

The Study on the Internationalization Policy of Portuguese Higher Education

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Abstract: Portuguese higher education institutions have experienced a vigorous internationalization process, involving personnel mobility and academic cooperation. This article analyzes the globalization of higher education within the overall framework of European Union education policy, and examines the transformation of Portugal's internationalization policies and institutions in higher education. Based on this analysis, the article summarizes the implications of Portugal's internationalization policies for China's higher education internationalization efforts in the areas of Sino-foreign cooperative education, international projects, external exchange and cooperation, at the theoretical, cooperative, and communicative levels. These implications have significant reference value for China's establishment of an internationally connected higher education internationalization policy.

Keywords: Internationalization Policy, Portugal, Higher Education

1. Introduction

With the deepening of the Bologna Process and in the new global education and economic context, internationalization has been placed at the forefront of higher education (HE) strategic planning by stakeholders and policy makers^[23]. "Higher education internationalization" has become a term that is repeatedly used in the discourse of politicians and supranational organizations, and competition among European countries has become competition in the field of higher education. Internationalization of higher education has changed from a passive strategic issue to an active one, and from an added value to mainstream^[7]. Internationalization is seen as the main reason for the sustained success of higher education.

In the competition of the knowledge economy in the 21st century, internationalization is now seen as a multi-dimensional process that achieves different goals^[8]. Internationalization is the second largest trend in the development of higher education after quality assurance, and its strategic importance is gradually increasing. This trend is expected to continue^[20]. In a large-scale survey by the International Association of Universities (IAU) titled "Trends 2015: Learning and Teaching in European Universities"^[20], internationalization was considered very important (69%), an increase of 8% from 2010. In recent decades, under the pressure of globalization and EU higher education policies, Portuguese higher education institutions have actively participated in the internationalization process. The dissemination of scientific knowledge, research production, international mobility of students and faculty, and academic cooperation have all steadily increased^{[9][14]}.

2. Higher Education Internationalization Theory

2.1 Globalization Theory

Starting from the 1980s, globalization first appeared in the cross-border flow of goods and capital in the economic field and gradually penetrated into the transnational, localized internationalization, and global flow trends in various fields such as politics, culture, and technology. With the deepening of economic globalization and the strengthening of the trend towards world economic integration, higher education internationalization emerged.

Higher education internationalization emphasizes the use of the global market to promote the cross-border flow of students, teachers, and educational resources, to strengthen exchanges and cooperation among countries in the field of higher education, to increase the openness of higher education in each country, and to make the educational content and teaching methods of each country meet the needs of international communication, talent development goals, and international competitiveness. Ultimately, it promotes the globalization of higher education^[17].

2.2 Marketing Theory

Western scholars believe that marketing is the management process of individuals or collectives exchanging products and values to meet certain needs. Marketing theory, on the other hand, takes marketing as its research object and studies how to achieve efficient, convenient, and accurate circulation of goods at the right time and place.

In the context of higher education internationalization, HEIs rely on education as a product to provide international educational resources to meet the internationalization needs of education recipients in various countries.

2.3 International Understanding Education Theory

The concept of international understanding education can be divided into two aspects. The first aspect is the ability to understand the lifestyle and development concepts of people from other countries, regions, and ethnic groups. The second aspect is to be understood by others, and to spread knowledge of one's own country, region, and ethnic group to other international regions and people through scientific and effective means in order to achieve mutual respect, cooperation, and sustainable human development.

International higher education uses language and written materials as carriers to incorporate relevant knowledge into the curriculum and to enhance its internationalization level through international exchanges, thereby promoting the achievement of the goal of internationalization of higher education.

3. A Review of Literature on Internationalization of Higher Education

Currently, the widely-used definition of internationalization applicable to comprehensive activities in higher education institutions by foreign scholars is "the purpose, function, or process of integrating international, intercultural or global dimensions into post-secondary education"^[11]. However, de Wit et al. modified the definition of internationalization for HE as "a deliberate process" aimed at enhancing "the quality of education and research for all students and staff and making a meaningful contribution to society." Their definition of internationalization clearly expands the scope and redefines the focus^[7]. Coelho and Arau Ribeiro emphasize from the perspective of the relationship between internationalization and quality that internationalization not only brings mobility, but also gives new relevance to curriculum and learning outcomes. This new definition emphasizes the relationship between internationalization and quality^[5].

The counterpart to the concept of "internationalization" is "comprehensive internationalization." Hudzik believes that comprehensive internationalization includes a high-level "action-confirmed commitment to infusing international and comparative perspectives in the teaching, research, and service missions of higher education"^[10]. The difference between "internationalization" and "comprehensive internationalization" can be summarized as follows: comprehensive internationalization involves a larger scale and scope, a broader range of clients served, higher expected outcomes, and reshaping of institutional spirit. Recently, the concept of "Internationalization at Home" (IaH) has been proposed in China, which is understood as "purposefully integrating international and intercultural dimensions into all students' formal and informal curriculum within a domestic learning environment"^[3]. IaH further expands the scope of domestic internationalization and transforms it into more opportunities for all students and staff to participate in the development and improvement of international and intercultural competencies, which were previously mainly measured by mobility^[13]. IaH requires a more comprehensive approach to curriculum internationalization and raises specific questions about the subject matter, teaching language, materials used, learning outcomes, assessment tasks, and teaching methods. Universities face the challenge of transferring and transforming these issues into new practices to replace the long-standing notion solely attributed to mobility.

Currently, scholars at home and abroad have mainly researched the concept, motives, and

development strategies of internationalization in higher education (HE). Internationalization, globalization, and interculturality are the main reasons that promote the globalization of international higher education. Most scholars believe that cross-border cooperation in teaching, scientific research, and social services while maintaining their own characteristics and positioning is the internationalization of higher education. The driving forces of the development of higher education are mainly reflected at the national and institutional levels. The state has the need for social and cultural communication, commercial trade development, and the formation of international strategic alliances, while institutions of higher education need to improve the quality of higher education and create a high-quality educational image. The development strategies of internationalization in higher education are to transform internationalization concepts, promote international cooperation, and strengthen the construction of the curriculum system.

The European Union's opinions and recommendations on internationalization are widely featured in several strategic documents, including Modernisation of Higher Education (OJEU2011/C372/09), Supporting Growth and Jobs (OJEU2011/0567), and Investing in Skills for Better Socioeconomic Outcomes (OJEU2012/0669). The European Commission's communication "European Higher Education in the World" on July 11, 2013, identified key areas for developing a comprehensive internationalization strategy: (1) international student and staff mobility, (2) internationalization and improvement of curricula and digital learning, and (3) strategic partnerships, collaborations, and capacity building.

The construction of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) proposed in the Bologna Declaration of 1999 posed challenges to governments, especially higher education institutions, which are key partners in implementing the European Union's economic growth strategy. The stimulating measures of European internationalization^{[7][21]} were notable for the Erasmus program launched by the European Commission in 1987 (abbreviated as the European Regional University Student Mobility Action Plan) and the Socrates program specifically for university students in 1995. In 2007, Erasmus was included in the lifelong learning program (2007-2013), opening up another new phase of European internationalization - the Erasmus+ program (2014-2020). This new phase of European internationalization focuses on supporting and promoting cross-border cooperation plans that bridge the gap between academia and the job market, and is proactive in nature with significantly increased "emphasis, scope, and content". In the context of increasingly fierce competition, commercialization, and the trend towards internationalization, this kind of European internationalization provides higher value for the exchange and partnership of higher education.

The comprehensive internationalization of Europe has established several sustainable practices for building strategic partnerships, including the establishment of academic networks, recognition of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), clearly defined strategic and partner relationships, ongoing network connections, and reliable institutional support for funding. To prepare and support students, faculty, and community members in interacting and dealing with greater diversity, the internal development of teaching and learning processes and curriculum within higher education institutions must also be guided by a perception of internationalization needs. The 2018 Best Erasmus+ Higher Education Project Award and Erasmus+ KA2 Strategic Partnership Program ICCAGE (Intercultural Communication Competence) are examples of the achievements of comprehensive internationalization.

4. Internationalization of Portuguese Higher Education

4.1 Internationalization Policies of Portuguese Higher Education

In 1974, the end of the Portuguese revolution ushered in a profound educational reform^[15]. According to data from the contemporary Portuguese database PORDATA (2017), with the democratization of education and the establishment of new higher education institutions (universities and polytechnics), the number of students in Portuguese higher education institutions (HEIs) has almost doubled in just over 40 years, increasing from 77,501 in 1978 to 297,884 in 2016. After the revolution, Portugal still lacked a unified internationalization policy for higher education (19) and faced the need for coordination in implementing the 1999 Bologna Declaration. Therefore, the internationalization strategy of Portuguese universities largely followed the pre-set and imposed forms of the European mobility scheme^[18] for student and teacher exchanges, with the flow of students coming mainly from the Portuguese-speaking community. These students faced challenges when returning home, such as their degrees not being recognized and a lack of encouragement for international exchanges^[22].found that language barriers, lack of financial resources, and government support were the main obstacles to internationalization of Portuguese higher education. In 2015, the European Commission report on internationalization of higher

education^[7] highlighted the need for a comprehensive internationalization strategy that identifies the positioning of HEIs, students, researchers, and staff and their national systems, in order to participate in relevant research and innovation activities on a global scale. This highlights the importance of understanding how individual profiles match the demands of the job market and the economic strategies of each country, which also promotes internationalization of Portuguese higher education.

In 2007, Portugal approved a new legal system for higher education institutions (Jurídico das Instituições de Ensino Superior - Rjies), which established a new framework for higher education and created new governance models for institutions, enabling them to establish their own management structures within the legal framework. These changes facilitated a centralized decision-making process, empowered management structures, and involved external stakeholders in the decision-making process^[11]. Adapting to this new legal framework brought about significant changes in the management of higher education in Portugal, creating the necessary conditions for the modernization and internationalization of Portuguese higher education as a whole. In 2014, Portugal achieved a milestone in its internationalization policy with the publication of Decree No. 36/2014, which defined the status of international students. New regulations for international students were announced and implemented in the same year in many schools^{[4][16]}, paving the way for the inclusion of more international students and strengthening the internationalization policy to attract more of them effectively.

As part of the Portuguese Language Higher Education International Cooperation Strategy^[12], the government support was established. In 2016, the Portuguese Ministerial Conference adopted a resolution based on the 2014 policy, which established some principles and expanded the new theoretical framework, including: promoting public policies that emphasize the development of knowledge and skills, and identifying guidelines for internationalization of higher education, science, and technology; defining different stakeholders who participate in internationalization; and conducting action and policy evaluations every four years. Through the reference framework established by this resolution, the scope of Portugal's internationalization policy has expanded, calling for research centers, businesses, and cultural associations to actively participate as partners and stakeholders. The government recognizes the fundamental role of higher education institutions and research centers, promoting their relevance and participation in the international network, while enhancing their ability to innovate and promote social, cultural, and economic development. These institutions play a crucial role in implementing the internationalization policy of higher education institutions in Portugal, providing new impetus for the internationalization of Portuguese higher education institutions.

The 21st Portuguese government plays a significant role in promoting internationalization in higher education. The Portuguese Internationalization Strategy Research Group has proposed that the national strategy for the internationalization of Portuguese higher education covers four key areas: institutional cooperation, mobility, strategic institutional partnerships, and the development of more digital educational resources. These four areas are summarized in 40 recommendations.

The first aspect - institutional cooperation, involves not only consortia and joint programs, but also collaboration among researchers and the design and implementation of projects with other higher education institutions. All these issues, together with the promotion and governance/implementation, lay the foundation for the future of Portugal's higher education internationalization action plan^[12]. The second aspect - mobility, includes international mobility of students, teachers, and researchers, the development of an international student statute, and the improvement of welcome procedures for international students. A goal was set to double the number of international students visiting by 2020. The third aspect is strategic institutional partnerships, and the fourth aspect is the development of more digital education resources. The first and second aspects will be supported by strategic institutional partnerships and the development of digital education, which may include MOOCs for language learning^[2] and Portuguese-language distance learning courses.

Today, public and private schools in Portugal have adapted to the requirements of the Bologna Process and have shown a growing interest in admitting foreign students. The government also demands the creation of more attractive conditions for internationalization of educational activities^[19].

4.2 The Future of Internationalization in Portuguese Higher Education

Each Portuguese HEI has its own unique economic, political, and cultural background, and they must compete in highly diverse environments both domestically and internationally. Given that internationalization policies, strategies, and measures are a priority in HE, HEIs must make coordinated organizational efforts and invest heavily in financial and human resources to train professionals who can

work in international environments, ensure participation in multinational projects, and benefit from and promote desired knowledge transfers^[24]. HEIs must also further recognize that monitoring, evaluation, and quality control mechanisms are crucial to achieving high-quality performance and effective outcomes.

For Portugal, ensuring the quality of higher education and implementing the Bologna process will be very important. The Bologna process is a major reform of higher education systems aimed at creating the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and integrating higher education systems of various countries. Therefore, the internationalization of Portugal's HEIs in the future means that their interests will not only be limited to faculty and students, but will also extend to the institution itself, other employers and organizations, local and national economies, and even local and global communities in broad and complex ways^[6]. Portuguese HEIs are at a turning point: the policies of the Portuguese government and pressures from within the institutions themselves are prompting HEIs to take a series of actions, especially in language, to reach out to various stakeholders such as businesses, language centers, communities, and cultural associations and foster comprehensive internationalization. This dynamic interaction of strengthening a comprehensive internationalization strategy helps to expand the scope of action in Portuguese higher education and other regions.

5. Implications of the internationalization of Portuguese higher education for our country

5.1 Theoretical Level

Higher education institutions need to actively update the theory of education internationalization, draw on international development experience, integrate advanced educational concepts into their own university development, and combine internationalization with market demand to find international development strategies that meet the actual situation of each university. Currently, the updating of internationalization theory in China's higher education is slow, and each higher education institution should increase research efforts on the theoretical level to promote the development of internationalization in China's higher education.

5.2 Exchange Level

Relying on its unique language charm, Portugal has expanded its international exchanges in Europe and Africa by leveraging the Community of Portuguese Language Countries and partnerships with EU countries, significantly deepening its trend towards internationalization and international influence in higher education. Therefore, China can leverage the influence of Confucius Institutes and promote the Chinese language to enhance the process of internationalization of higher education through language promotion.

6. Conclusion

Currently, Portugal's internationalization of higher education has achieved its largest scale since 1986, and has cultivated a competitive international academic research market at the national level. Through strong public investment, Portugal has also promoted rapid development in its scientific and higher education system. Portugal's international laboratories, such as the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN) and European scientific organizations such as the European Space Agency, as well as the new internationalization projects launched by the Portuguese government in 2006, have signed agreements with three US research universities - Carnegie Mellon University (CMU), Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), and the University of Texas at Austin. These internationalization policies not only allow academic staff at Portuguese universities to conduct research in state-of-the-art facilities, but also promote the implementation of more scientific internationalization policies under more complex technological change patterns and international cooperation, enhance the knowledge base of universities, and integrate into the global research, teaching, and innovation network.

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