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## Research on the global competence and experience of undergraduates

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### Abstract

In response to the growing demand for higher education to cultivate global talent amid contemporary global developments, this study investigates the status of Chinese universities' efforts in fostering global competency among undergraduates. Addressing a research gap in understanding the relationship between students' global experiences and their global competency, the study surveyed 3,513 undergraduates, comparing outcomes across different types of universities and analyzing key factors contributing to global competency. Using regression analysis, the study reveals that undergraduates from Project 985 universities scored significantly higher in global competency and engaged more frequently in globalization-related activities compared to their peers at nonelite institutions. Global experiences, including participation in internationalization-focused courses, academic events with global themes, social interactions with overseas students, and maintaining connections with foreign peers, were found to significantly enhance students' global competency. These findings highlight the need to balance internationalization efforts across both elite and nonelite universities while emphasizing the importance of enriching students' academic and communicative experiences. The study underscores the critical role of equitable and diverse internationalization strategies in developing global talent, offering actionable insights for policymakers and educators aiming to strengthen global competency across higher education institutions.

**Keywords :** Global competence; global experience; undergraduates

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Higher education should prioritize promoting cultural integration and enhancing international understanding as a key mission in today's global context, reflected in the competencies of the talent it cultivates which entails social competence (Zhao, 2022). The Chinese government's policies highlight its commitment to the internationalization of higher education and the development of globally competent talent. For instance, the Outline of the National Medium- and Long-Term Education Reform and Development Plan (2010–2020) explicitly calls for the cultivation of a large pool of internationally oriented individuals who possess a global vision, understand international norms, and can engage in international affairs and global competition. Similarly, the China Education Modernization 2035, issued by the Central Committee and the State Council, along with the Implementation Plan for Accelerating Education Modernization (2018–2022), reaffirms the necessity of comprehensively enhancing international exchange and cooperation and accelerating the training of high-level international talent.

Certain Chinese scholars have turned their focus to international comparative research, comparing China's leading universities with prominent global institutions. In line with this, Lv et al., (2013) findings indicate significant differences and gaps between Chinese universities and international institutions in terms of students' global competencies and experiences. Recently, Lu and Li (2020) analyzed the characteristics of college students' global learning experiences, the development of global competence, and their interrelationships. However, these studies primarily employ case-based comparisons. More specifically, Lv et al., (2013) focused on Nanjing University, and Lu and Li (2020) conducted their survey at Xi'an Jiaotong University. Both studies provide empirical support for our understanding of the global competence and experience of students at elite universities in China. Nevertheless, they limit our comprehensive understanding of the overall progress and effectiveness of Chinese universities in cultivating globally competent talent.

To provide a more nuanced understanding of undergraduates' global experiences and global competencies from diverse categories of universities, we introduced the widely known typology of Chinese universities, namely "Project 985" (hereafter referred to as 985 universities), "Project 211" (hereafter referred to as 211 universities) and "non-985 or 211 universities" (hereafter referred to as non-key universities). Revealing the differences among these three types, our investigation can help to provide a holistic picture of the students' global experience and competence in China. Therefore, the first research question is: To what extent do global experience and global competence differ among students from the three types of universities? Additionally, we also seek to explore the relationship between students' global experience and their global competence which seems to be logically connected. Therefore, the second research question is: What is the relationship, if any, between Chinese university students' global experience and their global competence?

### 1.1. Conceptual background

Regarding global competence, various international scholars have provided different definitions, most of which are grounded in either empirical evidence or theoretical reflection. Lee Olsen and Kroeger (2001), Jaiswal et al., (2024), and Trang & Phuong (2023) argue that an operational definition of global competence should encompass substantive knowledge, perceived understanding, cross-cultural communication skills for effective interaction in an interdependent world, or the presence of individuals with such knowledge, understanding, and skills within globally competitive organizations, along with a culture conducive to enhancing these capacities. Vinz's Global Capacities Framework includes critical capacities (interpretation, analysis, synthesis, evaluation), communicative capacities (observation, reflection, multimodal communication, strategic collaboration), creative capacities (imagination, questioning, simulation, appreciation of ambiguity),

and global awareness capacities (problem-solving, demonstrating global awareness, intertextual thinking, and multidimensional perspectives) (Li, 2018).

Hunter (2004), using the empirical Delphi Method to survey nearly 200 experts, characterized global competence as the ability to maintain an open attitude while actively striving to comprehend the cultural norms and expectations of others. It also involves utilizing pre-existing knowledge to engage, communicate, and collaborate effectively in environments beyond one's immediate context. In addition to scholars, some international organizations have also provided definitions of global competence. In 2016, the OECD presented a report to the education ministers of seven countries titled "Global Competency for an Inclusive World". This report posits that global competence involves the ability to critically analyze global and intercultural issues from diverse perspectives, understand how differences influence one's own and others' viewpoints, judgments, and ideas, and engage in open, appropriate, and effective interactions with individuals from different backgrounds, based on respect for human dignity.

In summary, the present research argues that any definition of global competence invariably involves two foundational dimensions: understanding and interaction. Understanding can be viewed as a static, introspective dimension focused on the analysis and internalization of knowledge regarding global issues, as well as on applying acquired knowledge to address global challenges. Interaction, in contrast, is a dynamic, application-oriented dimension, emphasizing real-life contexts of living and working, where competence is reflected through language proficiency, intercultural collaboration abilities, emotional experiences, and demonstrated professional and ethical standards (Lee et al., 2023; Worley et al., 2023).

At present, definitions and studies concerning global experiences are relatively scarce. This study focuses on global experiences as a significant component of students' undergraduate experiences. Specifically, global experiences are a subset of academic experiences and constitute an integral part of the learner's overall experiences during their academic journey. According to Astin (2001), student experiences encompass various dimensions, including coursework, faculty-student interactions, peer collaboration, work or part-time employment, and research involvement. Based on Astin's student involvement theory, the more time and effort college students invest in meaningful activities, the greater their benefits from the college experience. Academic experiences can be further divided into academic and non-academic experiences. The former refers to experiences directly related to classroom activities, while the latter encompasses interactions and engagements beyond the classroom (Gong and Lu, 2012).

### **1.2. Purpose of study**

Similarly, global experience can be categorized into academic and interpersonal dimensions. The academic experience includes all activities related to cross-cultural and transnational academic engagements, such as course study, international conferences and lectures, skill training, and translational research projects. The interpersonal dimension comprises primarily local students and international students, as well as the platforms essential for their interaction. These platforms include both formal and tangible structures, such as courses and student organizations, as well as informal and intangible channels, such as personal contacts and exchanges between domestic and international students.

## **2. METHOD AND MATERIALS**

### **2.1. Data collection instrument**

The current assessment of global competence is relatively underdeveloped, with few specialized questionnaires or scales available. Instead, global competence is often addressed as a subordinate part of

broader research endeavors (Wang, 2017). In this study, we employed the widely used “Student Experience in Research University” (SERU) survey tool, specifically focusing on the “Global Skills and Awareness” items. The SERU project originated from the University of California Undergraduate Experience Survey (UCUES), initiated by the University of California, Berkeley, in 2002. UCUES aimed to investigate and analyze undergraduate students’ learning experiences and the quality of education they received. Since 2011, the UCUES project has been formally expanded to a global scale, establishing the SERU International Consortium for Global Research (Lv et al., 2013).

The module on “Global Skills and Awareness” is composed of two primary components: “Global Experiences” and “Global Competence.” Our research team conducted iterative translations, revisions, and refinements of the questionnaire to ensure clarity, comprehensibility, and alignment with the nuances of the Chinese language, facilitating smoother responses from participants. After conducting a small-scale pilot test, we made further modifications to the wording of the items to enhance the questionnaire’s cultural adaptability. We also tested the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value of the relevant sections (0.812) and performed Bartlett’s test of sphericity, confirming that the data was suitable for factor analysis.

## **2.2 Participants**

The survey for this study was primarily distributed online, yielding a total of 3,513 valid responses following screening and data processing. Among the respondents, 1,100 were male (31.31%), and 2,413 were female (68.69%). The sample included 944 first-year students (26.87%), 1,110 second-year students (31.6%), 868 third-year students (24.71%), and 591 fourth-year students (16.82%). In terms of academic disciplines, the sample exhibited the following distribution: humanities students constituted the largest group with 1,106 participants (31.48%), closely followed by engineering and technology students with 1,074 participants (30.57%). The remaining respondents were distributed across social sciences (841 participants, 23.94%), natural sciences (287 participants, 8.17%), and medical and agricultural sciences (205 participants, 5.84%). Concerning institutional types, 1,265 participants (36.01%) were enrolled in 985 or 211 universities - elite higher education institutions - while 2,248 participants (63.99%) were from non-key universities.

## **3. RESULTS**

### **3.1. Comparison of global competence**

Our findings reveal a significant variation in global competence across different types of higher education institutions. The means and standard deviations for the two sub-items assessing global understanding and the four sub-items evaluating global communication skills are presented in Table 1. Students from 985 universities consistently achieve the highest scores in both dimensions, that is, global understanding and communication, demonstrating their competencies are markedly superior to those of students from other institutions. Although 211 universities generally exhibit stronger competencies in both areas compared to regular universities, the differences are minimal.

Notably, in sub-items A5, "I feel comfortable working with people from diverse cultural backgrounds," and A6, "I understand what constitutes ethical and professional responsibility in an international/global context," students from non-key universities even outperform those from 211 institutions. Overall, undergraduates from 985 universities exhibit significantly higher global competencies than their peers at the other two types of institutions, while the observed differences between students from 211 and non-key universities are relatively minor.

**Table 1**

*Comparison of global understanding and interpersonal communication abilities among undergraduates from different types of universities*

s	985 U (N=306)		211 U (N=959)		Non-key U (N=2248)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
<b>Comprehension competency</b>						
A1. Understanding and Recognizing the Complexity of Global Issues.	4.07	1.01	3.81	1.03	3.72	1.03
A2. The ability to apply subject knowledge in understanding and solving global problems.	3.83	1.08	3.50	1.03	3.48	1.06
<b>Communication competency</b>						
A3. Possessing language proficiency and cultural understanding in at least one foreign language other than their native language.	4.58	0.99	4.03	1.12	3.88	1.13
A4. Able to work with people from different cultural backgrounds.	4.48	1.08	3.97	1.09	3.95	1.08
A5. I feel comfortable working with people from diverse cultural backgrounds.	4.53	1.03	4.27	1.05	4.30	1.05
A6. I understand what constitutes ethical and professional responsibility in an international/global context.	4.66	0.95	4.48	0.96	4.52	1.00
<b>Global competence (general)</b>	<b>4.36</b>	<b>0.76</b>	<b>4.01</b>	<b>0.75</b>	<b>3.98</b>	<b>0.75</b>

Table 2 presents the results of multiple comparisons. Further analysis through pairwise comparisons reveals a statistically significant difference between 985 universities and the other two types of institutions within the sample. However, no significant difference is observed between 211 universities and non-key institutions, as indicated by p-values greater than 0.05. This comparative analysis further substantiates the findings outlined above.

**Table 2**

*Multiple Comparisons of Global Competencies*

Dependent Variable	(I) Univ type	(J) Univ type	Mean Difference (I-J)	Standard Deviation	Significance	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Limit	Upper Limit
Comprehension competency	985 U	211 U	0.59331*	0.12182	0.000	0.3545	0.8321
		Non-key U	0.69644*	0.11305	0.000	0.4748	0.9181
	211 U	985 U	-0.59331*	0.12182	0.000	-0.8321	-0.3545
		Non-key U	0.10314	0.07156	0.150	-0.0372	0.2434
	Non-key U		-0.69644*	0.11305	0.000	-0.9181	-0.4748
Communication competency	985 U	211 U	1.49014*	0.21288	0.000	1.0728	1.9075
		Non-key U	1.58585*	0.19757	0.000	1.1985	1.9732
	211 U	985 U	-1.49014*	0.21288	0.000	-1.9075	-1.0728
		Non-key U	0.09570	0.12506	0.444	-0.1495	0.3409
	Non-key U		-1.58585*	0.19757	0.000	-1.9732	-1.1985
	985 U	211 U	-0.09570	0.12506	0.444	-0.3409	0.1495
Global	985 U	211 U	2.083*	0.279	0.000	1.50	2.67

competence	Non-key U	2.282*	0.275	0.000	1.74	2.82	
	211 U	985 U	-2.083*	0.279	0.000	-2.67	-1.50
	Non-key U	0.199	0.174	0.254	-0.14	0.54	
	Non-key U	-2.282*	0.275	0.000	-2.8	-1.74	
	985	211 U	-0.199	0.174	0.254	-0.54	0.14

\* The significant level of the mean difference is 0.05.

### 3.2 Comparison of global experience

Table 3 presents the chi-square test (cross-tabulation) results regarding the differences in globalization-related academic and intercultural experiences among students from three types of higher education institutions. The findings indicate that undergraduate students from 985 universities exhibit a comprehensive advantage in global experiences, while the proportion of students with global experiences from 211 universities is only marginally higher than that of students from non-key universities.

Specifically, except for the category “Obtaining a certificate/minor/major in international/global issues” ( $P=0.261 > 0.05$ , indicating no significant difference), the proportion of students with globalization-related academic experiences from 985 universities surpasses that of students from 211 universities by approximately 9 to 13 percentage points. Moreover, except for the item “Participation in performances with an international/global theme,” the proportion of undergraduate students with intercultural experiences from 985 universities exceeds that of students from 211 universities by as much as 15 to 34 percentage points. The gap between non-key universities and 985 universities is even more pronounced; for instance, in terms of “Interacting with foreign students through course-based learning,” the difference reaches nearly 40 percentage points, while the disparity in “Interacting with foreign students through social activities” also exceeds 30 percentage points.

In comparing 211 universities with ordinary non-key universities, it is evident that the former has a higher overall proportion of students with intercultural communication experiences, though the advantage is not substantial. In particular, the differences in the categories “Having connections with students from one or more foreign universities” and “Participation in performances with an international/global theme” are minimal. In terms of globalization-related academic experiences, although 211 universities outperform non-key universities in categories B1, B3, and B4, students from non-key universities exhibit higher proportions in the categories of “Obtaining a certificate/minor/major in international/global issues” and “Presenting or participating in conferences with an international/global theme.” Generally, when comparing the proportion of students with global experiences between 211 universities and non-key universities, the difference is negligible.

**Table 3**

*Comparison of global academic and communication experiences among undergraduates from different types of universities*

	Item	Option	university type			X <sup>2</sup>	P
			985 U	211 U	Non-key U		
Academic experiences	B1. Having studied or currently studying a course with an international/global focus.	YES	58.82%	45.36%	40.08%	41.188	0.000**
		NO	41.18%	54.64%	59.92%		
	B2. Obtaining certifications or a minor/major in	YES	5.88%	3.75%	4.63%	2.688	0.261
		NO	94.12%	96.25%	95.37%		

Communication experiences	international/global issues.						
	B3. Experience working with teachers who specialize in international/global issues.	YES	24.51%	14.49%	11.57%		
		NO	75.49%	85.51%	88.43%	39.795	0.000**
	B4. Attending lectures, discussions, training, conferences, etc. on international/globalization-related topics.	YES	59.15%	40.56%	33.50%		
		NO	40.85%	59.44%	66.50%	80.236	0.000**
	B5. Giving presentations at conferences with an international/global theme, or participating in similar events.	YES	20.26%	10.64%	12.94%		
		NO	79.74%	89.36%	87.06%	19.063	0.000**
	C1. Communicating with foreign students through course study.	YES	66.34%	32.12%	26.87%		
		NO	33.66%	67.88%	73.13%	193.772	0.000**
	C2. Communicating with foreign students through social activities.	YES	62.09%	36.91%	30.78%		
		NO	37.91%	63.09%	69.22%	117.502	0.000**
	C3. Having connections with students from one or more foreign universities.	YES	35.62%	20.44%	19.31%		
		NO	64.38%	79.56%	80.69%	43.443	0.000**
	C4. Participating in performances with an international/global theme.	YES	14.71%	11.47%	9.48%		
	NO	85.29%	88.53%	90.52%	9.250	0.010**	

\* p<0.05    \*\* p<0.01

### 3.3 The relationship between global competence and global experience

To investigate the relationship between global competence and global experience, we initially conducted a correlational analysis examining the associations between global competence and variables such as gender, academic major, father's highest level of education, mother's highest level of education, monthly household income, academic year, the province where the high school was located, the province of the university attended, and various measures of global experience. The results indicated that the correlation coefficients between global competence and the variables of gender, academic major, academic year, high school province, and university province were close to zero, showing no statistically significant correlations. Subsequently, to achieve a more precise understanding of the relationship between global competence and global experience, we employed hierarchical regression analysis, controlling for the father's highest level of education, the mother's highest level of education, and monthly household income as control variables.

**Table 4**  
*Model of global competence impact factors*

	Model 1				Model 2			
	$\beta$	SE	t	P	$\beta$	SE	t	P
Constant	3.300**	0.049	66.669	0.000	3.240**	0.047	69.466	0.000
Father's highest level of education	0.105**	0.020	5.306	0.000	0.074**	0.018	4.026	0.000

Mother's highest level of education	0.061**	0.019	3.271	0.001	0.040*	0.017	2.323	0.020
Monthly household income	0.104**	0.009	11.478	0.000	0.060**	0.009	6.798	0.000
B1. Having studied or currently studying a course with an international/global focus.					0.233**	0.025	9.325	0.000
B2. Obtaining certifications or a minor/major in international/global issues.					-0.103	0.060	-1.726	0.084
B3. Experience working with teachers who specialize in international/global issues.					0.133**	0.038	3.525	0.000
B4. Attending lectures, discussions, training, conferences, etc. on international/globalization-related topics.					0.179**	0.026	6.783	0.000
B5. Giving presentations at conferences with an international/global theme, or participating in similar events.					0.046	0.039	1.178	0.239
C1. Communicating with foreign students through course study.					0.102**	0.030	3.400	0.001
C2. Communicating with foreign students through social activities.					0.169**	0.029	5.903	0.000
C3. Having connections with students from one or more foreign universities.					0.105**	0.031	3.356	0.001
C4. Participating in performances with an international/global theme.					0.064	0.041	1.572	0.116
R <sup>2</sup>	0.089				0.207			
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.088				0.204			
F	114.156**				75.912**			
△R <sup>2</sup>	0.089				0.118			
△F	114.156**				57.636**			
Dependent Variable (Y) : Global competence								
* p<0.05 ** p<0.01								

The hierarchical regression analysis comprises two models. Model 1 includes three independent variables: the highest educational level attained by the father (excluding in-service education), the highest educational level attained by the mother (excluding in-service education), and the average monthly household income. Model 2 builds on Model 1 by incorporating nine items related to global experiences. The dependent variable across both models is global competence. The analytical results demonstrated that Model 2 exhibited a markedly higher R-value and adjusted R-squared compared to Model 1, indicating the superior fit of Model 2. Examination of the regression coefficients revealed that except for B2, B5, and C4, the impact of various global experience items on global competence was substantially more pronounced than that of parental education and household income. This finding suggests that global experience exerts a more significant influence on students' global competence.

To conduct a more nuanced analysis of the impact of global experience on the understanding and interaction components of global competence, we performed linear regression analyses on the factors influencing understanding competence and interaction competence, respectively, based on Model 2. Table 5 presents the results of the multivariate regression analysis for factors affecting global competence. Here,  $\beta_1$



represents the regression coefficient for globalization comprehension, while  $\beta_2$  denotes the coefficient for globalization communication ability. According to the table, certain items in academic experience (B1, B3, B4) and in social experience (C1, C2, C3) significantly impact global competence. Notably, taking courses focused on international/global issues (B1), attending lectures, discussions, or workshops on international/global themes (B4), engaging in social activities with international students (C2), and establishing connections with students from one or more foreign universities (C3) exhibit significant positive effects. In contrast, participation in international/global-themed presentations or similar activities (B5) and performances (C4) show no notable influence on capacity. Furthermore, obtaining certifications or a minor/major in international/global issues (B2) even demonstrates a negative correlation with communication ability.

**Table 5**

*Results of the multivariate regression analysis of globalization capability impact factors*

Global experiences	$\beta_1$	$\beta_2$
B1. Having studied or currently studying a course with an international/global focus.	0.154**	0.124**
B2. Obtaining certifications or a minor/major in international/global issues.	0.006	-0.043*
B3. Experience working with teachers who specialize in international/global issues.	0.088**	0.033
B4. Attending lectures, discussions, training, conferences, etc. on international/globalization-related topics.	0.104**	0.100**
B5. Giving presentations at conferences with an international/global theme, or participating in similar events.	0.027	0.013
C1. Communicating with foreign students through course study.	0.029	0.071**
C2. Communicating with foreign students through social activities.	0.038*	0.126**
C3. Having connections with students from one or more foreign universities.	0.046**	0.052**
C4. Participating in performances with an international/global theme.	0.016	0.027

\*  $p < 0.05$  \*\*  $p < 0.01$

#### 4. DISCUSSION

Based on the above findings, it is evident that students from elite universities under initiatives like "Project 985" exhibit notably superior capabilities and experiences in global competencies. This outcome highlights an emerging "imbalance" in the development of higher education internationalization across different types of institutions. Specifically, a limited number of top-tier, strategically funded universities demonstrate pronounced success in advancing their internationalization efforts, thereby widening the gap with most other institutions, a clear manifestation of inequality in the realm of international engagement. Behind the statistics, on one hand, is the significant progress achieved by China's leading research universities in cultivating an international environment and enhancing intercultural exchange. On the other hand, the challenges faced by other universities in advancing their internationalization agendas must also be acknowledged.

Generally, high-level research universities center their activities on the production, dissemination, and application of knowledge, aiming to generate advanced research outcomes and cultivate high-caliber talent. Leading research universities worldwide adhere to a model of internationalization, which has become a defining characteristic of research-oriented institutions globally (Liu, 2010). This global trend has propelled China's key universities to actively and vigorously pursue internationalization. Studies on the strategic documents related to the internationalization of several top-tier Chinese research universities reveal that these institutions typically benefit from substantial governmental financial support in advancing their internationalization initiatives. Furthermore, China's Belt and Road Initiative has facilitated scientific and cultural exchanges between these universities and institutions in countries along the initiative's route, while also fostering stable collaborative relationships with globally renowned universities. These partnerships are characterized by a high volume of projects with extended durations (Liu and Kang, 2018).

In contrast, universities with general academic orientations are primarily sponsored and managed by provincial or municipal governments, or jointly by both levels of administration. Compared to elite institutions, these universities generally have shorter histories and lack sufficient institutional accumulation. Consequently, they face limitations in attracting international scholars, securing high-quality global resources, and obtaining policy and financial support at the national level (Han, 2014). Their international partners are often of limited stature and influence, and these collaborations tend to lack stability and sustainability, thereby rendering the process of internationalization particularly challenging.

However, it is imperative to recognize that the internationalization of higher education in China requires concerted efforts and coordinated advancement of various types of institutions. Internationalization should not be perceived merely as a distinctive feature or privilege of a select few high-level research universities. The remarkable international achievements of certain elite universities do not sufficiently represent or validate the overall effectiveness of internationalization across Chinese higher education. With the progress of society and the intensification of global trends, internationalization has gradually shifted from being a “choice” to a “necessity.” As the global flow of higher education resources and the openness of higher education markets increase, both elite research universities and regional institutions must confront the challenges posed by internationalization. Internationalization has become an inevitable trend in the development of modern universities.

To some extent, this necessity is driven by the fundamental mission of higher education—talent cultivation. Regardless of whether an institution is part of the prestigious “985” group or a non-key university, it must prepare graduates who are capable of succeeding in future professional environments. In the society of the future, cross-national and cross-cultural communication and exchange will become unavoidable trends, and thus students must be equipped with the skills to navigate these dimensions. As Cheng (2014) points out, in the era of the knowledge economy, even highly skilled university graduates may find their adaptability to future societal and professional environments greatly hindered if they do not possess fundamental international perspectives, language abilities, and cross-cultural experiences. Therefore, higher education needs to begin creating “simulated” international scenarios for students, fostering the continuous development and enhancement of their cross-cultural competencies.

The present research found that undergraduate courses focusing on globalization or internationalization, as well as participation in lectures, discussions, training sessions, and conferences centered on these themes, exert a significant positive influence on students' global competencies. Generally, these activities can be regarded as integral components of the curricular structure. Therefore, to cultivate domestic students' cross-cultural thinking, adaptability, and comprehension skills, key for navigating the increasingly globalized and diverse contexts of present and future life and work, global elements should be systematically embedded in the narrow sense of the curriculum. This includes foreign history and culture, social customs, cross-cultural competency development, international understanding, and globally shared challenges. Additionally, lectures, training sessions, and conferences constitute experience-based activities with a global orientation, effectively creating a “second classroom” beyond the traditional classroom. This “second classroom” approach provides a more diverse and engaging educational format that subtly imparts concepts of globalization and internationalization to students. Consequently, such initiatives should receive substantial emphasis in the efforts to internationalize higher education.

Additionally, two aspects of global interaction (engaging with international students through social activities and establishing connections with students from one or more foreign universities) remind us that

substantial communication and interaction between Chinese and international students, beyond the classroom and structured activities, are critical to enhancing students' global competencies. According to relevant statistics, in 2017, a total of 489,200 international students from 204 countries and regions were studying at 935 higher education institutions across China, nearly half of whom were enrolled in degree programs. China has become the largest destination for international students in Asia. However, these impressive figures mask the reality that Chinese and international students often lack daily interactions and communication. In most domestic universities, international students are typically housed in separate residential areas from Chinese students, which, in many cases, leads to the formation of small, isolated groups among international students. Differences in cultural customs and behavioral norms create an apparent gap between international and Chinese students, with limited interaction and a strong sense of estrangement. This lack of engagement undermines the cultivation of global perspectives, international understanding, and cross-cultural competencies that are being advocated. As Cheng (2014) claims for many universities in mainland China, international students are present in significant numbers, but opportunities for meaningful interaction and social engagement with peers from various countries and backgrounds remain limited.

## 5. CONCLUSION

When extracurricular activities are conducted exclusively in Chinese, international student housing remains separate from general student residences, and international students are confined to courses within an 'International College,' the goal of 'internationalization' loses its substance and impact. Therefore, both administrators and researchers should engage in a more in-depth exploration, from both practical and theoretical perspectives, of how internationalization and globalization can play a substantive role in universities, particularly in enhancing meaningful communication and interaction between Chinese and foreign students.

The presence of international students should not merely be viewed as a numerical tool for promoting international ranking; rather, it should be leveraged to genuinely contribute to the development of domestic students' intercultural competence and to foster a deeper understanding of international perspectives. Within this campus milieu, our students must be allowed to interact with international counterparts, gain insights into diverse cultures, customs, and cognitive frameworks, and partake in social exchanges that are devoid of utilitarian objectives and political agendas. Only through such immersive experiences on campus can university students be effectively prepared to navigate future international workplaces and the globalized world with confidence and adaptability.

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