

# Trends in the Internationalization of Higher Education: A Review of Internationalization at Home in China and other Countries

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## Abstract

Internationalization at Home (IaH) has emerged as a significant model for the internationalization of higher education, garnering extensive attention in both domestic and international academic circles in recent years. This study utilizes data from China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) and Scopus to retrieve literature from 2014 to 2024 with "IaH" as the theme, resulting in 564 Chinese articles and 676 English articles. Through statistical analysis of publication quantities and high-frequency word analysis, the study reveals the characteristics and development trends of IaH research. The findings indicate that while there are commonalities in research focuses and perspectives between domestic and international academia, differences also exist. The international academic community places greater emphasis on cultivating intercultural competence, curriculum internationalization, and teaching innovation, whereas Chinese scholars tend to focus more on policy orientation and local practices, particularly in promoting IaH in local universities and implementing Sino-foreign cooperative education programs. Furthermore, the COVID-19 has significantly accelerated IaH research, with virtual exchanges and online teaching becoming focal points, highlighting the importance of digital means in internationalization practices. Based on these findings, this paper suggests that future research should strengthen the localization of IaH theoretical frameworks, explore the sustainable development of digital internationalization, deepen the exploration of multi-level practical pathways, and promote cooperation and dialogue between domestic and international academic communities in the field of IaH. This study provides important references for theoretical innovation and practical development in IaH, as well as valuable insights for the diversified development of higher education internationalization in the post-pandemic era.

**Keywords:** Internationalization at Home, Higher Education Internationalization, Curriculum Internationalization, Intercultural Competence, Policy Support

## Introduction

In the context of increasingly intense global competition, cultivating talents with an international perspective and cross-cultural competence has become a core task of higher education (Steers *et al.*, 2013). However, traditional models of educational internationalization are often costly, benefit only a limited group, and struggle to achieve educational equity. Meanwhile, the global impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has made the transformation and innovation of higher education internationalization models particularly urgent (Kraja *et al.*, 2024). In this context, systematically organizing and comparing the research status and development trends of internationalization at home (IaH) in China and abroad is of significant importance for promoting theoretical innovation and practical development in higher education internationalization. The accelerated process of globalization presents new opportunities and challenges for the internationalization of higher education. Traditional models of educational internationalization primarily rely on student mobility across borders, such as studying abroad and international exchange programs. However, this model fails to fully meet the diverse needs for cultivating internationally competent individuals. Despite the numerous benefits of internationalization, only a small fraction of students globally participate in cross-border mobility programs (De Wit & Jones, 2018), leaving most students unable to experience internationalized education firsthand. To address this issue, scholars and policymakers have proposed the concept of "Internationalization at Home" (IaH). The global spread of COVID-19 has further underscored the importance and urgency of IaH strategies.

As an innovative model for educational internationalization, IaH aims to introduce international elements into local campus environments to provide students who cannot participate in cross-border mobility with opportunities for internationalized learning experiences. This approach seeks to achieve equity and accessibility in educational internationalization (Beelen & Jones, 2015), maintaining educational internationality while overcoming limitations associated with traditional study abroad models concerning cost, scale, and cultural adaptation. Compared to conventional models of internationalization, IaH emphasizes localized practices through curriculum design, cross-cultural activities, and diverse interactions among faculty and students to help students acquire intercultural competence and a global perspective within their local campuses. For instance, research indicates that curriculum internationalization—an essential component of IaH—significantly enhances students' intercultural understanding and critical thinking skills by integrating international perspectives into learning objectives, teaching content, and assessment methods (Leask, 2015). Moreover, the rapid development of virtual exchange and digital technologies has opened new possibilities for IaH practices (O'Dowd, 2022).

In China, with the advancement of initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative and "Double First Class" university construction, IaH has gradually become a vital strategic approach for enhancing universities' levels of internationalization. Many institutions are exploring localized IaH practices by introducing foreign faculty members, offering English-taught courses, promoting Sino-foreign cooperative education programs, and engaging in multicultural exchange activities (Fang, 2022). While IaH has strengthened the international engagement of Chinese higher education institutions, challenges remain regarding partnership establishment and power dynamics.

Based on this context, this study reviews relevant literature from CNKI and Scopus between 2014 and 2024 through keyword analysis and trend analysis to systematically assess the current state of research in IaH. It explores hot topics and future directions by comparing domestic and international studies on IaH to identify commonalities and differences in content and methodology. Additionally, as digital technology rapidly evolves, this paper discusses how modern information technology can be leveraged to advance IaH practices in response to an increasingly complex global educational environment.

Through a systematic review and comparative analysis of the current state of IaH research in China and abroad, this study not only enriches existing theoretical research but also provides important insights for practical development. First, by systematically comparing the hotspots and trends in IaH research across different cultures, this study reveals the characteristics and differences of IaH practices under various cultural contexts, offering new perspectives for theoretical research. Second, it deeply analyzes the new features of the integration of IaH with digital technology under the influence of the pandemic, enriching the research content on higher education internationalization in the post-pandemic era. Finally, based on findings from comparative research between China and other countries, it provides practical guidance for Chinese universities to formulate and improve their IaH strategies, as well as important references for promoting dialogue and cooperation between Chinese and foreign academic communities in the field of IaH.

### **Literature Review**

To reveal the core content and developmental trajectory of IaH research in greater detail, this study categorizes its development into several major stages and research directions:

#### *Emergence and Early Development of the IaH Concept*

Internationalization at Home (IaH) is an important concept in the field of higher education that stems from a profound reflection on traditional models of educational internationalization in the context of globalization. The concept was first introduced by Nilsson in 1999 at the European Association for International Education (EAIE) Spring Forum, initially defined as "all international activities in education other than mobility abroad." This definition highlights the essential distinction between IaH and traditional cross-border educational models, emphasizing that educational internationalization can be achieved without relying on the mobility of students and faculty.

As research progressed, scholars gradually recognized that the fundamental value of IaH lies in its educational inclusivity, which aims to break down economic and geographical barriers to provide all students with opportunities for internationalized education. This shift in thinking reflects the core principle of educational equity, transforming internationalized education from an elite privilege to a shared resource for all (Zeng, 2023). Notably, IaH is not intended to replace traditional internationalization models but rather to complement and enhance them. Some scholars even view IaH as a logical starting point and inevitable trend for higher education internationalization, positing that it better meets the new demands for talent cultivation in the era of globalization (Robson *et al.*, 2018).

In the early stages of practice, universities primarily advanced IaH by increasing the number of international faculty and students on campus and conducting academic exchange activities.

Specific measures included establishing exchange programs for international students, inviting foreign scholars to give lectures, and encouraging participation in international academic conferences (Knight, 2004). These initiatives not only enriched campus cultural content but also created practical platforms for cross-cultural communication and collaboration among students, effectively cultivating their intercultural awareness and communication skills. The explorations during this phase laid a theoretical foundation for subsequent in-depth practices, prompting educators to focus on how to cultivate students' global perspectives and intercultural competencies within local environments (Beelen & Jones, 2015). Educators began to realize that internationalized education is not merely about geographical relocation; rather, it involves a transformation in mindset and cultural understanding.

#### *Curriculum Internationalization and Pathways for Cultivating Intercultural Competence*

As the concept of IaH deepened, curriculum internationalization gradually became its core practice area. Universities commonly integrated international perspectives and intercultural competence development into their teaching systems by offering courses on international relations, cross-cultural communication, and global issues (Deardorff, 2006). Arkoudis *et al.* (2013) noted that effectively leveraging classroom cultural capital through formal and informal interactions can significantly promote the development of intercultural competencies among local and international students. Jones (2016) further emphasized that campus cultural diversity provides an essential practical platform for IaH, with interactions in multicultural classrooms enhancing students' intercultural sensitivity and communication skills.

These studies indicate that curriculum internationalization not only expands students' knowledge systems but also enhances their adaptability and competitiveness in multicultural environments, laying a foundation for their future development in a globalized context (Mendoza *et al.*, 2023). In practice, universities worldwide have launched innovative courses. For instance, the University of Canberra introduced a cross-cultural social skills training program developed collaboratively with scholars from Australia and Canada into its third-year social psychology course (Excellence in Cultural Experiential Learning and Leadership, Excell), enhancing students' intercultural competence through practical experiences (Brown *et al.*, 2016). The Chinese University of Hong Kong's "Global Change Biology" course employs case studies and news article discussions to not only enhance students' understanding of climate change but also encourage them to consider more sustainable adaptive behaviors (Falkenberg & Joyce, 2023). Tsinghua University incorporated "global competence" into its core talent cultivation objectives in 2017 through five types of activities: courses, workshops, consulting services, situational training, and online learning to systematically enhance students' intercultural adaptability. Southwest University implemented a strategy called "Learning Worldwide with International Credits," focusing on cultivating internationally competent individuals locally while providing diverse opportunities for international learning (Chen, 2021).

#### *Policy Support Systems and Practical Promotion Mechanisms*

Governmental and institutional policy support provides institutional guarantees and resource frameworks for IaH practices. Countries like those in Europe and North America promote IaH development through establishing dedicated agencies, formulating development

frameworks, and creating quality assurance systems and evaluation mechanisms. For example, the State University of New York established a COIL center to facilitate transnational online collaborative learning. The American Council on Education (ACE) proposed a comprehensive model for internationalization that clearly outlines curricular elements (Jones, 2016). Finland's Ministry of Education and Culture has developed an especially comprehensive policy framework that emphasizes cultivating students' capacities for international engagement while requiring universities to promote local integration of international students through specific measures such as providing language courses and facilitating joint learning opportunities (Mendoza *et al.*, 2023). During the pandemic, Brazil implemented IaH strategies characterized by virtualization by conducting online academic activities, virtual academic exchanges, COIL projects, etc., paving new paths for post-pandemic higher education internationalization (Woicolesco *et al.*, 2022). These innovative practices not only maintained the momentum of educational internationalization during the pandemic but also provided new ideas for future development. Additionally, policies across various countries encourage universities to strengthen cooperation with international organizations actively participate in global educational governance to enhance their international influence (Brandenburg *et al.*, 2020). Under policy guidance, an increasing number of universities are incorporating IaH into their development strategies while actively exploring practice models tailored to their unique characteristics.

#### *Innovative Models and Practical Pathways*

The rapid advancement of digital technology presents new opportunities for IaH; digital internationalization has become an important trend in its development. Online learning platforms, virtual communication tools, digital educational resources provide students with more convenient and diverse learning methods (Bruhn, 2016). This innovative model not only broadens channels for internationalization but also offers students more flexible and personalized learning experiences (Rubin, 2016). During the COVID-19 pandemic, many higher education institutions continued to promote internationalized educational experiences through online platforms and virtual exchange programs. These digital initiatives not only reduced costs associated with international exchanges but also increased student engagement and flexibility (Ganassin *et al.*, 2021). For example, medical and nursing students from Hong Kong and Indonesia successfully enhanced their cultural awareness through an online IaH program despite being unable to engage in face-to-face interactions (Kor *et al.*, 2022). Simões and Sangiamchit (2023) showcased a collaborative online international learning (COIL) project conducted between the University of Aveiro in Portugal and Thailand's Chamber of Commerce University through a case study involving cross-cultural teaching activities. This project aimed to enhance students' global capabilities—particularly their English communication skills and intercultural competencies—through online collaboration. Students generally reported positive perceptions regarding skill development through this virtual global learning approach; cognitive abilities as well as social skills were effectively enhanced alongside other essential 21st-century competencies. Moreover, digital internationalization promotes educational equity by enabling more students to access high-quality resources related to international education regardless of their location (Bruhn, 2016). This innovative model breaks down temporal and spatial limitations while offering infinite possibilities for the future development of IaH.

IaH represents a multidimensional educational concept that has undergone various developmental stages including theoretical evolution, curriculum innovation, policy support, and digital transformation from its initial introduction to practical exploration. These studies and practices not only enrich students' experiences with internationalized learning but also provide innovative developmental ideas for higher education institutions. With technological advancements and societal progress continuing apace, IaH is poised to find broader applications across deeper dimensions while making significant contributions toward cultivating individuals equipped with global perspectives and intercultural competencies—thus promoting globalization within education as well as equitable access to it. In this process, sustained efforts from educators, policymakers as well as the global educational community are essential alongside ongoing innovative explorations.

## **Method and Sampling**

### *Literature Selection*

This study primarily utilizes China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) and Scopus as core data sources, representing high-quality research literature databases in Chinese and English, respectively. During the literature selection process, advanced search functions were employed to filter documents with "Internationalization at Home (IaH)" as the keyword. In CNKI, the search was limited to core journals such as CSSCI, EI, Peking University Core, CSCD, and AMI, covering the time frame from 2014 to 2024, resulting in a total of 564 relevant documents. To ensure the authority and representativeness of the data, irrelevant literature was excluded, including studies solely focused on cross-border mobility or those that did not explicitly discuss the core concept of IaH. In Scopus, a search was conducted using "IaH (Internationalization at Home)" as the title keyword within the same time frame, yielding 676 English documents. Conference papers, book chapters, and non-peer-reviewed literature were also excluded from the Scopus search to guarantee comparability and consistency of the analytical data. The final selected literature encompasses a wide range of content from theoretical construction to practical exploration in the field of IaH, providing a comprehensive reflection of both domestic and international research on IaH.

### *Research Methods*

In terms of research methodology, this study employs a combination of keyword frequency analysis and annual publication trend analysis to reveal research hotspots, structures, and development trends in the field of IaH. Keyword frequency analysis is utilized to count the occurrence rates of keywords, identifying core themes and popular topics within the research area; the frequency of keywords directly reflects their significance in the study (Hou *et al.*, 2009). Based on high-frequency keywords, this research also analyzes the dynamic changes in IaH studies by calculating annual publication volumes from 2014 to 2024. Through trend analysis combined with key events and contextual factors, it explores the driving forces behind changes in research quantity and their potential impact mechanisms.

### *Research Tools*

For research tools, this study primarily uses built-in statistical analysis functions within databases and literature statistical analysis tools for keyword extraction and annual publication volume statistics. The findings are visually presented through charts to intuitively showcase research hotspots and thematic structures. Microsoft Excel is used for data cleaning and organization; particularly during keyword extraction, synonyms such as

"Internationalization at Home," "International at Home," and "IaH" are manually merged to ensure accuracy and consistency in analysis results. Through a multidimensional approach utilizing various methods and tools, this study aims to comprehensively reveal the current state of research on IaH, its hotspots, and future development directions.

### **Findings and Discussion**

This study analyzes literature on Internationalization at Home (IaH) from CNKI and Scopus databases between 2014 and 2024. It reveals trends in publication quantity as well as distributions of high-frequency words, highlighting similarities and differences in publication trends, research themes, and focal points between domestic and international academic communities while discussing these findings in relation to relevant literature.

#### *Statistical Analysis of Publication Quantity*

Regarding changes in annual publication volumes (see Figure 1), both CNKI and Scopus databases show a year-on-year increase in IaH research literature; however, there are significant differences in growth patterns and rates. During the period from 2014 to 2016, publication volumes were relatively low in both databases—approximately 20 articles per year in CNKI and about 35 articles per year in Scopus. During this period, IaH research was still in its infancy with its core concepts gradually being accepted by academia as opportunities for providing international experiences and intercultural competence development for students unable to participate in cross-border mobility (Beelen & Jones, 2015). Research during this stage mainly focused on conceptual proposals and theoretical framework constructions; international academia exhibited significantly higher levels of attention compared to Chinese academia.

Starting from 2017, both databases entered a steady upward trend in publication volumes; notably, Scopus experienced more pronounced growth—from 47 articles in 2017 to 64 articles in 2019. During this period, themes within IaH research began diversifying; particularly studies focusing on curriculum internationalization, intercultural competence cultivation, and teaching reforms gradually became hotspots (Brewer & Leask, 2022). The number of publications in CNKI also increased from 23 articles between 2017 and 2019 to 35 articles; however, overall growth was slightly lower than that observed in Scopus. This trend indicates that while attention from Chinese academia towards IaH has increased, its breadth and depth have yet to reach international levels.

After 2020, both databases saw significant increases in publication volumes—especially peaking between 2020 and 2023. The number of publications in CNKI rose from 52 articles in 2020 to 105 articles in 2023; meanwhile, Scopus increased from 64 articles in 2020 to an anticipated total of 118 articles by 2024. This growth is evidently closely related to the outbreak of COVID-19. During the pandemic period, due to restrictions on cross-border mobility, universities were compelled to rethink their internationalization strategies; IaH gained wider recognition as an alternative solution (Mittelmeie & Rienties, 2024). Particularly among Chinese universities—under policy guidance—there was an accelerated push for localized practices related to IaH that became especially evident within local universities promoting Sino-foreign cooperative education programs (Zhang & Liu, 2017). However, by 2024 CNKI's publication volume decreased from 105 articles down to 80 articles while Scopus continued its upward trend. This divergence may relate to adjustments in policy support or

reallocation of research resources; it also reflects ongoing attention from international academia towards systematic development within IaH studies (Brandenburg *et al.*, 2019).

The differences observed in these publication trends can be explained through two perspectives. On one hand, since IaH originated first in Europe where it developed earlier within Western higher education systems—international academia has shown deeper engagement with IaH that is more sustained over time (De Wit & Jones, 2018). On the other hand, China's rapid response promoting IaH during the pandemic—especially through practical explorations at local universities—has made publication increases between 2020 and 2023 particularly notable. This phenomenon indicates the significant role that policy-driven initiatives play within Chinese IaH research while suggesting that further theoretical deepening may be necessary for ensuring sustainable research outcomes moving forward.

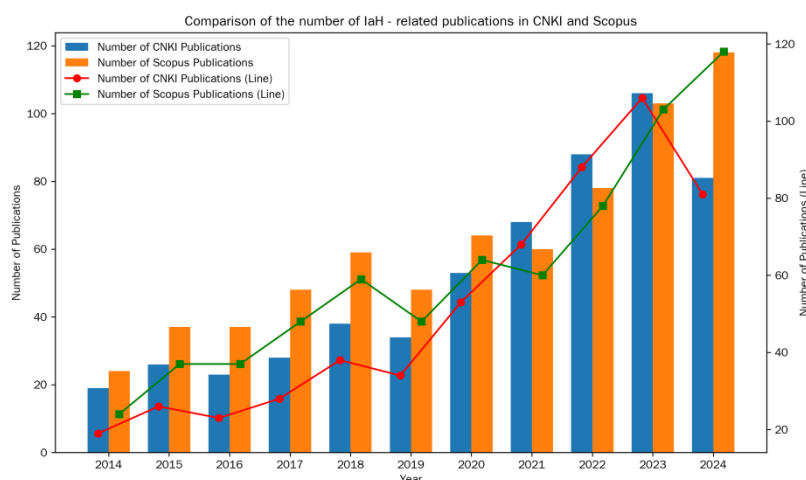


Figure 1 Comparison of the number of IaH - related publications in CNKI and Scopus

### Frequency Analysis

High-frequency word analysis reveals both commonalities and differences in the research themes and focal points of IaH studies between domestic and international academic communities. The high-frequency terms in both databases indicate a close relationship between IaH and the internationalization of higher education. Terms like "Internationalization at Home" and other higher education-related vocabulary consistently rank among the top, suggesting that IaH is widely recognized as a crucial component of higher education internationalization (Robson *et al.*, 2018). However, CNKI and Scopus exhibit notable differences in specific research themes.

The high-frequency words in the Scopus database indicate that the international academic community places greater emphasis on IaH's role in curriculum internationalization, teaching reforms, and intercultural competence development. For instance, the frequent occurrence of terms such as "Intercultural Competence," "Cultural Competence," and "Teaching" suggests that international scholars focus on enhancing students' intercultural adaptability and cultural understanding through IaH practices (Leung *et al.*, 2021). Additionally, "International Students" appears frequently, reflecting significant attention from the international academic community towards interactions between international and local students and how these interactions facilitate cross-cultural learning. During the pandemic, virtual exchanges and online internationalized teaching also became research hotspots; these



practices not only compensated for the lack of cross-border mobility during the pandemic but also opened new possibilities for future IaH development (Helm & Guth, 2023).

In contrast, the high-frequency words in the CNKI database more prominently reflect policy orientation and local practices. The frequent appearance of terms like "International Talent Training" and "Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools" indicates that Chinese universities are increasingly focused on innovating models for cultivating international talent and exploring practical pathways for Sino-foreign cooperative education in advancing IaH (Zhang & Liu, 2017). The frequent mention of "Local Universities" signifies that IaH research in China has penetrated into local institutions, which is a key characteristic of promoting IaH within China. Furthermore, the high frequency of "Post-Pandemic" reflects the profound impact of the pandemic on China's higher education internationalization model. It is evident that Chinese academia tends to view IaH as a policy tool and practical pathway, whereas the international academic community emphasizes its theoretical implications and educational outcomes.

From the perspective of competence development objectives, there are also differences between domestic and international academic communities regarding their focus on IaH. The frequent occurrence of "Global Competence" in the CNKI database indicates that Chinese research places greater emphasis on cultivating comprehensive competencies within a global context. In contrast, the frequent appearance of "Intercultural Competence" and "Cultural Competence" in Scopus suggests that the international academic community is more concerned with adaptation and understanding between cultures (Deardorff, 2020). This difference may stem from variations in educational systems and policy objectives: Chinese education emphasizes developing global competence to address global competition, while international academia highlights the importance of intercultural competence in global collaboration. Although these differences in expression have cultural background validity, they also suggest that future research could seek a balance between global competence and intercultural competence to achieve more comprehensive competency development goals.

Overall, high-frequency word analysis not only reveals hotspot themes and keyword differences in IaH research but also reflects complementary perspectives and practical pathways between domestic and international academic communities. China's policy orientation and local practical experiences can provide significant insights for the international academic community, while theoretical frameworks and teaching methods from the international academic sphere can support theoretical innovation in China's IaH practices. Future research needs to further strengthen dialogue between domestic and international academia to promote deeper integration of theory and practice in IaH research.

Table 1

*List of high-frequency keywords in CNKI and Scopus "IaH" literature*

N	CNKI	Frequen	Scopus	Frequen
O.	High-frequency Words	cy	High-frequency Words	cy
1	Internationalization at Home	107	Internationalization	210
2	Internationalization of Higher Education	29	Internationalization at Home	120
3	International Talent Training	18	Higher Education	81
4	Internationalization Process	18	International Students	54
5	Internationalization Background	17	China	38
6	Internationalization Development	14	Intercultural Competence	26
7	Post-Pandemic Era	11	Teaching	25
8	Local Universities	10	International Cooperation	25
9	Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools	9	Cultural Competence	17
10	Global Competence	8	Study Abroad	16

## Conclusion

Internationalization at Home (IaH) has emerged as a significant component of higher education internationalization, receiving extensive attention from both domestic and international academic communities in recent years. This paper conducts a statistical analysis and high-frequency word analysis of literature related to IaH from the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) and Scopus databases between 2014 and 2024 to reveal the core characteristics and developmental trends of IaH research. The study finds that there are both commonalities and significant differences in publication trends and research focuses between domestic and international academia regarding IaH studies. The international academic community began its research earlier, with a consistent increase in publication volume, focusing primarily on curriculum internationalization, intercultural competence development, and teaching innovation, emphasizing the enhancement of students' intercultural adaptability and global competitiveness through IaH practices (Karimova *et al.*, 2023). In contrast, while Chinese academia started later, it has achieved rapid development in recent years, particularly against the backdrop of the pandemic, focusing more on policy orientation and local practices such as promoting initiatives at local universities and implementing Sino-foreign cooperative education programs (Zhang & Liu, 2017). Additionally, the pandemic has significantly propelled IaH research, with digital means such as virtual exchanges and online teaching becoming hotspots for study, demonstrating a trend towards the integration of globalization with digitalization (Ren & Jiang, 2024). However, there remains a lack of systematic research on theoretical constructs within Chinese academia regarding IaH; likewise, there is room for improvement regarding localized applications within international academia's practical pathways, providing important insights for future studies. This study attempts to provide new insights and inspirations for the field of IaH research through systematic literature analysis. By comprehensively comparing the

developmental trajectory of IaH research in China and abroad over a decade, it reveals the evolution patterns of research focuses and deepens understanding of the development history of IaH. Through an in-depth analysis of the driving role of the pandemic on IaH development, particularly regarding innovative practices in digital transformation, it enriches recognition of higher education internationalization in the post-pandemic era. Furthermore, by contrasting the differences in research between China and other countries, this study clearly identifies future research directions, providing new ideas for advancing theoretical innovation and practical development in IaH. These findings not only help fill existing gaps in research but also provide valuable references for the diverse development of higher education internationalization in the post-pandemic era.

Based on these conclusions, future research and practice related to IaH can explore several areas in greater depth. First, there is a need for further theoretical innovation within IaH studies, particularly breakthroughs in constructing theoretical frameworks across different cultural contexts. Although IaH is widely accepted as a global concept, its theoretical system is still primarily based on educational experiences from Western countries. Future research should focus more on how to integrate the core concepts of IaH with educational practices in non-Western countries like China; this involves drawing upon mature experiences from the international academic community related to curriculum design and intercultural competence cultivation while also summarizing unique practical characteristics exhibited by Chinese universities regarding policy-driven initiatives and localized promotion to ultimately construct a universally applicable yet locally adaptable theoretical framework. This is crucial for enhancing IaH's global influence and academic contributions.

Secondly, the development of digital internationalization opens new avenues for researching IaH. During the pandemic, virtual exchanges and online teaching provided significant supplements to traditional models of internationalization; however, further investigation into the long-term impacts of digital means is necessary. Future studies could examine sustainability aspects of digital IaH practices alongside their educational effects while exploring how technology can enhance students' intercultural interaction experiences while ensuring equity and inclusivity in educational resources. For instance, research could explore effective utilization of digital means to integrate international content within resource-limited local universities while enhancing student engagement levels along with learning outcomes. Additionally, further exploration into relationships between digital internationalization models versus traditional cross-border mobility remains worthwhile as it encompasses both innovations in educational technology as well as transformations within models for internationalization.

Furthermore, future studies should pay closer attention to exploring multi-level practical pathways for IaH implementation from promoting initiatives at local universities to deepening Sino-foreign cooperative education implementation across various educational levels including undergraduate through graduate education while tailoring research approaches according to distinct characteristics associated with different educational tiers or institutional types. Simultaneously investigating how disciplinary features can be integrated into IaH practices could yield fruitful insights; for example examining how humanities disciplines might enhance students' cultural understanding through corpus-based or internationally designed curricula or how STEM fields might foster capacity building through collaborative projects or

virtual experiments aimed at promoting intercultural competencies. Through multi-level explorations across diverse fields relating to IaH implementation this area can provide more varied solutions contributing towards higher education's overall goal for enhanced globalization efforts.

Finally, collaboration and dialogue between domestic and international academic communities concerning IaH require strengthening efforts moving forward. Differences observed regarding perspectives and practical pathways reflect not only distinctive characteristics inherent within educational systems but also highlight complementary aspects present within both realms concerning theory and practice integration opportunities available therein. Future studies should facilitate deeper exchanges by employing transnational collaborative projects joint publications case study methodologies aimed at fostering enhanced communication among scholars engaged within this area across borders; for instance enabling Chinese institutions' participation within global virtual exchange programs joint course designs allowing them opportunities to share their practical experiences while simultaneously learning from established theoretical frameworks methodologies employed by their counterparts abroad. Such collaborative efforts would not only advance global developments surrounding IaH but also contribute significantly towards augmenting its influence within broader contexts associated with higher education's ongoing pursuit towards greater levels of globalization.

In summary, the future of IaH research should seek breakthroughs in theoretical innovation, digital applications, diversified practical pathways, and international collaboration. As a crucial component of higher education internationalization, IaH demonstrates significant potential within the tension between globalization and localization. By further advancing the integration of theory and practice, IaH research can not only provide essential support for the diversified development of global higher education but also offer greater opportunities for cultivating students' global perspectives and intercultural competencies.

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