

QUỐC TẾ HÓA GIÁO DỤC TRONG CÁC TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC NGHỆ THUẬT TỔNG HỢP TRUNG QUỐC: THỰC TRẠNG, THÁCH THỨC PHÁT TRIỂN VÀ CHIẾN LƯỢC CAN THIỆP

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TÓM TẮT

Trong bối cảnh hội nhập toàn cầu sâu rộng và sự đa dạng văn hóa ngày càng gia tăng, quốc tế hóa trở thành yếu tố then chốt thúc đẩy phát triển chất lượng cao cho các trường đại học nghệ thuật tổng hợp ở Trung Quốc. Nghiên cứu này khảo sát thực trạng, thách thức và chiến lược nâng cao quốc tế hóa tại tám cơ sở đào tạo hàng đầu, thông qua phương pháp nghiên cứu hỗn hợp bao gồm phân tích chính sách, phỏng vấn và quan sát thực địa. Các nội dung chính được xem xét gồm triết lý giáo dục, thiết kế chương trình, phát triển đội ngũ giảng viên và hợp tác khu vực. Kết quả cho thấy mặc dù cả tám trường đều nhận thức rõ tầm quan trọng của quốc tế hóa và đã có kế hoạch hành động cụ thể, song vẫn tồn tại những thách thức cơ cấu như mục tiêu chưa rõ ràng, phân bổ nguồn lực chưa đồng đều và hợp tác khu vực còn hạn chế về chiều sâu. Để giải quyết những thách thức này, nghiên cứu đề xuất mô hình can thiệp “3P”: Chính sách (Policy) - củng cố khuôn khổ quốc gia và khu vực, đặc biệt chú trọng nghiên cứu gắn với ASEAN; Quan hệ đối tác (Partnership) - xây dựng mạng lưới hợp tác chặt chẽ với Mỹ, châu Âu và ASEAN nhằm thúc đẩy nền tảng chia sẻ và trao đổi nguồn lực; Thực tiễn (Practice) - tăng cường sự tương thích giữa nội dung, hệ thống giáo dục trong nước và quốc tế, mở rộng tính lưu động của giảng viên và sinh viên, đồng thời cùng phát triển các chương trình định hướng chất lượng. Những giải pháp này nhằm góp phần hình thành cộng đồng giáo dục nghệ thuật đại học Trung Quốc - ASEAN và thúc đẩy sự phát triển đồng bộ giữa các cơ sở đào tạo. Về mặt lý thuyết, nghiên cứu bổ sung cơ sở cho việc tích hợp quốc tế hóa vào khung giáo dục nghệ thuật đại học; về mặt thực tiễn, cung cấp định hướng cho công tác quản trị và triển khai chiến lược quốc tế hóa trong các trường nghệ thuật, dựa trên sự kết hợp giữa chiến lược quốc gia, hợp tác khu vực và quản trị cơ sở.

Từ khóa: Liên minh các trường nghệ thuật Trung Quốc - ASEAN; Cộng đồng giáo dục nghệ thuật bậc đại học; Đại học nghệ thuật tổng hợp; Quốc tế hóa giáo dục nghệ thuật bậc đại học

INTERNATIONALIZATION OF EDUCATION IN CHINESE COMPREHENSIVE ARTS UNIVERSITIES: CURRENT SITUATION, DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES, AND SUGGESTED INTERVENTIONS

ABSTRACT

Amid growing global integration and cultural diversity, internationalization has become essential for fostering the high-quality development of China's comprehensive arts universities. This study investigates the current status, challenges, and strategies for enhancing internationalization at eight leading institutions. Using a mixed-methods approach-including policy analysis, interviews, and field observations-the research examines educational philosophy, curriculum design, faculty development, and regional cooperation. The findings reveal that while all eight universities recognize the importance of internationalization and have developed action plans, they still face structural obstacles such as vague objectives, uneven resource allocation, and limited regional collaboration. To address these issues, the study proposes a “3P” intervention model focusing on Policy, Partnership, and Practice. Policy involves strengthening national and regional frameworks, including ASEAN-focused research. Partnership emphasizes building robust collaborations with the United States, Europe, and ASEAN countries to foster shared platforms and resource exchange. Practice centers on aligning national educational content and systems with international standards, increasing faculty and student mobility, and jointly developing quality-driven programs. These interventions aim to advance the China-ASEAN higher arts education community and foster mutual institutional growth. Theoretically, this study contributes to the integration of internationalization into higher arts education frameworks. Practically, it provides guidance for enhancing governance and strategic implementation in arts universities through a feasible model grounded in national strategy, regional cooperation, and institutional governance.

Keywords: ASEAN-China Arts Colleges Alliance; higher arts education community; comprehensive arts universities; internationalization of higher arts education

1. INTRODUCTION

Amid the evolution of globalization, the internationalization of higher education (IHE) has gradually shifted from a peripheral issue to a central component of global educational reform (De Wit & Altbach, 2021). Although the concept of “internationalization” has been widely discussed in scholarly discourse over the past three decades, there is still no universally accepted definition. One of the most frequently cited definitions describes internationalization as “the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions, or delivery of postsecondary education” (Knight, 2003, p. 2). Knight's definition highlights that internationalization is a deliberate, strategic endeavor rather than a naturally occurring phenomenon. Building on this foundation, De Wit, Hunter, Howard, and Egron-Polak (2015) emphasize that the ultimate objective of IHE is to improve teaching and research quality and make meaningful contributions to society, rather than simply pursuing economic benefits or higher international rankings.

In China, IHE began in the 1990s through the dual policy approach of “bringing in” and “going global,” which aimed to introduce global cultures to China while simultaneously promoting Chinese culture abroad. This approach fostered dialogue, mutual understanding, and shared cultural development and has since evolved into a comprehensive national strategy. In recent years, IHE has been increasingly emphasized as a means to strengthen China's soft power, promote cultural exchange, cultivate global talent, and enhance educational quality (Zheng & Kapoor, 2021). Compared with Western models, China's approach is characterized by strong policy-driven orientations and institutional particularities that address concerns related to national security, cultural identity, and educational sovereignty.

While globalization and internationalization are often viewed as products of neoliberal agendas, the role of individual institutions in shaping these processes should not be overlooked (Tight, 2021). Since 2000, Chinese arts universities have actively implemented national IHE strategies. However, it is important to distinguish between the “internationalization of higher education” and the “internationalization of higher education institutions.” While the former encompasses the latter, the two differ in scope and focus. IHE typically refers to top-level strategies formulated by national or regional authorities, whereas institutional internationalization concerns curriculum design, faculty composition, student mobility, and cross-cultural engagement (Childress, 2009). In this regard, the internationalization of arts universities

(IAUs) functions as the operational platform for implementing national IHE strategies. The extent of strategic planning, implementation capacity, and cultural adaptability largely determines the depth and breadth of internationalization outcomes (Tiansheng et al., 2018).

Within this framework, arts universities play a distinctive role in China's broader IHE efforts by leveraging the flexible and open nature of their disciplines. IAUs represent a strategic response to global transformations in arts education, providing a crucial pathway for promoting cultural exchange, improving educational quality, and enhancing equitable access to the arts while aligning with international standards. Key initiatives include joint degree programs with foreign institutions, collaborative artistic productions and exhibitions, the development of internationalized curricula, cross-cultural talent cultivation, and participation in global arts networks. Importantly, this process must move beyond Western-centrism, embracing reciprocal and pluralistic cooperation while prioritizing Chinese cultural perspectives to shape global discourse on arts education (Guo et al., 2022).

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought unprecedented disruptions as well as transformative trends to IAUs. On one hand, traditional forms of cross-border mobility for students and faculty have been severely constrained. On the other hand, virtual exchanges, online arts courses, remote co-teaching, and digital exhibitions have expanded rapidly, enriching the practice of “internationalization at home” (De Wit & Deca, 2020). These developments have accelerated a shift from a mobility-centered model toward a more diversified, inclusive, digitalized, and environmentally sustainable approach characterized by “soft contact,” which refers to low-barrier, flexible, technology-enabled interactions that complement traditional face-to-face exchanges.

Despite these advancements, IAUs in China face several practical challenges. First, limited intercultural communication skills and foreign language proficiency among faculty and students hinder effective participation in international programs. Second, many collaborative initiatives suffer from imbalances in discourse power, with Western institutions often dominating joint projects. Third, arts universities in central and western China face structural disadvantages—such as limited funding, unequal access to international resources, and geographic constraints—that impede their ability to compete globally. Finally, some institutions focus on superficial internationalization, prioritizing

symbolic activities over substantive outcomes, leading to a disconnect between resource investment and quality improvement.

Looking ahead, Chinese IAUs must adopt endogenous strategies for sustainable development. These include enhancing intercultural competence and international governance capacity, creating internationally oriented curricula grounded in Chinese cultural heritage, developing hybrid platforms for online–offline collaboration (De Wit et al., 2015), co-branding artistic projects and exhibitions, and promoting fairness and diversity in the global mobility of art professionals. Furthermore, integrating internationalization strategies into institutional development plans is crucial to avoid fragmented implementation and to promote systematic, long-term, high-quality arrangements.

Within China's higher education system, comprehensive arts universities (CAUs) are multidisciplinary, emphasize cross-disciplinary integration, cultivate versatile talent, and are generally larger in scale. By contrast, single-discipline institutions—such as academies of fine arts or conservatories of music—focus on specialized fields, emphasizing depth and elite training, with narrower service scopes. This study examines eight CAUs in China: Nanjing University of the Arts, Guangxi Arts University, Shandong University of Arts, Jilin University of Arts, Yunnan Arts University, Xinjiang Arts University, Inner Mongolia Arts University, and Anhui University of Arts. These geographically and culturally diverse institutions are highly representative of China's higher arts education system in terms of comprehensive disciplines, large student populations, and distribution across ethnic and non-ethnic regions. Collectively, they form a microcosm of the development and structural diversity of Chinese higher arts education.

This study contributes to the theoretical understanding of internationalization in Chinese higher arts education and offers practical strategies and policy-oriented interventions for IAUs. These recommendations, which align with national priorities and global trends, aim to enhance the global visibility and educational quality of Chinese arts universities.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses a mixed-methods approach to comprehensively examine the current status, characteristics, challenges, and opportunities associated with the internationalization of CAUs in

China. A mixed-methods study incorporates both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and analysis for a single inquiry, which allows researchers to explore complex phenomena through qualitative insights supported by numerical data, charts, and basic statistical analyses (Creswell, 1999).

In the quantitative phase of the study, a comprehensive assessment of the internationalization status of eight CAUs in China was conducted by administering the “Questionnaire on the Development of Internationalization in Chinese Higher Education Institutions” issued by the Ministry of Education in 2021 (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2021). The questionnaire covered eight key indicators: internationalization strategy, organization and management, faculty, students, disciplines and curriculum, transnational education, academic cooperation and exchanges, and cultural exchanges and distinctive development.

Despite the limited sample size, the findings are considered to be representative and analytically sound due to the high degree of institutional homogeneity across China's comprehensive arts universities in terms of governance structure and functional orientation.

In the qualitative phase, the study used document analysis, in-depth interviews, and participant observation to investigate the data obtained from the quantitative research. Analyzed documents included each university's general development plans, internationalization strategic documents, bilateral cooperation agreements, and annual international exchange summaries. A total of 24 interviews were conducted (three at each university) that included senior administrators (university leadership or directors of international cooperation offices), faculty members, and enrolled students. The aim was to obtain multilevel, multi-perspective insights into institutional practices and individual experiences related to internationalization. Interview topics covered institutional goals, resource allocation, program implementation, individual participation, and outcomes. In addition, the researcher observed participants in activities such as international art exchange exhibitions and performances, joint educational programs, and debriefing sessions for overseas study visits to gain a deeper understanding of the effectiveness and dynamics of internationalization practices.

By employing a mixed-methods research strategy, this study analyzes the developmental challenges

facing the internationalization of CAUs in China. Based on the findings, the study proposes a “3P” framework of suggested interventions-Policy, Partnership, and Practice-which address internationalization at three interrelated levels: national strategy, regional collaboration, and institutional governance.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Current Status of Internationalization in Chinese Comprehensive Arts Universities

3.1.1 Cognitive Dimension: Heightened Awareness Among University Administrators, Faculty, and Students

In recent years, driven by the national strategy of “opening up” education to the world, arts universities in China have reached a broad consensus on the significance of internationalization. At the National Education Conference in 2018, President Xi Jinping emphasized the need to expand educational openness and promote high-level collaborations using world-class educational resources. In a 2023 keynote address, he reiterated the importance of coordinating inbound and outbound educational initiatives, optimizing the strategic layout of educational internationalization, and establishing China as a globally influential educational center (Zheng & Kapoor, 2021). This top-level policy design serves as a powerful engine for advancing internationalization and has inspired institutions to allocate more resources toward the reform of higher arts education.

Against this policy backdrop, the eight selected CAUs have actively strengthened their internal awareness of internationalization by organizing viewings of national policy conferences, university-wide meetings, and thematic training sessions. Across all institutional levels (e.g., administrators, frontline faculty, and students), there is a widespread consensus that internationalization is a key strategy for enhancing the academic caliber and quality of education (De Wit & Altbach, 2021). It is also a critical pathway to align Chinese arts education with global standards and disseminate Chinese culture worldwide.

3.1.2 Strategic Dimension: Integration of Internationalization into Medium- and Long-Term Development Plans

At the strategic planning level, all eight universities have explicitly incorporated “educational internationalization” or “internationalized education” into their respective 14th Five-Year Development Plans (2021–2025). As part of China's national five-year planning system, initiated in 1953, these institutional plans serve as documents to guide

university development and function as action blueprints for resource allocation, institutional innovation, and international cooperation in higher education (Guo et al., 2022). The universities consistently identified internationalization as a key driver for enhancing the intrinsic quality of education and facilitating a transformative shift in institutional development.

Supportive policies issued at the central level have further empowered universities in their internationalization efforts. Key national documents, such as the “Opinions on Promoting Educational Opening-Up in the New Era” (2016), “Opinions on Accelerating and Expanding Educational Opening-Up in the New Era” (2020), and the “National Plan for Building an Educational Powerhouse” (2024–2035), have provided strategic frameworks for universities to design and implement their own internationalization agendas. In response, universities have expanded their channels for international collaboration, diversified their methods of global artistic exchange, enhanced their international reputations, and developed distinctive internationalization pathways tailored to their unique institutional strengths.

3.1.3 Action-Oriented Dimension: Institutional Mechanisms and Diversified International Collaboration

Comprehensive arts universities across China have implemented a wide array of targeted internationalization initiatives that align with the directives issued by the Ministry of Education. In 2021, the Ministry released the “Questionnaire on the Development of Internationalization in Chinese Higher Education Institutions,” which provided a comprehensive assessment of internationalization in undergraduate institutions. The questionnaire included eight primary indicators, 19 secondary indicators, and 115 observation items that encompassed almost all aspects of institutional operations (Ministry of Education, 2021). This large-scale assessment created a form of “reverse impetus” that compelled universities to engage in rapid self-diagnosis and strategic refinement. As a result, higher arts institutions benefited from administrative system improvements, greater access to funding for international activities, and improved allocation of educational spaces.

Arts universities commonly undertake institutional reforms, such as managing international partnerships and joint educational programs, to improve administrative efficiency and enhance the outcomes of internationalized education. For instance, at the end of 2021, Guangxi Arts University reorganized its

international affairs by merging the Office of International Exchange, the School of International Education, and the China-ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) Arts Talent Training Center into the Center for International Education and Exchange. This integration consolidated functions, promoted centralized resources, and facilitated platform sharing, which strengthened the university's governance capacity and international education service quality (Ministry of Education, 2020).

Many institutions have actively explored diversified international collaboration models characterized by “low investment and quick results,” such as launching dual-degree programs with overseas arts universities, organizing international art festivals, promoting online joint courses, and participating in international arts organizations. These initiatives enhance cross-border mobility for students, broaden global perspectives among faculty and students, and contribute to the worldwide dissemination of Chinese arts education philosophies and achievements (Childress, 2009).

3.1.4 Effect-Oriented Dimension: Internationalization as a Driver of Multidimensional Development and Institutional Distinctiveness

Internationalization has become a critical driving force for enhancing the educational quality and distinctive development of the eight CAUs studied. Empirical data indicate that internationalization efforts have had a positive impact by optimizing talent cultivation models, strengthening faculty development, advancing collaborative artistic creation, and shaping institutional international reputations (De Wit & Deca, 2020).

For cross-border educational cooperation initiatives, universities have established long-term, stable partnerships with foreign arts institutions that offer students multiple pathways for overseas study or internship opportunities. At the level of artistic exchange, frequent international exhibitions and performances have significantly enhanced intercultural communication and expression skills among faculty and students. They have also catalyzed innovation in teaching methods and artistic content.

Notably, these universities have gradually developed internationalization strategies aligned with their respective regional cultural cooperation agendas. For instance, Nanjing University of the Arts primarily collaborates with European and North American institutions and emphasizes the cross-national integration of art, design, and the cultural and creative industries. Guangxi Arts University

focuses on Southeast Asian countries and has expanded in a “southward corridor” through the China-ASEAN arts education cooperation platform. Shandong University of Arts concentrates on cultural exchanges with Japan and South Korea. Jilin University of the Arts strengthens Northeast Asian cooperation through the China–Russia Arts Alliance. Yunnan Arts University benefits from South Asian arts education resources, while Xinjiang Arts University engages in ethnic arts exchanges with Central Asian countries. Inner Mongolia Arts University has established cross-border collaborations with Mongolia and Russia.

This evolving pattern-characterized by differentiation, regionalization, and complementarity-has contributed to the creation of a uniquely Chinese international cooperation network in higher arts education. It also reflects the proactive role universities play in supporting the nation's broader cultural diplomacy and strategic goals. Partnerships with institutions in the United States and Europe remain important because of their continued influence on global arts education. Meanwhile, under the guidance of the “Belt and Road Initiative” and China's neighborhood diplomacy, cooperation with ASEAN countries has become an increasingly prominent focus, particularly in the fields of culture, arts, youth, and educational exchanges.

3.2 Challenges in the Internationalization of Chinese Comprehensive Arts Universities

With the growing integration of global higher education in terms of concepts, forms, and content, China's CAUs have begun to develop preliminary frameworks for internationalization. However, significant bottlenecks remain in the actual implementation process. These challenges mainly manifest in four areas:

3.2.1 Insufficient Understanding of the Core Values of Internationalization

Although all eight comprehensive arts universities explicitly emphasize the importance of internationalization in their 14th Five-Year Development Plans, their understanding of its core meaning and strategic significance remains superficial. In many cases, internationalization is perceived as an ornamental or supplementary component of educational development rather than a transformative force central to institutional reform and advancement.

This misalignment in conceptual understanding has resulted in internationalization being treated as a “temporary initiative” instead of a “strategic imperative.” Several factors contribute to this

cognitive gap. First, some universities fail to situate internationalization within the broader context of global higher education trends and therefore lack a global perspective. Second, institutional limitations prevent these universities from fully recognizing internationalization as a key instrument for national public diplomacy and a vehicle for enhancing China's soft power. Finally, persistent rigid disciplinary boundaries hinder internationalization's potential to serve as a catalyst for interdisciplinary integration and dismantle siloed academic structures.

3.2.2 Limited Effectiveness in Implementing Internationalization Plans

All eight universities incorporated internationalization goals into their medium- and long-term development strategies (e.g., the 14th Five-Year Development Plan). Goals include student and faculty exchanges, faculty development, transnational teaching collaborations, and international academic cooperation. Proposed measures include expanding international student enrollment, launching international workshops, implementing faculty and student exchange programs, and hosting international conferences. However, actual performance data indicate that the implementation outcomes remain suboptimal.

The reasons behind this limited effectiveness can be attributed to four primary factors. First, the number of international students remains low. As of July 31, 2025, there were just 286 international degree-seeking students enrolled across all eight universities. International students account for less than 0.4% of the total student population, which is far below the average of 15% among internationally renowned universities (Lassahn, 2023).

Second, the internationalization of faculty has progressed slowly. During 2021–2025, the eight universities collectively hired just 35 full-time foreign faculty members. Only 101 Chinese faculty members participated in international academic training programs that lasted six months or more, which falls short of meeting the demand for internationalized faculty development.

Third, the internationalization of curricula remains underdeveloped. Aside from a few compulsory foreign courses offered within Sino–foreign joint education programs, most universities lack international course offerings and English-medium instruction, highlighting a serious gap in curriculum internationalization.

Fourth, pathways for international research and

artistic collaboration are largely absent, and existing cooperation models are overly simplistic. Most collaborative projects are led by Chinese scholars participating in overseas initiatives (21 projects in total). Only five projects involve in-depth participation by foreign scholars in Chinese-led research. This imbalance reflects a structural asymmetry in international collaboration.

3.2.3 Inadequate Localization and Transformation of International Best Practices

Although all eight arts universities have emphasized the importance of “drawing on international best practices” in their development strategies to promote the progress of educational practice, actual implementation reveals a limited capacity for deep assimilation and localized adaptation of these experiences.

There is a prominent tendency toward Western-centrism. Some institutions overly rely on standards and frameworks from Western universities during the process of conceptual introduction. This uncritical dependence tends to neglect the essential process of contextual transformation based on critically reflecting on fundamental questions, such as why these particular experiences are being adopted and whether these practices are suitable for their contexts. Consequently, imported models may not align with local realities.

Additionally, the process of introducing international practices is predominantly unidirectional and lacks mutual engagement or dialogical interaction with foreign institutions. Collaborative activities are often top-down or instrumental in nature instead of being embedded in a foundation of reciprocity, mutual trust, and shared benefit.

This deficiency highlights a deeper issue: the absence of a clearly defined internationalization strategy grounded in institutional strengths and oriented toward intercultural and multicontextual exchange. At the operational level, arts universities have not yet established systematic implementation mechanisms or frameworks for transforming international practices. Consequently, many imported best practices are left unused or fail to produce meaningful outcomes due to a lack of integration and relevance.

3.2.4 Significant Disparities in the Level of Internationalization Among Institutions

The eight CAUs are located across China in the Southeast, South, Southwest, North, Northeast, and Northwest. Each has distinct cultural contexts and

resource endowments. However, current findings reveal stark disparities in the level of internationalization among institutions, which represents an imbalanced development pattern characterized by regional inequality and uneven institutional performance.

Four primary factors contribute to this disparity. First, imbalanced disciplinary development has created differences in the depth and quality of international cooperation. For instance, Nanjing University of the Arts, supported by well-established doctoral and master's degree programs, engages in high-level collaborations with world-class institutions. Similarly, Guangxi Arts University has used its doctoral program as an opportunity to expand state-level partnerships with ASEAN arts universities. In contrast, other institutions primarily collaborate with nearby local colleges, which creates significant variation in the scale and standard of cooperation.

Second, there is a notable gap in financial support for internationalization among institutions. The ratio of internationalization-specific funding between the most and least resourced institutions is as high as 12:1. This funding disparity directly affects institutional capacity to develop projects, establish platforms, and recruit international talent.

Third, the development of Sino–foreign cooperative education is uneven. Some universities (e.g., Shandong University of Arts, Nanjing University of the Arts, Guangxi Arts University, and Yunnan Arts University) already have legally independent Sino–foreign joint institutions or formalized collaborative programs. Others, in the exploratory or initial stages of cooperation, still lack institutionalized frameworks.

Fourth, the international mobility of faculty and students varies greatly. The proportion of faculty with international academic backgrounds differs by up to a factor of 5:1 across institutions. Outbound student exchange is extremely limited, with an annual average participation rate below 0.5%, and the gap between the highest- and lowest-performing universities reaches 18:1. These discrepancies reveal the uneven distribution of resources available for international talent exchange and development.

In summary, CAUs in China face a series of common challenges to advancing educational internationalization. These include limited strategic awareness, weak implementation capacity, insufficient localization of international practices, and significant disparities in development levels

across institutions and regions. Collectively, these issues constrain the sustainable development of individual universities and undermine the global visibility and influence of Chinese higher arts education in international academic systems.

Addressing these structural and systemic barriers is imperative. A coordinated set of responsive strategies aimed at enhancing the overall quality and effectiveness of internationalization efforts will allow Chinese CAUs to achieve more substantive, balanced, and meaningful development that contributes to the broader goal of creating high-quality, globally engaged art education.

3.3 Suggested Interventions for the Internationalization of Comprehensive Arts Universities in China

This study conceptualizes interventions for the internationalization of Chinese CAUs in three dimensions: national strategy, regional cooperation, and institutional practice (Figure 1). This tripartite framework aligns with widely adopted analytical models of global higher education internationalization (Knight, 2003; De Wit et al., 2015) and corresponds closely to the empirical findings of this research. The data indicate that the opportunities, challenges, and outcomes of internationalization in arts universities are largely concentrated within these three dimensions and their interrelationships, so positioning suggested interventions within these decisive dimensions is theoretically justified. In practice, the interventions can provide policymakers and implementing agencies with clear action guidelines at multiple levels.

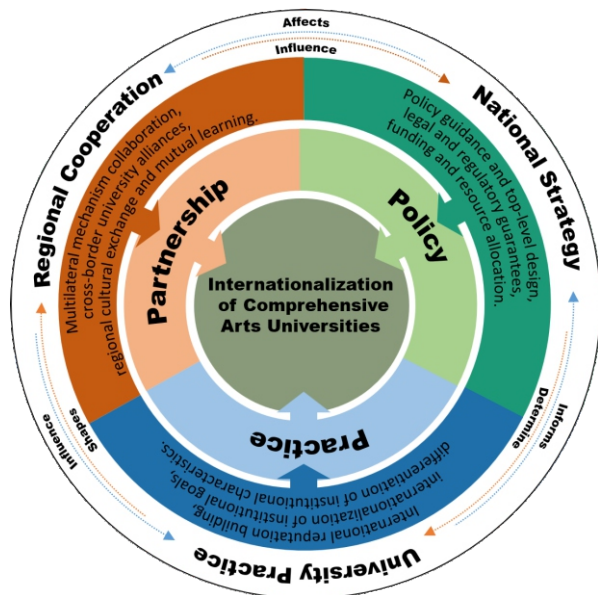


Figure 1. Suggested interventions for the internationalization of comprehensive arts universities using the “3P” model (Source: Author)

3.3.1 The “3P” Model

Based on the above rationale, this paper proposes the “3P” model-Policy, Partnership, and Practice-to explain the connotations, characteristics, and interactional logic among the three dimensions. Policy refers to national-level strategies and institutional arrangements, characterized by policy guidance, top-level design, legal and regulatory guarantees, and the allocation of financial and material resources. Partnership embodies the diverse forms of regional and transnational collaboration, such as multilateral cooperation mechanisms, cross-border university alliances, and intercultural exchange within regional contexts. Practice emphasizes concrete implementation pathways within universities and covers the cultivation of international reputation, the globalization of institutional goals, and differentiated development.

The interrelationship among these three dimensions is not linear; it constitutes a bidirectional circular dynamic system. In the “decision loop” (a cyclical decision-making mechanism), national policy determines institutional practice, institutional practice shapes regional cooperation, and regional cooperation exerts a degree of influence on national policy. In the “influence loop” (a cyclical process of reciprocal impact), national policy affects regional cooperation, regional cooperation influences institutional practice, and institutional practice, through feedback from outcomes and experiences, informs the revision and refinement of national policy.

China's top-down higher education governance structure means that regional cooperation cannot directly determine national policy; it can only exert indirect influence by mediating accumulated institutional practice outcomes. This dual-loop relationship elucidates the driving mechanisms of internationalization and provides a structural foundation for formulating multilevel interventions.

3.3.2 Policy

In the Policy dimension, the effective advancement of educational internationalization must be anchored in robust, stable institutional mechanisms. National policies-mainly the “Belt and Road Initiative,” the “vision of a community with a shared future for mankind,” and the “educational power strategy”-have established overarching goals and strategic directions for the internationalization of CAUs (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China [MOE], 2020; 2025).

Simultaneously, policy documents such as the Plan for Building China into an Educational Power

(2024–2035) and the China Education Opening-Up Action Plan have constructed a multilevel framework encompassing legal regulations and quality assurance that provides a solid institutional foundation for the legitimacy and sustainability of universities' international cooperation (MOE, 2025). The allocation of financial and material resources is equally important. National fiscal appropriations, international cooperation funds, and diversified scholarship schemes offer the material guarantees needed to introduce high-quality international resources into CAUs and create conditions that promote the cross-border mobility of faculty and students.

In this context, Chinese CAUs should integrate internationalization into their overall development strategies to ensure alignment with national priorities and form a closed-loop system from policy guidance to practical implementation.

3.3.3 Partnership

In the Partnership dimension, regional cooperation is a vital bridge that allows Chinese CAUs to integrate into global educational networks. Multilateral platforms such as the China-ASEAN Education Cooperation Week and the Asia-Pacific Alliance for Cultural Heritage Conservation facilitate the cross-border flow of educational resources and provide institutionalized channels for joint research, faculty exchanges, and collaborative curriculum development.

Transnational university alliances promote equitable dialogue and in-depth collaborations between Chinese and international art institutions. Since the ASEAN-China Arts Colleges Alliance was founded in 2017, it has grown to include 22 members-nine from China and thirteen from ASEAN countries. Looking ahead, the positive effects of enhanced dialogue mechanisms, shared educational resources, and deepened academic cooperation are expected to position this alliance as a flagship platform for coordinated regional development in higher arts education (Tiansheng, 2018).

Encouraging geographical and cultural linkages to promote regional cultural exchanges is valuable for creating innovative content and integrating pedagogical approaches. This includes actively hosting cultural and artistic activities within exchange mechanisms, such as the China-France Cultural Exchange Year and the China-ASEAN Cultural Exchange Year. Likewise, initiatives such as the China-ASEAN Music Week, Visual Arts Biennale, Design Biennale, Dance Education Forum, and Architecture and Arts Week-all

organized by Guangxi Arts University-have attracted artistic resources from inside and outside the region.

These events enhance the university's international visibility and deepen cross-cultural understanding and identity. Collaborative platforms like this ensure that the internationalization of universities is not an isolated endeavor but a synergistic process within a regional educational community.

3.3.4. Practice

In the Practice dimension, universities function as the direct implementers of internationalization strategies. Results are primarily manifested in three areas: reputation, goals, and distinctive characteristics. Cultivating an international reputation requires sustained high-level academic and artistic initiatives. For instance, Guangxi Arts University has hosted the China-ASEAN Music Week for over 13 years. By attracting more than 2,000 scholars and artists from nearly 30 countries and regions, it has become an important international platform for showcasing China's higher music education achievements.

The internationalization of institutional goals requires universities to explicitly prioritize the cultivation of talent with a global vision and intercultural communication skills in their development strategies. These goals can be implemented through course modules offered in English, Sino-foreign cooperative education programs, and overseas internship bases.

The differentiated development of institutional characteristics necessitates the integration of disciplinary strengths with regional cultural resources to establish distinctive curricula and brand projects that are recognized internationally. Examples include region-specific ASEAN studies and the China-Vietnam Base of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Education Research Center, which exemplify the transformation of local cultural assets into competitive advantages in international contexts.

Universities should prioritize building internationally oriented academic and creative platforms, fostering think tanks, developing globally influential event brands, advancing curriculum internationalization (e.g., micro-majors, which are compact, skill-focused academic programs providing specialized training, certification, or career-oriented knowledge), agreeing to the mutual recognition of credits for cross-border learning, expanding bidirectional faculty and student exchanges, and conducting specialized artistic

research in targeted fields. These measures will collectively enrich the depth and breadth of international cooperation.

3.3.5 The 3P Model and the Operation of the “Decision” and “Influence” Loops

The 3P model emphasizes the individual importance of policy, partnership, and practice and also focuses on the interactions among them. In the decision loop, robust national policies provide institutional and resource support for university-level practices. In turn, successful institutional practices create favorable conditions for regional cooperation. The outcomes of regional cooperation can then promote policy optimization and the preferential allocation of resources.

In the influence loop, national policies shape the scale and direction of regional cooperation through policy orientation and funding mechanisms. The experiences and outcomes from regional cooperation influence the internationalization pathways of universities, while feedback from institutional practices during the internationalization process is a crucial reference for policy revision. This dual-loop relationship ensures the dynamic balance and sustainable development of internationalization efforts.

Based on this framework, improving the quality and level of internationalization in China's CAUs will require a “nation-region-university” full-chain advancement mechanism driven by the synergy of national strategic leadership, deepened regional cooperation, and institutional innovation in practice. Top-level strategic focus and institutional safeguards should be strengthened during the design stage to form a systematic support structure that encompasses policy, funding, legal frameworks, and evaluation mechanisms.

At the regional level, multilateral and bilateral cooperation should be deepened to consolidate the current foundation of cooperation with ASEAN and expand toward the “Belt and Road Initiative” countries to create a broader network of international higher arts education.

At the same time, each CAU should strike a balance between cultural exchange and institutional development by expanding international cultural exchange through arts festivals, forums, and exhibitions and enhancing international competitiveness through curriculum internationalization, faculty mobility, and collaborative research. Through the organic

integration of a global perspective into local practice, China's CAUs can play a more proactive role in the global education governance system and use education as a bridge to create an inclusive, equitable, and sustainable future education community.

In the advent of the AI era, generative artificial intelligence can transcend geographical and linguistic boundaries to promote the sharing and collaboration of arts education resources. It can also enhance the efficiency of international cooperation and the diversity and inclusivity of creative outcomes through intelligent curriculum design, cross-cultural virtual exchange platforms, and creative assistance tools (Holmes & Miao, 2023). Internationalization reform of CAUs based on artificial intelligence represents the response of higher arts education to the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals 4 (Quality Education), 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and 10 (Reduced Inequalities) (Colglazier, 2015).

4. CONCLUSION

CAUs have made remarkable progress in internationalization, which has become an integral and active component of China's higher education opening-up plan since 2000. Institutions have continuously expanded their international cooperation platforms, strengthened cross-border mobility for faculty and students, and actively introduced high-quality overseas educational resources. As a result, they have developed a distinctly Chinese internationalization pattern based on talent cultivation, research collaboration, and curriculum design.

However, there are still challenges to overcome, such as ambiguous internationalization objectives, unclear strategic planning, insufficient resource allocation, fragmented cooperation mechanisms, and lagging internal capacity building. These constraints have hindered the transition from “tangible exchanges” to “deep integration” and limit quality enhancement and sustainable development.

To address these challenges, this study proposes a set of interventions based on the “3P” framework: (1) Policy - strengthen top-level design and institutional innovation within the national policy framework to clarify internationalization goals and pathways and to establish stable, efficient operational and evaluation mechanisms; (2) Partnership - build high-level international education communities and deepen multilateral cooperation and regional cultural synergy, focusing on consolidating Sino-U.S., Sino-European, and China-ASEAN arts education platforms;

(3) Practice - promote full-element internationalization across students, faculty, curricula, research, and management, and create multi-tiered practice systems, such as cross-border credit recognition, branded international events, and country-specific art studies, to ensure that the decision loop (a cyclical decision-making mechanism) and the influence loop (a cyclical process of mutual impact) are closed and mutually reinforcing.

Looking ahead, China's CAUs should adhere to a “quality-driven, win-win cooperation” development philosophy. While consolidating existing advantages in cooperation with Europe and North America, they should strengthen region-specific art education research by targeting ASEAN countries and advance the construction of a China-ASEAN higher arts education community. These institutions should also embrace emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence, and integrate them into artistic creation, teaching, and research to explore digitalized, intelligent pathways for educational internationalization.

They should also use the interdisciplinary integration of the arts into higher education to respond to the United Nations' 2030 Sustainable Development Goals by offering Chinese proposals and contributing Chinese wisdom to cultural heritage preservation, social inclusion, and innovation-driven development.

Ultimately, the essence of educational internationalization does not lie in its formal or symbolic aspects but in using global resources and cooperative networks to promote the high-quality development and transformation of domestic education. In an era defined by multipolarity, cultural diversity, and rapid technological advancement, only by upholding openness, inclusiveness, and collaborative innovation can China's comprehensive arts universities secure a prominent position in the global higher education system and contribute to the creation of a more equitable, inclusive, and sustainable international educational ecosystem.

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GIÁO DỤC - EDUCATION

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