

# The Impact Of Covid-19 On The Internationalization Of Higher Education And Countermeasures

Wang Liang and Roselan Bin Baki

**Abstract-**The global spread of COVID-19 has had a huge impact on communication among countries in the context of globalization. In the field of education internationalization, Chinese students are not allowed to study abroad, while foreign students are not allowed to study in China. Based on the risk society theory, the impact of the epidemic on the flow of international students was analyzed. The destinations for Chinese students to study abroad became more diversified. The Popularity of the United States decreased, the UK keep the same level as last year, and the attention of Asian countries such as Japan and Singapore increased. The epidemic has not significantly affected the actual demand for studying abroad, and there may be a blowout effect after the epidemic. The trade-oriented western universities will face a severe financial crisis, and the floating market will shift from seller's market to buyer's market. Local and online internationalization will accelerate. In the post-epidemic era, China should catch the opportunity of changing the pattern of overseas study market, shift from crisis management to strategy formulation, optimize the overall planning of overseas study in China, and accelerate the layout of cross-border education, so as to occupy a favorable position in the future competition of international student flow.

**Key words:** COVID-19; internationalization of Chinese education; impacts; countermeasures

## I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the global spread of COVID-19 has exerted a huge impact on political, economic and cultural exchanges among countries under the "globalization"

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situation, as well as on the internationalization of higher education. At the same time, western countries clamped down on rising developing countries, and the tide of "anti-globalization" was raging. "Anti-globalization" is highlighted by Brexit and trade and non-trade friction between China and the United States. This wave has not only dragged down the economic growth of countries around the world, but also posed severe challenges to global governance(Wan&Zhu,2020). Under the influence of multiple social risk factors such as anti-globalization, unilateralism and COVID-19, the process of internationalization of higher education has significantly decreased. As an important participant in the international higher education system, China is facing risks and crises with innovative thinking in the post-epidemic era, seizing opportunities and taking internationalization as an important development strategy to realize a new world pattern of internationalization of higher education.

## II. PROBLEM STATEMENT

On the one hand, globalization has greatly unleashed human productivity. On the other hand, it has closely linked the destiny of mankind. While enjoying the benefits brought by globalization and modernization, mankind is bound to be linked into a community with a shared future, including bearing the costs of globalization. Globalization is turning some national and regional issues into global issues, such as the energy crisis, environmental pollution, the threat of terrorism and public infectious diseases such as COVID-19. It can be said that globalization and modernization are accompanied by uncertainties and risks in the rapid development of contemporary society. "The central thesis of the risk society is that the consequences are the result of the increasing extremes of modernization, technologization and economization processes, which unquestionably challenge and make problematic the practice of making side effects predictable through institutions(Ulrich,2004)." As far as

higher education is concerned, with the continuous and in-depth development of globalization, internationalization of higher education has become one of the core forces promoting the reform and development of higher education. On the relationship between globalization and the development of higher education, people increasingly reach a consensus that the former through competition and interaction with science and technology constitute the main driving force of the latter, and make the internationalization of higher education in recent years present a completely different situation from the past(Zeng,2009). that globalization has become the main driver of the further development of internationalization of higher education continuously, global higher education inevitably under the influence of globalization and powerful sculpture, including the internationalization of higher education is implemented, the internationalization of education philosophy, education internationalization value orientation is all present a different trend.

### III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Since the 1980s, with the acceleration of globalization, continuous promotion of scientific and technological innovation, and profound changes in international politics, global economic, institutional, environmental, social, technological and geopolitical risks have increased significantly, and human society has undergone profound systemic structural transformation. Enter an era of "global risk society" characterized by high uncertainty and high complexity. In 1986, Ulrich Beck proposed the risk society theory. "In a risk society, unknown and unintended consequences become the dominant force in history and society," he argues(Ulrich&Anthony,2001). Later, Anthony Giddens, Niklas Luhmann and other scholars joined the research of risk society theory one after another. Especially in the 21st century, human society has experienced many unexpected risks throughout the world. "Risk society" has become an important concept for people to observe, understand, interpret and analyze modern society, providing a unique perspective for understanding the structural characteristics, risk causes and system governance of modern society (Liu,2016). Ulrich Beck divides the risk of modern society into natural risk, technological risk and institutionalized risk. If epidemics, floods, earthquakes and

other natural disasters are natural risks, then technological risks and institutionalized risks are man-made. With the deepening of the impact of human activities on the natural and social environment, the risk structure of human society has gradually changed from natural risk dominant to risk dominant. Artificial risk indicates that various technological measures and institutional systems created by human beings in order to realize the progress of social civilization also bring another risk, namely "organized irresponsibility". The main reasons are that modern risks are spatio-temporal and difficult to calculate the consequences of risks, and modern highly specialized institutions are highly dependent on and interrelated with each other in the system, which makes it difficult to identify the subject of responsibility. Therefore, it is difficult to effectively respond to risks when they come, and it is difficult to assume the responsibility of preventing risks in advance and responding to them afterwards. Giddens refers to modern risk society as the "out-of-control world" and believes that risk society is produced in the development process of new technology and globalization and is a "consequence" of modernity. Luhmann's risk system theory holds that modern risk has both time and social dimensions, and the extreme complexity of modernity structure and the future uncertainty of time structure caused by the differentiation of modernity are the root of modern society's serious risk. To overcome risks, reflection needs to be strengthened in individual functional systems in order to control uncontrollable impulses of social power and interest growth [8].

### IV. METHOD

Under the risk society theory, the fields and subjects involved in risks are global and extensive. According to this logic, the risks faced by different interest subjects in the process of internationalization of higher education are universal. Specific risks vary from person to person and need to be analyzed in specific situations. This paper only tries to analyze the common risks in the process of internationalization of higher education through the risk society theory.

#### **4.1 External and visible risks of the internationalization of higher education**

In the global risk society, the sensitivity and instability

of the international situation have triggered a chain reaction in many fields. The internationalization of higher education is a product of globalization, and the aggravation of the anti-globalization trend under the influence of the epidemic makes the international exchanges and cooperation between universities and international education organizations also fall into a dilemma, which has an irreversible and transformative impact on the international higher education field. Since January 2020, COVID-19 has spread across the world. As of October, more than 36 million people have been confirmed globally, with more than 10,000 confirmed cases in 95 countries (Zhang, 2016). In order to prevent the further spread of the epidemic, many countries have taken corresponding emergency measures, such as the closure of universities in various countries and the suspension of entry and exit by governments. The most direct impact on international cooperation in higher education is reflected in the following three aspects.

First, personnel turnover has been sharply reduced. According to the latest QS survey of international students from China, the European Union, India and North America, 57 percent of respondents said their plans to study abroad were affected by the epidemic, with Chinese students accounting for 66 percent of the total. Of those affected, nearly half (47%) decided to postpone their plans to study abroad, a smaller number (13%) decided to change their country of study, and less than 10% decided to cancel their plans. A significant reduction in international travel bans and flights as a result of the pandemic, as well as delays in visa applications and processing, were most of the reasons for the postponement of students originally scheduled to start in 2020. At the same time, the safety and health of overseas students reflected in the epidemic situation has become the primary consideration of whether to continue academic exchanges (Ulrich, 2004). Students who have returned to their home countries are required to take preventive measures including limiting the number of visitors (52%), taking online classes instead of offline classes (51%), avoiding public places (48%), quarantining for a specified time (45%), and maintaining social distancing (44%). And avoid using public transportation (31 percent), while only 15 percent were required to take nucleic acid tests, the same as those who did not take any preventive measures. Second, scientific cooperation is blocked. The scientific research originally planned to be carried out on the field has been

shifted to theoretical research, the work progress of many laboratories has been suspended due to the failure of researchers to return to their posts in time, and face-to-face academic cooperation projects have been postponed or cancelled. In terms of the number of research collaborations, conferences and projects account for a large proportion of higher education research. According to Scopus, there were about 500,000 conference proceedings published in 2018, accounting for about 15% of all academic journals. The cancellation or postponement of numerous meetings and projects during the pandemic will have a material impact on the volume of research and collaboration (Ulrich & Anthony, 2001). In terms of the quality of the scientific research cooperation, and domestic and international academic exchanges, as a result of the outbreak is blocked for scientific research and international cooperation in the field of interdisciplinary, cross into the trough, although research collaboration have started to use online remote communication technology, but the discussion of the atmosphere and deeper degree sell at a discount greatly, many field type scientific research project and therefore lag. In addition, young scholars at the graduate level are completing their master's and doctoral theses or advancing their early research work through academic conferences and research projects. Due to the impact of COVID-19, there is bound to be a phenomenon that many young researchers' academic careers will be cut short.

Third, education services were shut down. In terms of education services, bilateral or multilateral higher education cooperation documents signed by many countries and exchange mechanisms established have been blocked, education powers such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada and Australia have suspended the provision of international education services, and education assistance for backward countries and regions has been suspended. According to UNESCO, total aid to education was \$15.6 billion in 2018, with the higher education level reaching its highest level ever, up 12 percent from the previous year. However, as a result of the global economic recession caused by COVID-19, global aid will be cut by at least \$2 billion from 2018 to 2022, and it will take six years for education aid to recover to 2018 levels.

#### **4.2 Internal risks of the internationalization of higher education**

On the one hand, the government allows the marketization of education; on the other hand, it strengthens the supervision of the higher education market so as to make more effective use of public education resources. In the "managed market" of higher education, internationalization has been artificially constructed since its birth. The process of internationalization is not a simple education issue. The apparent academic mobility and research cooperation, etc., reflect the different economic and political demands of different countries for higher education. Therefore, this paper attempts to analyze the endogenous risks arising from the development of internationalization of higher education from political, economic and institutional factors.

First of all, education, as a "normative product" of modern countries, has always been regarded as a carrier of social values. Universities are also important talent training bases in national scientific research fields, government departments and judicial system, so education is regarded as a sensitive field of the country. There are differences between national polity and cultural system, which determines that there will be some value conflicts among countries in international cooperation. Taking Sino-US relations as an example, the Trump administration issued the Strategic Guidelines for the People's Republic of China in May 2020, emphasizing the competition between China and the US. Under the guidance of national strategy and the influence of ideology, the US education department began to expel some Chinese students studying in the US and restricted the opening of certain disciplines to Chinese students. To some extent, this has caused the dilemma of educational exchange between China and the United States. How to safeguard national interests in educational exchanges and cooperation and how to weaken the obstacles of hegemonism and power politics to international higher education cooperation are political risks in the process of internationalization of higher education. Secondly, the service for overseas students in the internationalization of higher education is the main economic source in the education market, and the blind profit-seeking behavior makes the quality of education difficult to guarantee. According to the American Association of International Educators (NAFSA), international students contributed \$41 billion to the US economy and created nearly 460,000 jobs

in the 2018-2019 academic year. Canada's Minister of International Trade pointed out that international students in Canada contributed \$21.6 billion to Canada's GDP in 2018 and provided nearly 170,000 jobs; According to the data of the Australian Department of Education, the export income of Australian education was 40.3 billion US dollars in 2019. In driven by economic interests, more and more pure commercial for-profit education organizations and institutions in the international higher education market, the use of the international higher education market in the circulation of information and legal system construction of loopholes, set up businesses and business cooperation projects, to the identity of the participants on consumers demand of international exchange and qualifications, The result isa deluged of fake degrees, falling academic standards and Degree Mills and Visa Tories(QS,2020). This weakens or even deprives vulnerable groups of their right to participate in international educational exchanges, deviates from the universality of higher education and disrupts the normal order of international higher education market. Finally, institutional factors and the inequality of international higher education order also make the development of internationalization face risks. In the international higher education system centered on the Developed countries in Europe and the United States, the central developed countries have the majority of world-class universities, international renowned scholars and high-quality students and other human resource reserves. They have the absolute right to speak in promoting scientific research and innovation and development, and exert an important influence on the world economy and society(MARGINSONS,2020). Among the top 100 universities in the QS World University Rankings 2021, except for 15 universities from developing countries such as China, Malaysia, Argentina and Mexico, the remaining 84 universities are all from developed countries. Although emerging economies such as China, India and Brazil pay more and more attention to the construction of internationalization of higher education and continue to strengthen their strength in the international higher education system, their strength is still not enough to shake the status of the established education powers in Europe and the United States. At the same time, the education system there are still many on the edge of the less developed regions such as Latin America, Africa and other countries, the

construction of higher education system started relatively late, in the process of internationalization for excessive dependence on central state increased in some countries the mobility and academic cooperation, scientific research and so on international dimensions of hegemony, further strengthened the unequal situation of higher education international order. Faced with the unequal development of the higher education system and the strong of the developed countries, developing countries under the condition of the limited education level always lack of voice, and gradually learn to imitate the western education mode, the way of internationalization of higher education became the "westernization education", the discourse system of vulnerable countries easily lead to loss of local, The pattern of internationalization of higher education tends to homogenize. The restructuring of international relations under the impact of COVID-19 and other global risks is bound to intensify the fierce competition between different countries in various fields, including education [30]. For countries with a weak foundation of higher education system and lack of resilience, the post-epidemic recovery of higher education system increases uncertainties. It makes it harder for countries to break through the unequal international system of higher education.

## V. FINDINGS

### **5.1 COVID-19 exacerbates the crisis of internationalization of higher education**

One of the dangers of internationalization of higher education is the decline in the growth rate of large-scale student mobility. While the COVID-19 pandemic has slowed cross-border student flows globally, the crisis is not entirely caused by COVID-19. The crisis of global internationalization of higher education was already evident before the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, in the early years, middle and high income families in China liked to send their children to study abroad, but now Chinese people's views on studying in the United States are changing, and the total number of Chinese students going abroad is decreasing in recent years. The COVID-19 pandemic has further accelerated the decline in the number of students studying abroad. We need to be objective about the possibility that the explosive wave of post-epidemic study abroad will not be repeated. Another crisis in the

internationalization of higher education before the outbreak of COVID-19 was the increasing conflict between traditional internationalization and local internationalization. The high cost and narrow coverage of internationalization of traditional higher education have brought about a great demand for internationalization in local areas. In terms of the quality of their students, China ranks first in the world, and India is no less. Internationalization has enabled large numbers of Chinese and Indian students to receive high-quality higher education at home without going abroad to study.

### **5.2 There are significant differences in the quality of online education in different countries and regions**

COVID-19 has led to campus closures in many places, and the ability of different countries, regions and universities to cope with the epidemic varies widely. Although most high schools teach students through distance learning, the hardware and software preparations for online education vary widely among universities in different countries and regions. There are also questions about the quality of online education offered by colleges and whether students are satisfied with the new educational environment. Moreover, most teachers in some countries have not received distance course training and lack advanced technology necessary for online teaching, so they cannot adapt to online teaching.

### **5.3 In the post-COVID-19 era, the international pattern of global higher education will change**

As far as higher education in western countries is concerned, its international thinking and action have been ahead of other countries or regions in the world for a long time. But that has slowly changed in recent years, especially as China, India and other countries have grown in international influence. Several Chinese universities are already planning to set up overseas campuses, and there are growing moves by Japanese universities interested in internationalisation and by academics doing research in the field. The internationalization of global higher education will become more diverse and the dominance of western countries will slowly erode. In terms of rankings, China's rise has been quite rapid, while that of some other Asian countries has not been so rapid.

## VI. DISCUSSION

### **6.1 Online education is not a long-term solution**

As the COVID-19 pandemic has prevented international students from returning to campus, many universities are offering education to international students through distance learning. At present, online education is still advancing, but the understanding of the difference between online education and offline education is often vague. Some universities even regard online education and offline education as equivalent, and adopt the same charging standard, which is not appropriate. In fact, most students' demand for offline education is much higher than online education, because campus experience is a very important part of overseas study; Offline classes are much richer than online classes in terms of classroom interaction and comprehensive thinking development.

### **6.2 The pattern of education internationalization in the post-epidemic era is facing reconstruction**

The COVID-19 pandemic is causing the international development of global higher education to become more diversified, and the dominance of western countries is quietly changing. East Asia has begun to rise, albeit relatively slowly, and countries like China, India, Japan, And Singapore have been able to attract large numbers of students who have traditionally preferred to study in the United States or The United Kingdom. China will find a new model suitable for the internationalization of its higher education and take a unique development path.

## VII. CONCLUSION

Facing the new situation in the post-EPIDEMIC era, China has been more active in opening up education. In June 2020, the Ministry of Education issued the Opinions of the Ministry of Education and other Eight Departments on Accelerating and Expanding the Opening up of Education in the New Era, which clearly pointed out that speeding up and expanding the opening up of education, vigorously enhancing the international influence of China's education, and actively strengthening mutual learning, inclusiveness and communication with other countries in the world. We will form a more all-round, wider, more advanced and more proactive opening up of education. (BOTHWELL,2020). As

an important participant in international education, China should adopt diversified strategies to avoid risks in the process of education opening up, seize the initiative of education internationalization in the post-epidemic era, and promote the sustainable development of global education cooperation.

### **7.1 Establish cultural consciousness and improve the resilience of higher education system**

Risk in modern risk society is a combination of objective existence and subjective understanding, and the essence of risk is not that it is 'happening', but that it is 'possible' (UNESCO,2020). To deal with risks, we need to understand the cultural nature of risks, establish correct risk concept, objectively understand the existence of risks, and strengthen the awareness of objective risks. Due to the sudden outbreak of the crisis, making people to review again the importance of risk awareness, to collect education elite talent and teachers in the field of higher education is concerned, not merely content with the outbreak and passive reaction and rush after the disaster, and should save for a rainy day, take the lead in establishing cultural consciousness, We should fully grasp the history, current problems and future trend of the internationalization of higher education, and play an active leading and supporting role in society's response to emergencies and disasters. China should be sensitive to changes in the internationalization of higher education and improve the resilience of its higher education system.

First, adhere to the socialist road with Chinese characteristics theory system of self-confidence, self-confidence, self-confidence and culture, with a positive attitude and reasonable response to the western trend of unilateralism and populist, and realize from "education powers" to "education powers", holding power and courage to stand on its own among the higher education of the world. Second, consciously avoid the homogenization trend of the world higher education model, and independently explore the internationalization development road of higher education with its own characteristics. Third, as the US pursues unilateralism, keeps withdrawing from groups and obstructs international cooperation, international organizations cannot function properly, international rules and norms are weakened, and globalization and global governance face serious challenges(SALTERB,2020).

China needs to make strategic arrangements to break and reconstruct the inequitable order of education internationalization, and cooperate with capable and willing countries to jointly maintain the process of globalization and promote global governance.

### **7.2 Seize the "Opportunity Period" of Risk and Improve the governance Capacity of higher Education System**

Risks bring obvious harm to human beings, but we should not ignore the positive significance of risk society for human development. Giddens once pointed out: "On the positive side, a risk society is one in which people's choices expand. Second, make full use of distance education technology and take advantage of their own experience in the field of international online education. According to Simon Markinson, international education is expected to have a recovery period of at least five years, based on data from countries affected by the pandemic(NAFSA,2020). Educational technologies such as "Internet + education" and "smart + education" have been adopted as teaching tools to promote internationalization and become a characteristic action to deal with the risk of the epidemic. In March 2020, the OECD published an article entitled "Education's Response to COVID-19: Embracing digital Learning and online collaboration", which clearly pointed out that countries and schools should make full use of existing online distance learning platforms, focus on developing new online teaching platforms, carry out international cooperation and share existing online education resources(Wang,2020).

### **7.3 To strengthen international cooperation, to promote higher education international influence**

Baker said: "we cannot change the fact that in principle, each one of us is likely to be affected by this crisis or dangerous, and, in the current situation, to solve these problems from the Angle of politic level will also have to need the joint efforts of the world. Strengthen cooperation with multilateral international organizations and take an active part in global education governance. As for the new issues in global education mentioned above, we should strengthen our cooperation with multilateral international organizations such as UNESCO, UNICEF and the World Bank. Based on the history and culture of our country, we should conscientiously sum up the experience and lessons of China's education development, and sincerely communicate with countries willing to cooperate, and provide necessary

financial or technical assistance, so as to promote each other and achieve common development(Knight,2013). At the same time, we should step up our efforts to not only select outstanding students from domestic universities for training or internship in international organizations, but also support overseas students to receive training in international organizations, so as to help them familiarize themselves with international communication rules, enhance their international understanding and enhance their international competitiveness.

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