate into campus life and enhancing their sense of belonging. At the same time, it reflects the principle of educational equity, allowing both Chinese and international students to receive education and management on the same platform, which is conducive to improving their abilities in cultural and humanistic exchanges.

However, the convergence management model does not mean ignoring the special needs and individual differences of international students. In practice, vocational colleges still need to pay attention to issues such as the cultural background and language barriers of international students and provide corresponding support and assistance. This requires universities to maintain sufficient flexibility and humanistic care while implementing convergence management, to ensure that the study and life of international students are properly arranged.

3. THE DILEMMA OF CONVERGENCE MANAGEMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN VOCATIONAL COLLEGES IN CHINA

Vocational colleges in China are placing increasing emphasis on educational quality and using assessment and accreditation as effective means to measure the quality of talent cultivation for international students. However, it is also essential to recognize that assessment and accreditation alone are not sufficient to guarantee the quality of education for international students, as they do not inherently possess the safeguarding functions of a quality assurance system. [5]

3.1 Insufficient Recognition of the Importance of Managing International Students in China

In the process of promoting internationalization, most vocational colleges consider the scale and quality of international student recruitment as one of the important indicators of their school's level of internationalization. However, due to the drive of internationalization indicators and a lack of thorough understanding of policies for recruiting and training international students, these colleges

often harbor two erroneous concepts regarding the management of international students. One is a lax approach, giving too much freedom. This management style often stems from an overemphasis on the special status of international students, assuming they should enjoy more freedom and privileges, thus neglecting standardized management [6]. Such a permissive management approach can not only lead to poor academic outcomes for international students but also negatively impact campus order. The other misguided concept is treating international students as "foreign guests," establishing a separate management system for them in terms of education, life management, and internships, isolating them from other students. Although this "specialized" approach may be convenient for management in the short term, it is no longer suitable for the direction of internationalization in vocational colleges in the face of the high demands of educational openness in the new era.

3.2 The Management System for International Students in Vocational Colleges Has Not Kept Pace with the Times

The convergence management requires close cooperation among school departments, integrating the recruitment and teaching management of international students into the management system for Chinese students, thereby achieving the goal of "convergence" management. At present, vocational colleges lack inter-departmental collaboration in the daily management of international students. Most vocational colleges still adopt a centralized management approach through departments such as the International Education College or the International Office, with a single department responsible for various tasks including the recruitment, education, and management services of international students. However, due to reasons such as limited staffing, human resource allocation, and insufficient ability to allocate school resources, the effectiveness of this centralized management is often not satisfactory. Therefore, to achieve convergence management, it is urgent to strengthen the collaborative cooperation among various departments of vocational colleges in the management of international students, especially the linkage between the International Education College and secondary colleges as well as other administrative departments has not been effectively formed, and the synergy in management needs to be enhanced. In addition, there are internal

departmental barriers within the school, which prevent the entire chain of international student recruitment, teaching, assessment, life management, and internships from being connected. The lack of effective communication and collaboration between departments causes many inconveniences for international students in their campus life and studies [7]. For example, the lack of information sharing between the recruitment department and the teaching department may lead to uneven distribution of teaching resources; the disconnection between the teaching department and the life management department may result in international students' living issues not being resolved in a timely manner. Vocational colleges need to strengthen their understanding of the importance of internationalization, update management concepts, improve management systems, and enhance communication and collaboration between departments, in order to better adapt to the development of the new situation of international students coming to China and to lay the foundation for improving the school's level of internationalization.

4. INNOVATIVE MEASURES FOR THE CONVERGENCE MANAGEMENT OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN VOCATIONAL COLLEGES IN CHINA

Vocational colleges need to establish a comprehensive management system for international students that covers ten aspects, including teaching, accommodation, and safety, to ensure that the management of international students is regulated and effective. The approach should Adhere to the needs of international students as the central focus, integrating management and services, showing care, affection, respect, and understanding for their cultural habits and ways of thinking. And colleges will be centered on the needs of international students, integrating management and services, showing care, affection, respect, and understanding for their cultural habits and ways of thinking.

4.1 Innovative Concept — Deepening the Understanding of Convergence Management

Vocational colleges should establish a unified ideology, deeply recognizing the importance of

optimizing the management of international students coming to China in enhancing the overall educational level of the school. All functional departments and secondary colleges need to work closely together to synergistically promote the internationalization process of the school and jointly build a community of shared destiny committed to improving the level of internationalization. This close cooperation not only helps to enhance the school's global influence but also provides a solid foundation for cultivating outstanding talents with an international perspective and cross-cultural communication skills.

At the same time, vocational colleges should focus on long-term development, concentrating on the continuous improvement of talent cultivation and connotation quality. In line with the school's unique educational goals and positioning, a scientific and comprehensive medium- to long-term training plan for international talents should be carried out. In this process, it is essential to always adhere to the core principle of the quality of international student talent cultivation, by exporting high-quality professional teaching standards, strengthening in-depth international cooperation with enterprises, and committing to cultivating outstanding international students who understand, befriend, and assist China. This strategy not only helps to attract more outstanding international talents to study at the school but also effectively promotes the school's excellent talents and resources to the world, thereby expanding global influence and further accelerating the pace of educational internationalization.

4.2 System Innovation — Ensuring the Implementation of Convergence Management with Systems, Teams, and Management Models

The convergence management strategy does not have a fixed pattern, and its specific measures are often adjusted according to local conditions and differences in specialties and cultures. For the homogeneous cultivation of international students coming to China, each vocational college needs to tailor professional paths based on its own educational characteristics and development needs. They should establish an international talent training system focusing on the construction of an international faculty team, the establishment of a long-term management mechanism for the "convergence" of Chinese and international students, and the enhancement of the quality of

international student talent cultivation throughout the entire process. This lays a solid foundation for the internationalization of the school's education.

4.2.1 Building a Faculty Team with International Competence

Vocational colleges can actively explore the potential of international exchange platforms and cooperative education projects, deepen bilateral or multilateral educational cooperation, and carry out international faculty exchanges and training to enhance the international perspective, professional capabilities, and cross-cultural communication levels of the existing young and middle-aged teaching staff. In addition, vocational colleges can also introduce outstanding teachers who possess international educational concepts, are proficient in foreign-related affairs management, and have excellent language skills, gradually building a team of international student managers who are professionally excellent, morally noble, capable, and progressive.

4.2.2 Establishing a Long-term Management Mechanism for the "Convergence" of Chinese and International Students

When promoting the education of international students coming to China, vocational colleges should closely follow the school's blueprint for internationalization and rely on their unique educational characteristics to carefully create training programs for international students. The "Quality Standards for Higher Education of International Students in China (Implementation)" issued by the Ministry of Education in 2018 clearly states that universities should incorporate the education of international students into the school's overall educational quality assurance system, implementing unified standards for teaching management and examination assessment, providing equal teaching resources and management services, and safeguarding the cultural exchanges and legal rights of Chinese and international students. Therefore, it is necessary for vocational colleges to establish a management mechanism that treats all students equally, set up a leading group for international student management with school leaders at the core, and issue norms for international student teaching and campus management to completely eliminate "double standards" in teaching and campus management. Under such a management system, international

students will receive professional education and skill training without any difference from Chinese students, thus achieving true convergence in educational management and creating a fairer and just learning environment together.

4.2.3 *Enhancing the Quality of the Full Chain of International Student Talent Cultivation*

Vocational education, as a different type of higher education, plays an important role in the education of international students coming to China. Especially under the guidance of national policies and the incentives of school internationalization indicators, some universities, in order to attract more external resources, enhance competitiveness, and improve the school's reputation and reputation,

do not hesitate to lower the recruitment threshold for international students, set recruitment conditions for international students that are lower than those for Chinese students, and improve their scholarships and accommodation-related standards. With the increasing number of international students, the issue of uneven quality of student sources and graduate levels has begun to stand out. Therefore, vocational colleges should take documents such as the "Quality Standards for Higher Education of International Students in China (Implementation)" as policy guidance, and introduce regulations and measures for the entire chain of international student training, including input quality of recruitment, quality of training process, and output quality of graduates. Specific measures are shown in "Table 1".

Table 1. Measures for the full chain cultivation and improvement of international students in vocational colleges in China

Involving Content	Specific Measures
Recruitment Input Quality	Utilize international cooperation platforms effectively, tap into the potential for external collaboration, and expand diverse recruitment channels. Conduct effective external promotion, highlight flagship programs, and enhance the attractiveness of the institution. Strengthen the recruitment review process and implement a "strict admission" assessment mechanism.
Quality of the Training Process	Provide language training to lay the foundation for professional courses. Set cultivation objectives in line with the school's educational goals, current academic status, and the situation of international students. Fully mobilize the enthusiasm and creativity of teachers, make rational use of online education platforms, and establish an online Chinese language teaching resource library. Improve the teaching quality evaluation and feedback mechanisms, make good use of scholarships and other incentive tools, and perfect the reward and punishment system for international students. Introduce a school-enterprise cooperation training model of "industry experts + school teachers" and encourage international students to intern in Chinese overseas enterprises.
Quality of Graduate Output	Strictly enforce the same degree-granting standards for both Chinese and international students. Strictly enforce teaching and assessment systems to ensure the quality of talent output establish an alumni association for international graduates to enhance the reputation of the institution's international education.

5. CONCLUSION

The level of convergence management for international students in vocational colleges in China still varies across different stages. These institutions should regard the management and construction of international students as a crucial

lever for enhancing the level of international education. Starting from convergence management, they should strengthen the construction of systems and faculty teams, and create an open and inclusive campus environment. This will enhance the reputation of their international education and

better serve the realization of the goal of becoming an educational powerhouse.

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