

The Mutual Influence Between Economic Globalization and Internationalization of Higher Education

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Abstract: The internationalization of higher education has emerged as one of the major research areas in the current era of economic globalization. However, there are still some unified explanations about the relationship between the two. This paper will explain the relationship between economic globalization and the internationalization of higher education, analyzing a part of the history of economic globalization as well as some literature on higher education internationalization. The research found that higher education internationalization and globalization of the economy are mutually reinforcing, that is, the internationalization of higher education may be able to promote further globalization, while economic globalization can facilitate higher education's internationalization to grow more quickly. However, there are still some problems and obstacles in the mutual promotion of the two, such as anti-globalization, the single way of internationalization of higher education, and few returns. This paper then gives suggestions such as taking education as an important strategy to promote the economy, expanding ways of developing internationalization of higher education, and providing more opportunities to the returned students to these problems at the end that might smoothen the mutual promotion of the two.

Keywords: Internationalization of higher education, economic globalization, mutual influences, anti-globalization

1. Introduction

The internationalization of higher education is currently a common trend and a hot topic in global education due to the backdrop of economic globalization. As a result, many academics now focus their study on the promotion of the economic circumstances to the globalization of higher education as well as the challenges this process presents. The problem of the reversion of globalization intensifying conflicts between cultural groups, resulting in a negative impact on the internationalization of higher education was deeply discussed [1]. Some mention that in the process of economic globalization, the student mobility rate in various countries is still less than 5% due to the large differences in the economic level of countries [2]. In other words, it is challenging to bring about positive economic change while simultaneously promoting the globalization of higher education in a single mode.

Although these studies have considered the background of globalization, most of them evaluate the internationalization of higher education by standing on more of a pedagogy perspective, so the discussion of the problems is more than the positive effects. However, the internationalization of

higher education itself is one of the products gradually formed in the process of economic globalization, and according to the theory and history in the framework of the global economy, though problems do exist, the interplay between economic globalization and internationalization of higher education tends to be positive. Therefore, to complement the discussion on the relationship between the internationalization of higher education and globalization, the internationalization of higher education would be discussed in the position as a part of international trade in this paper, that is to say, to discuss the positive mutual influences in more of an economic aspect.

2. The Relationship between the Internationalization of Higher Education and Economic Development

According to the definition, the world economy is the total of national economic activities in each country such as production, distribution, exchange, and consumption that are carried out in the world through 4 bonds: international trade, international investment, international finance, and international labor cooperation. International trade includes trade in goods and trade in services. Since education is one of the service industries, higher education internationalization may actually be regarded as a way to promote the international service trade. Therefore, higher education internationalization and the globalization of the economy may have a certain double-way promoting effect.

2.1. Forward Promotion

From a global perspective, economic globalization originated from the opening of new routes and the discovery of new continents in the 15th century, which expanded the scope of the world market, expanded the scale of international trade, and kicked off the prelude of human economic globalization.

From the perspective of regional characteristics of international exchange, the international exchange of higher education is mainly carried out between European and American countries with relatively developed economies and a high degree of openness. In the East, except for Japan, other countries did not participate in the international exchange of economy and higher education caused by the Industrial Revolution, which was one of the main reasons for the backward higher education and economic development of these Eastern countries at that time. Since the 1980s, with the establishment of the regional economic blocs known as the European Union, the North American Free Trade Area, and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, as well as the improvement of the international economic coordination mechanism, economic globalization has developed comprehensively and rapidly, and the process of internationalizing education has accelerated and moved into the fast lane. According to UNESCO, the number of international students rose from 915,859 in 1980 to 1,177,583 in 1990, to 1.3 million in 1997, and 1.8 million in 2008 [3].

Through the data from UNESCO it can be found that, since then, exchanges between higher education countries have also occurred frequently. Countries that carried out the internationalization of higher education were those whose economies were opened earlier and better developed. So, the history and data prove that the globalization of the economy is a precondition of high education internationalization, and boosts its development.

2.2. Reverse Promotion

In the theoretical framework of international trade, the British economist Adam Smith has put forward the theory of absolute costs, which extended the division of labor theory to the international field. The main content of this theory could be stated as: Superior natural endowments and production conditions can reduce production costs, and countries should produce those products with lower costs and then exchange them among countries. By participating in the international division of labor,

natural conditions can be fully utilized, production efficiency can be improved, and social wealth can be increased.

If certain words in the theory are rewritten in the aspect of education, it is still applicable: Superior financial endowments and service conditions can reduce education costs, and countries should promote education with lower costs and then exchange them among countries. By participating in the international division of labor, capital can be fully utilized, education efficiency can be improved, and social wealth can be increased.

However, in the present reality, the real situation is that many countries are well-developed in multiple industries. However, this does not mean that they do not need to develop their international trade, including the internationalization of higher education.

According to the theory of comparative cost, a country can focus on producing and exporting goods in which its absolute disadvantage is relatively small while importing goods in which its absolute disadvantage is relatively large. Dierdorf made a great breakthrough in the applicability of the theory of comparative advantage and proved the discriminability of commodities and trade[4]. Although his explanation of the theory of comparative advantage is a little far-fetched when there are differences in management factors, educational services do not belong to the scope of differences in management factors.

Therefore, the application of comparative cost in educational services can indeed prove that the internationalization of higher education will promote the globalization of the economy by countries cooperating to reach the largest advantage.

3. Problems Exist in Internationalization of Higher Education

3.1. Economic Downturn's Influence on the Internationalization of Higher Education

In recent years, the trend of anti-globalization and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in some countries have led to economic downturns, which has hindered the development of higher education internationalization at its original pace.

The education system has undergone changes in terms of policy, economics, and institutions due to globalization which is accelerating global interconnections [5]. However, after the 2008 global financial crisis, the process of globalization slowed down and declined. Professor Zheng Yongnian proposed the concept of "limited globalization" [6], which mainly indicates that Western developed countries, based on zero-sum thinking, transfer some manufacturing industries and withdraw financial capital, even at the expense of interrupting the global industrial chain and deviating from multilateralism, to reduce interdependence and implement selective globalization [1].

The degree of dependence of higher education on globalization should not be underestimated, and the evolution of the internationalization of higher education depends on the possibilities and opportunities provided by economic globalization to a large extent. However, in the face of the outbreak of the global novel coronavirus pneumonia in 2020, globalization has accelerated its reversal in the political game and global public crisis, and the countercurrent of globalization has brought no small turbulence to the internationalization process of higher education.

3.2. Single Form

The mode of developing the internationalization of education is too limited, which results in difficulties in driving economic development, and even makes some countries' situation severer.

At present, the well-known ways of internationalization of higher education almost only include sending students to study in overseas countries, because people have an incomplete understanding of the basic meaning of internationalization of higher education. Higher education internationalization refers to the trend that higher education in various countries is increasingly paying attention to the

development of the world based on domestic orientation [7]. In other words, higher education development not only satisfies national needs, but also considers the needs of the development of the global situation, upholds and perpetuates national traditions and characteristics, and also pays attention to absorbing the experience of other countries' higher education systems. In addition, higher education should be geared towards the world to train talents with the knowledge and ability to deal with affairs from a broad international perspective and the perspective of all mankind. Many who do not understand the core idea of internationalization of higher education would simply consider it as sending students to other nations and learning by completely diving into other nations' cultures.

3.3. Low Rate of Return

The problems left over from the history of economic globalization make the economic losses caused by such incomplete cognition greatly amplified. The economic differences between countries lead to the early development of the internationalization of higher education in developed countries, and developing countries are more inclined to carry out the internationalization of higher education through overseas study after reaching a higher degree of economic openness. Therefore, developing countries continue to send students to learn the ideas of globalization and facilitate higher education internationalization, expecting them to make contributions to building their own country and driving the economic development of their nation. But the fact is that only relatively few students eventually choose to return to their motherland, resulting in a large part of the one-way flow of funds and talents, less return, and the unbalanced international higher education student source market in the world [8]. This causes some developing countries to face serious brain drain and economic losses.

The top 10 countries for international student sending in 2020 are China, India, Vietnam, Germany, the United States, France, South Korea, Nepal, Kazakhstan and Brazil. With the economic development of China, the return rate of overseas students is increasing to over 80%. But in 2000, when China's economy was still relatively backward, the return rate was only a low 20%.

The data of some other developed countries in the top 10 can tell that they are possibly experiencing what China was suffering as well. The student attrition rate in Nepal increased from 9.1% in 2015 to 22.8% in 2021. According to the survey data released recently from the Brazilian Undergraduate Association (Brasa), 48% of Brazilian students studying abroad hope to return to Brazil after graduation. The situation in India is more surprisingly severe. The proportion of returned students from the US is only almost 20% according to UNESCO.

The above data would be enough to get the attention of the problem, however, it does not show the whole of the problem. For a raft of countries, even developed European countries like Germany and France, the return rate of doctoral students is lower than that of master's students. This is an even more concrete reflection that shows internationalization of higher education surely causes trouble to a country's development under the condition of economic globalization when only through the way of sending students to study abroad.

4. Suggestions

4.1. Take Education as an Important Strategy

To cope with the problem of economic downturn, the development of international education might need to be regarded as an important strategy to support economic development.

As Professor David Jonhson mentioned in one of his presentations, learning is not only a process of knowledge storage but also a process of ideology formation. If the ideology and practice of "internationalization" are added to higher education, which is the key link of abundant knowledge input and talent output, and abundant financial and human capital, the "international" thinking will be sowed in students' ideology. These students might also be able to apply the concept of

"globalization" in the process of entering and operating the society and balancing the market. Thus, the advancement of internationalization of education might hinder economic anti-globalization, and boost economic globalization on the contrary.

4.2. Expand the Ways

To solve the problem of a single way of internationalization development of higher education, perhaps more attention could be paid to introducing foreign capital or teachers to integrate more international perspectives into the teaching of national universities.

First, an example is Qingdao University of Science and Technology. The Sino-German Institute of Science and Technology was founded in collaboration between Paderborn University of Germany and Qingdao University of Science and Technology. It is dedicated to training sophisticated engineering technology and skills of management in the background of Chinese and German cultures as well as bilingual competence, drawing on the advanced teaching, research, and management experience of the University of Paderborn in Germany to introduce high-quality educational resources. It has been successfully operating for 16 years and is recognized as a model of Sino-foreign cooperation in running schools in China.

Then, an example from Singapore. To encourage universities to learn from experience and improve their international competitive advantages, the Singapore government officially determined the right of universities to manage school affairs independently and in a modern mode in 2005. Under this policy, the National University of Singapore started internationalization efforts very early and established the direction of building a global university very early, which pushed it to become a leader in international education across Asia. [9]. Moreover, one of the key factors behind Malaysia leading the globe in higher education internationalization is the growth of distance learning in the country. Malaysia's policy makes full use of the provisions of the GATS framework. In this positive learning environment, distance education is no longer just a means for students to further their degree courses, but has become an important driving force for the internationalization of education in Malaysia and a major step forward in the development of its international service trade [10].

Textbooks are essential tools for education. For the internationalization of higher education, textbooks containing relevant ideas and knowledge are good media to promote its development [11]. It might be an effective way to improve the quality of Chinese-foreign cooperative schools to introduce high-quality teaching materials that meet the teaching requirements. Perhaps, Sino-foreign cooperative schools can integrate and give play to their advantages, win the support of the government, and establish a unique and comparative advantage of the Sino-foreign cooperative school materials introduction system.

Therefore, it may be a good solution to carry out more abundant ways such as co-construction of domestic and foreign universities and distance learning, which can promote the circular flow of talents and funds in the country and drive the economic development of both sides of the cooperation.

4.3. Provide Opportunities

To improve the situation of low return rate, maybe the country that encourages students to study abroad should also offer opportunities for career development that are equitable when compared to those who have not studied abroad.

Here, equity does not mean equality. Students who have accepted higher education under an international background would have an understanding of certain spheres of learning from an international aspect. Thus, if the content of their job is the same as those who do not experience the international way of thinking, their years of learning outcomes in a strange country would be wasted to some extent. However, if their outcomes have been maximized, and there are more suitable

positions and opportunities for them to apply their knowledge with an international perspective to serve the motherland and promote the motherland to better navigate in the tide of globalization, it may be a great attraction for overseas students to return home.

5. Conclusions

Problems do exist, but it is logical to deem that economic globalization encourages higher education internationalization and that higher education internationalization also contributes to the fuller development of economic globalization. Since the internationalization of higher education has become an inevitable need, it is expected that continuous progress will be made and a better mode of operation will appear. By taking education as an important strategy to promote the economy, exploring new modes to develop higher education internationalization, and providing more opportunities to the returned students' careers, the double-way promoting effect between the two might be enhanced.

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