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# Strategies for Talent Development in International Collaboration Insights from Chinese Universities and Global Institutions

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## Abstract

With China's continuous rise in comprehensive national strength and rapid economic development, international cooperation and exchange in Chinese universities have garnered increasing attention. This paper analyzes the current status of undergraduate talent development through international cooperation in Chinese ethnic universities. Based on summarizing the characteristics of talent development in international cooperation, it explores the development trends and challenges in international talent cooperation and provides some recommendations for further development.

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## 1. Introduction

China, as a unified multi-ethnic country, has always attached great importance to higher education for ethnic minorities. With the deepening of China's reform and opening-up and globalization, the country has engaged extensively with other nations in various fields. China's friendly cooperation with many countries in politics, economics, and education has led to rapid developments in educational cooperation and exchanges. China has established six central ethnic universities and more than ten local ethnic universities. These ethnic universities serve as the foundation for ethnic education and not only contribute to the dissemination of modern science and technology but also play a significant role in international cooperation in undergraduate talent development with foreign universities.

## 2. Growth in the Number of Undergraduate Students from Ethnic Universities Studying Abroad

According to data provided by the Ministry of Education and the China Statistical Yearbook, the number of students studying abroad increased to approximately 1.9 million from 1978 to 2010. Over the decade from 2003 to 2012, the number of students studying abroad on government scholarships consistently rose. According to the Ministry of Education, the annual number of students sent abroad on government scholarships increased from 7,500 in 2006 to over 16,000 in 2012, more than doubling. In 2008, the number of government-sponsored students studying abroad had already exceeded 10,000. This indicates that undergraduate students continue to be the main force among those studying abroad. Regarding ethnic universities, since the reform and opening up, they have actively used inter-university cooperation agreements to select undergraduate students for international exchange and study.

## 3. Distribution of International Cooperation Between Ethnic Universities in China and Foreign Universities by Country

With economic globalization, the internationalization of education has become an inevitable trend in the world's educational development. Under this trend, ethnic universities in China have further recognized the importance of international cooperation in undergraduate talent development and have embarked on the path of internationalization in education. Since the reform and opening-up, ethnic universities in China have signed cooperation agreements with more than 100 universities and institutions from over 20 countries and regions around the world. They have established various forms of exchange and cooperation, including student exchanges, student cooperation projects, joint training programs, participation in international conferences, and cooperative education programs. In addition to cooperation with foreign universities, various forms of inter-university exchange programs have gradually increased, demonstrating a thriving and prosperous situation. In summary, compared to research-oriented universities in China, ethnic universities still have weaker efforts and less extensive collaboration with foreign universities. Dalian Nationalities University, located in a coastal city, has some advantages in international cooperation among ethnic universities, but overall, it still lags other "985" and "211" universities. An analysis of the distribution of countries involved in cooperative undergraduate talent development between ethnic universities in China and foreign universities reveals that the main countries of cooperation are the United States, South Korea, Japan, the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, France, Germany, New Zealand, and others.

According to statistics on cooperation between ethnic universities in China and foreign universities in the past five years, the top four popular countries for studying abroad are the United States, South Korea, Japan, and the United Kingdom. This data contradicts the results from the China International Education Expo for the years 2008 to 2012, which listed the top four popular study destinations as the United States, Australia, the United Kingdom, and Canada. China's international cooperation with foreign universities is concentrated in North America and Northern European countries.

However, the survey results from ethnic universities show that cooperation with Asian countries such as South Korea and Japan occurs more frequently than with Northern European countries. Survey data indicates that more than 65% of university students believe that the academic level of American universities is higher than that of Chinese universities. They suggest that China should make efforts to strengthen related disciplines and promote comprehensive exchanges to bridge the gap. Additionally, most university students believe that the gap between China and the United States is greater than the gap between China and South Korea. The distribution of countries in which ethnic universities in China cooperate with foreign universities suggests that there is still a considerable gap in academic standards between ethnic universities in China and foreign universities. Further efforts are needed to expand the scale and level of cooperation between ethnic universities and foreign universities.

#### 4. Increase in the Hiring of Foreign Education Experts by Ethnic Universities in China

Chinese ethnic universities primarily employ foreign experts for foreign language teaching, including teaching specialized foreign languages and engaging in long-term and short-term research cooperation, organizing academic lectures, academic exchanges, and jointly educating students. Since the beginning of the 21st century, the employment of foreign education experts by ethnic universities in China has achieved significant results. The number of experts hired has continued to increase, the overall scale of hiring has expanded, the fields of hiring have diversified, and various forms of employment have increased opportunities for exchanges between Chinese and foreign educators. This has allowed the latest advanced professional disciplines and research developments from abroad to be continually transmitted to ethnic universities in China. This not only contributes to the cultivation of high-quality undergraduate students at ethnic universities but also efficiently utilizes and shares limited teaching and research resources. It accelerates the development of undergraduate education at ethnic universities and promotes new developments in teaching, research, and faculty construction.

#### 5. Diverse Forms of International Exchange by Ethnic Universities in China, with an Increase in the Number of Participants

International cooperation and exchange not only involve inviting foreign experts but also require Chinese educators to go abroad. Over the years, ethnic universities in China have actively sought opportunities and cooperation space with foreign universities to improve the teaching and management capabilities of their faculty. They have actively sought collaboration opportunities with foreign universities to learn from their advanced educational concepts, introduce high-quality educational resources, enhance academic exchanges, and improve undergraduate teaching and management. In recent years, ethnic universities have actively sought opportunities to send teachers abroad, following the principle of "dispatch according to needs, guarantee quality, and align learning and use." This has led to an annual increase in the number of students studying abroad. Ethnic universities consider their academic structure when sending teachers abroad and align them with the urgent needs of the schools, especially in key, marginalized, and weak subjects, as well as emerging

disciplines. This targeted approach combines the dispatch of personnel with the task of establishing various forms of inter-university cooperation, making overseas work a driving force for teaching and research.

## 6. Enhancing Technological Strength and International Influence

With the continuous development of globalization, international academic exchanges have become an integral part of international cooperation and exchange. Many international academic conferences have been held focusing on the distinctive specialties and advantageous disciplines of ethnic universities in China. These multi-level and comprehensive academic exchange activities have yielded beneficial experiences for the development of ethnic universities, promoting discipline construction and teaching work. However, when compared to research-oriented universities, there is still a gap in international exchange.

## 7. Distribution of Majors for Undergraduate International Cooperation Programs at Ethnic Universities in China

The majors for undergraduate cooperation programs at ethnic universities in China primarily focus on ethnic studies, religious studies, Korean language, and management. This choice of majors may be related to the specific professional structure and curriculum offerings of ethnic universities, which tend to align with their unique specialties and advantageous disciplines. In recent years, the rapid development of globalization has made China the largest target country for foreign universities to establish partnerships and engage in cooperative education. With continuous expansion of exchanges and cooperation between Chinese and foreign educational sectors, ethnic universities in China have signed agreements and established inter-university cooperation for student education. The overseas education cooperation environment is conducive to fostering China's ethnic university's international cooperation with foreign universities.

## 8. Challenges and Recommendations for China to Consider

Strengthen the Protection of the Rights and Interests of International Students. China is the world's largest exporter of international students, with hundreds of thousands of students studying abroad annually and over a million Chinese students studying and working overseas. These international students represent a valuable human resource reserve for China, and ensuring their physical and mental safety and protecting their rights and interests is crucial. In recent years, there have been several cases of violent incidents involving Chinese international students overseas, such as the killing of Chinese students in Montreal, Canada, in 2012, and the shooting deaths of two Chinese students at the University of Southern California in the United States. Factors such as the influence of anti-China forces abroad and social conflicts resulting from rising unemployment rates in developed countries can impact the safety and well-being of Chinese international students. A survey conducted in early 2013 among North American international students showed that when international students encounter problems abroad, over 80% of them first seek help from their parents and their host

institutions. Very few seek assistance from the Chinese government or relevant agencies, indicating that the primary point of contact for international students after going abroad is typically their parents, and there is limited ongoing contact with Chinese authorities. It is crucial to prioritize the safety and rights of international students studying abroad.

Strengthening the collection of statistics on Chinese students studying abroad, including detailed information on their geographical distribution, academic disciplines, and educational levels. Improving existing platforms for foreign education to assist international students in their study abroad plans and offer them a platform for obtaining information about China and maintaining regular contact with Chinese authorities.

Enhancing communication with overseas Chinese community organizations, leveraging their role in connecting with international students, and safeguarding the rights and interests of international students. Collaborating with well-established international organizations like the Association of Chinese Students and Scholars in the United States to establish branches in major host countries for Chinese students, creating dedicated organizations responsible for safeguarding the safety of Chinese international students overseas, responding to emergencies, and maintaining emotional connections with international students.

Strengthening regulatory oversight of domestic study abroad services. Chinese study abroad service providers play a crucial role in facilitating students' access to international education opportunities. They serve as a primary channel for students to gather information about studying abroad, contributing significantly to the growing interest in overseas education. Despite their importance, there have been instances of irregular operations and deceptive practices within the study abroad service market. This calls for a stronger regulatory framework to ensure the integrity and quality of services provided to students. One significant regulatory challenge emerged following the July 2013 Asiana Airlines crash incident. It exposed a regulatory gap in the oversight of the international study abroad market. To address this gap, it is recommended to elevate the regulatory framework of the study abroad market to a legal or regulatory level, providing legal protection for students' consumer rights. Additionally, at the national level, China should take a more active role in supervising the international study abroad market. As the largest contributor to the international student market globally, China should actively engage with international organizations such as UNESCO to advocate for increased authority and influence in regulating the global education market.

Addressing the issue of younger students studying abroad. The trend of younger students opting for overseas education is expected to continue in the coming years. These students often possess exceptional talents and tend to adapt quickly to international environments. However, they also face unique challenges related to their age, maturity, and cultural assimilation. It is essential to pay greater attention to this phenomenon, as it not only impacts the potential loss of talent but also raises cultural preservation concerns. Young students studying abroad may become more influenced by Western cultures due to their early exposure, potentially impacting China's long-term cultural development. Therefore, there is a need to strengthen traditional cultural education in domestic primary and secondary schools, emphasizing the importance of preserving Chinese cultural heritage alongside international exposure.

Encourage students to find funding from overseas. Fully funded opportunities may be available without the help of Chinese funding. For example, one student (1) originated from disadvantageous background and a poor village in China

can still be admitted into the most prestigious universities in the US with excellent academic achievements by academic publishing (2–16), without any funding support from China.

Facilitating opportunities for students returning from overseas. As the trend of studying abroad continues, there will be a corresponding increase in the number of students returning to China after completing their education overseas. These students may face challenges in finding suitable employment due to a lack of work experience, limited knowledge of the domestic job market, and difficulty adjusting to local conditions.

Surveys have shown that students who express a desire to return to China tend to have higher readership of Chinese-language media, a stronger affinity for Chinese mainstream values, and a more positive evaluation of the Chinese government's work in various aspects. This suggests that China's policy of supporting and encouraging the return of students studying abroad has been effective in ensuring that these individuals contribute positively to China's modernization. To further promote this policy, there should be fewer concerns about the return of students studying abroad. Opportunities should be created, stable channels established, and platforms provided to allow these students to apply their advanced knowledge and international perspectives in service to their homeland.

Attracting high-quality international students to China. Attracting international students to study in China is a crucial aspect of enhancing the internationalization of Chinese higher education. Currently, there is a significant imbalance between the number and quality of Chinese students studying abroad and international students coming to China. To address this disparity, efforts should be made to improve the attractiveness of China as a study destination for international students.

Implementing flexible student management. Traditional "rigid" student management models have become less effective in addressing the evolving needs of students in the modern educational landscape. Therefore, adopting a more flexible, student-centric approach to management is essential. This approach involves understanding and respecting students' individuality, accommodating their weaknesses, and building trust-based relationships. Measures include: Establish mechanisms for student participation in collective activities, ensuring students have access to information and decision-making processes. Create platforms for students to showcase their talents and engage in self-development. Build student organizations and leadership structures to enhance students' self-management abilities. Cultivate a supportive and empathetic relationship between educational administrators and students.

Leveraging new media for student management and guidance. New media platforms offer both opportunities and challenges for student management. Educational administrators should embrace these platforms to communicate with students effectively and provide guidance. New media can help shift from rigid management to a more adaptable, personalized approach. Educational managers should use new media. Listen to students' voices and understand their perspectives. Foster a sense of community and provide a trusted online space for students. Share valuable information and resources. Promote healthy interactions and discussions among students. Organize online activities and events to engage students positively.

## 9. Conclusions

In conclusion, ethnic universities in China have made significant progress in international cooperation in undergraduate talent development. However, there is still room for improvement in terms of depth and breadth of collaboration, overcoming challenges, and maximizing the potential of international cooperation. Strengthening protection for international students, enhancing the impact of academic conferences, and furthering collaboration with foreign institutions are essential steps for China's ethnic universities to continue their development in the era of globalization.

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