

Implications of Sino-foreign Cooperative University Cultivation Models for Internationalization Education in Local Universities --Taking University of Nottingham Ningbo as an Example

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Abstract. As a model of Sino-foreign cooperative education, the successful experience of the University of Nottingham Ningbo is a profound inspiration for the education reform of local universities. The university strengthens the international vision and local integration, implements the teaching concept of “student-centered”, and emphasizes the cultivation of students' independent learning ability and practical ability. Through diversified teaching methods such as case study teaching and contextualized teaching, students' motivation in learning has been significantly enhanced. Meanwhile, the internationalized faculty and rich international educational resources provide students with an educational experience in line with international standards. Its successful experience provides a useful reference for the reform of higher education in China.

Keywords: international cooperative education in higher education; University of Nottingham Ningbo; education concept renewal; teaching mode innovation.

1. Introduction

According to the Regulations of the People's Republic of China on Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools, international cooperation in running schools is defined as cooperation between foreign educational institutions and Chinese educational institutions to carry out educational activities in China with Chinese citizens as the main subjects. After years of development, China's international cooperative education has gradually become an indispensable part of China's higher education from small to large. As of June 2023, a total of 1,519 international cooperative education institutions and programs have been established in China, showing its vigorous development and broad prospects (see Table 1). The University of Nottingham Ningbo, as a pioneer, has set a model for the internationalization of higher education in China by introducing high-quality educational resources and promoting the international exchange of educational ideas. This study will deeply analyze the schooling characteristics of the University of Nottingham Ningbo, with a view to providing strong support and guidance for the internationalization process of higher education in China.

Table 1. Chinese-foreign cooperative educational institutions and projects approved to be established and organized nationwide in 2023 (including Mainland China, Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan)

Typology	Chinese-foreign cooperative schooling institutions (unit/unit)	Chinese-foreign cooperative school programs (unit/unit)	Add up the total
undergraduate (adjective)	181	91	272
Postgraduate student	1073	174	1247
Subtotal	1254	265	1519

(Source: Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China Information Platform for Supervision of Sino-foreign Cooperative Schools (jsj.edu.cn))

2. Characteristics and Practices of the University of Nottingham Ningbo

2.1. Background and History

The University of Nottingham Ningbo, as the first Chinese-foreign cooperative educational institution approved by the Ministry of Education of China with the status of an independent legal person, marks the new exploration of the internationalization of higher education in China. The university was co-founded by Zhejiang Wanli College and the University of Nottingham in 2002[1], and has gradually developed into a comprehensive university with more than 6,000 students and occupies a prominent position in the world's university rankings after three phases of early integration, rapid development and high speed enhancement. The background of its founding can be traced back to YaFen Xu educational reform in 1992, after a series of educational institutions founded and developed, to China's accession to the WTO, in the face of globalization, YaFen Xu in 2003 to the University of Nottingham in the United Kingdom issued an invitation to the University of Nottingham to cooperate in running a school, marking the official start of the preparatory work for the University of Nottingham Ningbo. 2004, the Ministry of Education officially approved the preparations for the establishment of the university (see Figure 1). In 2004, the Ministry of Education officially approved the preparations for the establishment of the University of Nottingham Ningbo (see Figure 1). Jinping Xi, the then Party Secretary of Zhejiang Province, pointed out at the opening ceremony that the creation of the University of Nottingham Ningbo had created a precedent for combining Chinese higher education with foreign high-quality educational resources, and had created a brand new model for Chinese education to go global. After three phases of preliminary friction, rapid development and high-speed enhancement, the university has developed into a comprehensive university with more than 6,000 students and occupies a prominent position in the world's university rankings. Its unique characteristics and practices have contributed to the internationalization of China's higher education.

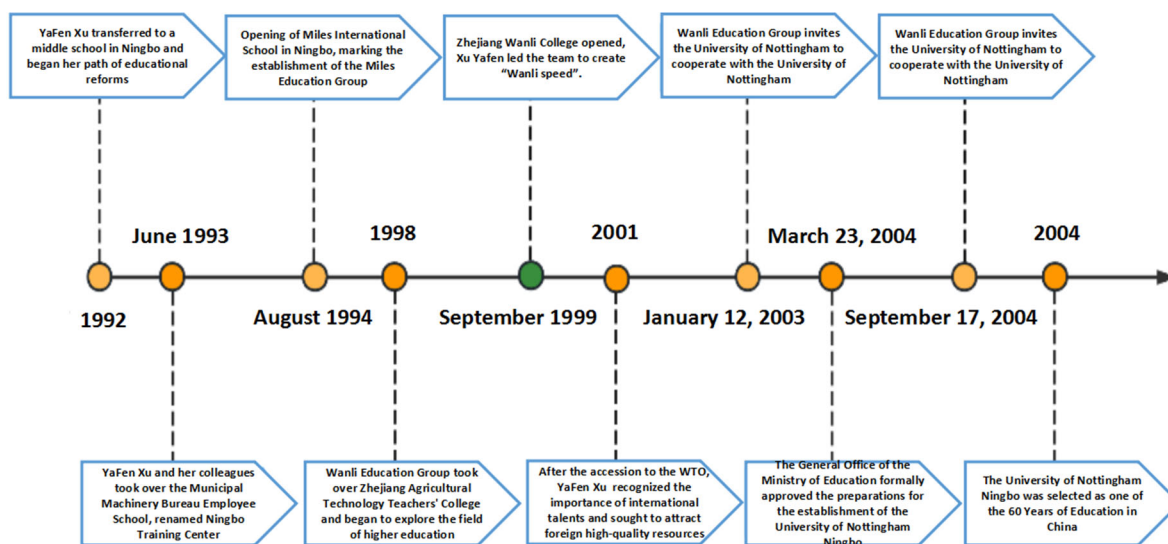


Figure 1. Timeline of the development of the University of Nottingham in Ningbo

2.2. Internationalization Exploration of School Running Characteristics and Practical Effectiveness

The University of Nottingham Ningbo, under the framework of the Regulations on Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools, has jointly constructed a "collaborative" management model with the British side to ensure an international perspective and efficient operation. The University adheres to the concept of "student-centered" education, cultivating students' cognitive, skill and thinking abilities, and bringing them into contact with the academic frontiers through international faculty and high-standard teaching activities, such as the Nobel Lecture Theatre. The school offers a diverse

curriculum and a wide range of cooperation opportunities to enhance students' international perspective and comprehensive quality [2]. Its international ranking has been improving year by year, and its graduates have strong employment competitiveness, with a high implementation rate of more than 95% for undergraduate graduates (see Figure 2), and nearly 80% of them have entered Fortune 500 companies, and a high advancement rate, with a number of graduates being admitted to prestigious universities such as Oxford, Cambridge, and so on, which provides valuable experience for the development of internationalization of China's higher education.

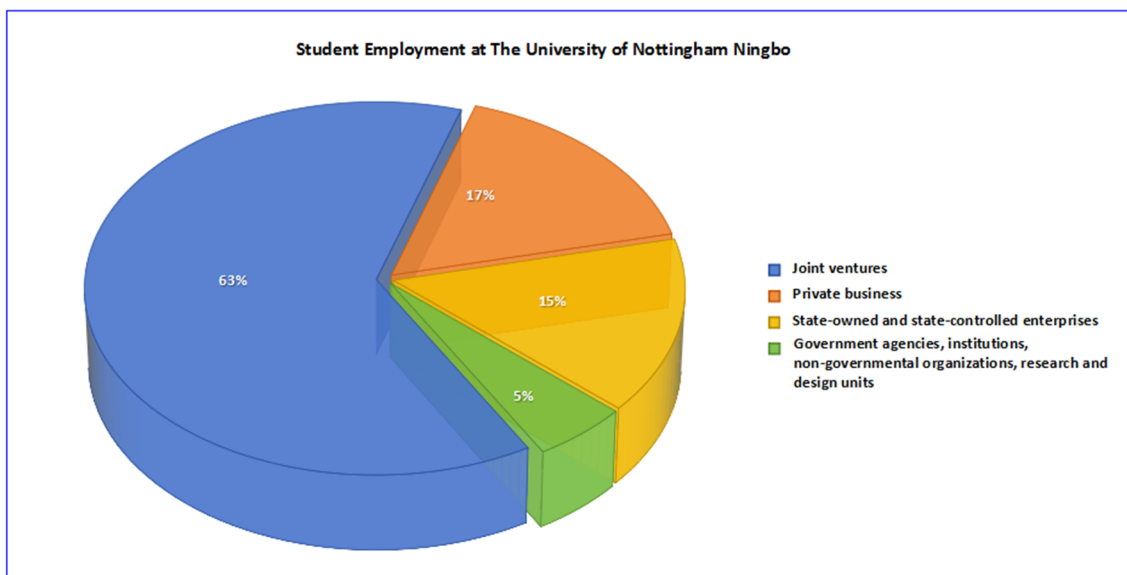


Figure 2. Employment of students in Ningbo Nottingham University

(Source of data: 95.7% implementation rate of the destination! University of Nottingham Ningbo Annual Report on Quality of Employment 2022/23 Released)

3. Teaching Mode and Management Mechanism of The University of Nottingham Ningbo

3.1. Education Mode and Philosophy

As a model of Chinese-foreign cooperative education, the University of Nottingham Ningbo has deeply integrated its teaching mode and educational philosophy, showing remarkable innovation and exploration. The university adheres to the core concept of cultivating students with international vision and innovation ability, and realizes the organic unity of education philosophy and teaching methods by building a student-centered teaching environment [3]. The combination of flexible and diverse curriculum and international cutting-edge academic achievements provides students with rich and internationalized educational resources. At the same time, the university focuses on the close integration of theory and practice, and the integration of small-class teaching and interactive classroom effectively stimulates students' critical thinking and innovation ability. The application of diversified teaching methods, such as case teaching and situational simulation, provides students with a practical platform to further enhance their practical ability and comprehensive quality. The internationalized faculty not only teaches professional knowledge, but also cultivates students' cross-cultural communication skills, laying a solid foundation for their international development. The successful experience of The University of Nottingham Ningbo provides a valuable reference for the reform of higher education in China, demonstrating the positive role of internationalized schooling in enhancing the quality of education and promoting the all-round development of students.

3.2. Governance and Organizational Structure

The management mechanism and organizational structure of the University of Nottingham Ningbo demonstrates its unique features of internationalization and ensures a governance model that emphasizes both efficient operation and academic freedom. The University has adopted the Presidential Responsibility System under the leadership of the Board of Governors, which clearly defines the division of responsibilities between the decision-making level and the executive level, and guarantees the efficient management of university affairs as well as the scientific nature of decision-making. Under this structure, the council, as the highest decision-making body, is responsible for formulating the school's development strategies and major policies, while the principal is responsible for the concrete implementation of these decisions and leading the school's daily operation and academic activities. At the same time, the party supervision and guarantee system occupies an important position in the school's governance structure, which is not only responsible for supervising the school's work and ensuring the implementation of the party's education policies, but also actively participates in the school's major decision-making process and plays the role of a political core, providing a stable and harmonious internal environment and guaranteeing the school's sustained and healthy development. This management mechanism, which combines the presidential responsibility system under the leadership of the Board of Governors with the Party committee's supervision and guarantee system, has earned the University of Nottingham Ningbo a good academic reputation and social recognition (see Figure 3).

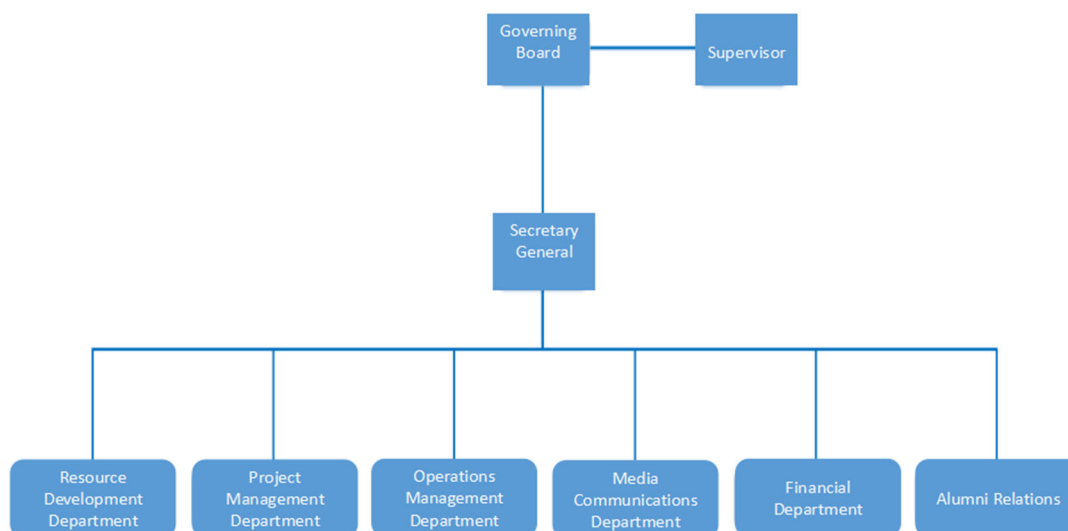


Figure 3. Structure of the management mechanism of Ningbo Nottingham University

4. Experiences and Insights of International Cooperative Education of University of Nottingham Ningbo

4.1. Renewal of Educational Philosophy and Innovation of Teaching Mode

As a model of Chinese-foreign cooperative education, the University of Nottingham Ningbo success lies in the continuous updating of educational concepts and the innovation of teaching modes and methods. While strengthening its international vision, the university focuses on the personalized development of students, which is in line with the global development trend of higher education. Through the introduction of advanced education concepts from abroad, such as the UK's “student-centered” teaching model, and by combining them with the reality of Chinese education, the university has formed a unique education philosophy. The school focuses on international vision and local integration, adopts the education model of the University of Nottingham, emphasizes the “student-centered” teaching philosophy, focuses on cultivating students' independent learning ability, scientific research and teamwork ability, and implements a mentor system to provide personalized

academic guidance and development planning; meanwhile, it implements “whole-person education”. At the same time, it implements the concept of “whole-person education”, focuses on the all-round development of students, emphasizes the close integration of scientific research and teaching, and exposes students to the latest scientific research results and technological advances, as well as having an international faculty to provide students with an educational experience that is in line with international standards. In the business management program, the university effectively enhances students' learning motivation and practical ability by introducing diversified teaching methods such as case study teaching and contextual teaching. It also focuses on strengthening practical teaching, promoting the integration of industry, academia and research, and establishing cooperative relationships with a number of enterprises to provide internship and training bases for students. These innovations provide useful references and new ideas and directions for the reform of higher education in China.

4.2. Internationalization of Teaching Staff and Diversification of Evaluation System

As a model of international cooperative education, the University of Nottingham Ningbo internationalization path of faculty construction and its comprehensive and diversified evaluation system provide an important reference for China's higher education reform. The university has attracted excellent teachers from more than 30 countries and regions through its global recruitment strategy, with more than 60% of foreign, Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan teachers, injecting diversified academic perspectives and cutting-edge teaching methods into the campus (see Figure 4). At the same time, the university attaches great importance to international training and exchanges of teachers to enhance their internationalization literacy and teaching ability. In terms of teaching evaluation, the University of Nottingham Ningbo not only pays attention to academic performance, but also emphasizes the cultivation of emotion, attitude and values, and adopts diversified methods such as project evaluation, peer evaluation and self-evaluation to comprehensively assess students' comprehensive quality [4]. These initiatives not only promote the overall development of students, but also provide new ideas and directions for the reform of China's higher education evaluation system.

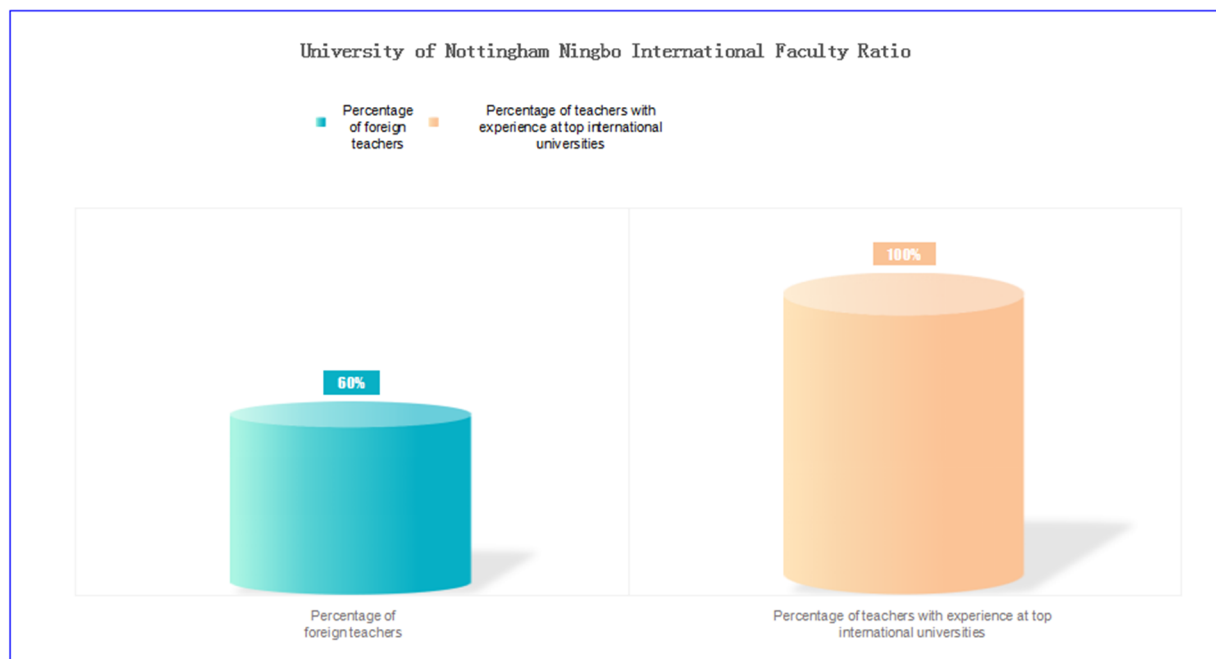


Figure 4. Percentage of international faculty at the University of Nottingham, Ningbo, China (Source: University of Nottingham Ningbo: excellent faculty escort, graduates continue to excel_Academic_Graduate_Global)

5. Challenges and Solutions

5.1. Challenges faced

The University of Nottingham Ningbo, as a model of international cooperative education, faces challenges in many aspects. In terms of cultural differences and integration, the university needs to cope with the differences in educational concepts between China and the UK, as well as the different cultural backgrounds of teachers and students, which to a certain extent affects teaching interactions and the integration of campus culture. For example, the differences in the evaluation standards for students in the Chinese and British education systems require the school to take into account localized adaptability while maintaining international characteristics. In terms of the optimal allocation of educational resources, UNB needs to balance domestic and international educational resources to ensure the continuous improvement of teaching quality and research strength. This includes the internationalization of faculty, the updating and improvement of the curriculum, and the depth and breadth of research cooperation. Policy support and sustained funding are also important challenges for the university. International cooperative education needs policy support and financial guarantee from governmental departments to ensure the long-term and stable development of the school. For example, the government's support in the approval of educational projects, financial allocations, tax concessions, etc. has an important impact on the internationalization process of the school.

5.2. Countermeasure Suggestions

In view of the challenges faced by the international cooperative education of the University of Nottingham Ningbo, this paper puts forward the following targeted countermeasure suggestions, with a view to providing reference for its internationalization process.

First, strengthen the construction of cultural communication and integration mechanism. The university should set up a special cross-cultural communication center responsible for planning and implementing cultural exchange activities, such as organizing the “International Cultural Festival” on a regular basis to provide a platform for teachers and students to display and understand different cultures, so as to promote mutual understanding and respect, and effectively alleviate the conflicts caused by cultural differences.

Secondly, broaden the channels of educational resources and improve the utilization efficiency. The University of Nottingham Ningbo should actively seek opportunities for cooperation with internationally renowned universities to enrich its teaching resources and enhance its teaching quality and scientific research strength through co-development of courses and joint scientific research projects. For example, it can establish closer cooperation with the University of Nottingham in the UK and share its high-quality educational resources.

Thirdly, we should strive for more policy and financial support to form a long-term development mechanism. Schools need to strengthen communication and cooperation with government departments, and strive for more policy support in the approval of education projects, financial allocations, tax incentives and other aspects. At the same time, the school should also actively establish the “International Cooperative Education Development Fund” to attract donations from alumni and all walks of life, so as to provide a strong financial guarantee for the long-term and stable development of the school.

Through the implementation of the above countermeasures, University of Nottingham Ningbo is expected to make greater breakthroughs and development on the road of international cooperative education.

6. Conclusion

The University of Nottingham Ningbo shows distinctive school running characteristics with its unique international cooperative school running mode, which is reflected in the deep integration of

internationalization and localization in the curriculum system, teaching methods and teacher-student interactions, and provides a strong support for the cultivation of talents with an international outlook and cross-cultural communication ability. Its “all-English teaching environment” and “Sino-British Dual Degree Program” have effectively enhanced the international competitiveness of students. The university's practice of running schools has profound inspiration for the education reform of local universities, proving that while maintaining the characteristics of local education, the active introduction of international education resources can improve the quality of teaching and scientific research, and encouraging local universities to explore more open and diversified education paths to adapt to the needs of education in the context of globalization. The University of Nottingham Ningbo has shown a positive attitude in exploring and innovating the mode of international cooperative education, and it has continuously established cooperative relationships with internationally renowned universities, co-developed curricula, and carried out joint scientific research projects, which provide a rich platform for teachers and students to have international exchanges. Looking ahead, local universities need to meet the challenges of cultural differences and optimal allocation of educational resources on the road to internationalization, as well as grasp the opportunities of introducing advanced education concepts and resources from abroad.

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