

## Paths and Strategies for Quality Improvement of International Student Education in China from the Perspective of Two Sessions Public Opinion: Postprint

**Authors:** Shen Jinxia, Wang Baohua, Wan Xuting, Hu Yu

**Date:** 2023-10-08T00:00:00+00:00

### Abstract

The online public sentiment triggered by the proposals on international student education in China submitted by the delegates of the Two Sessions reflects public attitudes and perceptions toward this educational domain. Building upon an analysis of the stances held by mainstream media, self-media, and netizens, this article proposes strategic pathways for enhancing the quality of international student education in China: in developmental philosophy, transitioning from quantitative expansion to connotative development focused on quality improvement and efficiency enhancement; in management paradigms, shifting from “isolated” management to convergent management; and in teaching quality evaluation, moving from a spontaneous model to a third-party quality certification model. In terms of implementation strategies, leveraging the Two Sessions proposals as an opportunity to substantively address public concerns; establishing a “trinity” echo wall mechanism among government, media, and universities; and developing advantageous disciplines and faculty for teaching Chinese as a foreign language as foundational undertakings.

### Full Text

## Paths and Strategies for Improving the Quality of International Student Education in China from the Perspective of Two Sessions Public Opinion

**Shen Jinxia**<sup>1</sup>, **Wang Baohua**<sup>1</sup>, **Wan Xuting**<sup>2</sup>, **Hu Yu**<sup>3</sup> 1. Collaborative Innovation Center, Communication University of China, Beijing 100000 2. Institute of Internet Information, Communication University of China, Beijing 100000 3. Institute of Communication Studies, Communication University of China, Beijing 100024

**Abstract:** The online public opinion triggered by proposals on international student education during China’s Two Sessions reflects public attitudes and perceptions toward this issue. Based on analysis of mainstream media, self-media, and netizen sentiments, this article proposes strategic paths for improving the quality of international student education in China: shifting from scale expansion to quality-oriented connotative development in educational philosophy; moving from “isolated” management to convergent management in governance models; and transitioning from spontaneous evaluation to third-party quality certification in teaching assessment. Implementation strategies include using Two Sessions proposals as opportunities to address public concerns, establishing a tripartite “feedback mechanism” among government, media, and universities, and developing advantageous disciplines and Chinese language teaching faculty as foundational projects.

**Keywords:** Two Sessions public opinion; international student education in China; quality improvement; paths; strategies

---

On March 12, 2021, the *Outline of the 14th Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development of the People’s Republic of China and the Long-Range Objectives Through 2035* (hereinafter referred to as the *Outline*) was officially promulgated. The *Outline* explicitly states the need to “adhere to broader, wider-ranging, and deeper-level opening up, leverage China’s super-large market advantages to promote international cooperation and achieve mutual benefits, advance the steady and sustained progress of the Belt and Road Initiative, and promote the building of a community with a shared future for mankind.” It also calls for “building bridges for mutual learning among civilizations.” International student education serves as an important channel for building such bridges and plays an irreplaceable role. The Two Sessions represent a distinctive Chinese form of democratic policy discussion, serving to collect and convey information and demands from the people to the Party Central Committee. While remarkable achievements have been made in international student education in China in recent years, proposals by Two Sessions delegates and the subsequent online public opinion they generate reflect public attitudes and perceptions that merit serious attention. This article analyzes proposals and related online public opinion from the 2021 Two Sessions to propose strategic paths and implementation strategies for improving the quality of international student education in China.

## 1. Data Sources and Research Methods

Data for this study were obtained from the Higher Education Communication and Public Opinion Monitoring System at Communication University of China. During the Two Sessions period from March 5 to 13, 2021, the system continuously collected information 24/7 from Chinese-language online sources including news websites, forums, Zhihu, Weibo, and WeChat public accounts. Keywords were categorized into background terms, subject terms, and sentiment terms to

improve data accuracy and clarify relationships between subjects and objects of public opinion. Based on this data collection, the system employed advanced algorithms to conduct computational analysis, automatically classifying, clustering, and analyzing sentiment tendencies from multiple dimensions including hot topic identification, user profiling, and social media dissemination. Building upon this systematic data collection and analysis, this article conducted more refined research to provide targeted and practically significant conclusions about public opinion on international student education during the Two Sessions.

## 2. 2021 Two Sessions Proposals on International Student Education and Public Attention

During the 2021 Two Sessions, delegates actively fulfilled their duties, submitting four proposals related to international student education: (1) a proposal on optimizing policies for international students in China (by CPPCC member Gao Yanming); (2) a proposal on strengthening standardized management of international students (by CPPCC member Han Baosheng from Shaanxi); (3) a proposal on enhancing international students' identification with Chinese culture (by CPPCC member Zhan Ru); and (4) a proposal on standardizing international student education (by Yang Jiande, Vice Chairman of the Sichuan Provincial Committee of the China Association for Promoting Democracy and Vice Chairman of the Chengdu Municipal CPPCC). Among these, Gao Yanming's proposal on optimizing policies for international students attracted significant public attention, reaching the top of Weibo's trending topics on March 6, 2021. By March 17, the topic had garnered 180 million views, with coverage by mainstream media including *People's Daily* and 25 related articles on WeChat public accounts. Yang Jiande's proposal on standardizing international student education also received widespread attention, accumulating 8.815 million views on Weibo, with coverage by mainstream media such as China Youth Net and four related articles on WeChat public accounts (see ).

## 3. Analysis of Public Opinion on 2021 Two Sessions Proposals

Public opinion can be analyzed from three perspectives: mainstream media, self-media, and netizen attitudes.

### 3.1 Mainstream Media Coverage

Regarding Gao Yanming's proposal, on March 5, 2021, *People's Daily* posted on Weibo: “[CPPCC Member Proposes Raising Admission Standards for International Students].” The post quoted Gao Yanming, a CPPCC member and Chairman of Hebei Ocean Shipping Co., Ltd., as suggesting that “except for international students dispatched by foreign governments who may have lower admission requirements, all other voluntary applicants must meet proper academic standards. Universities should strive to recruit high-level, high-quality

international students and must not allow unqualified individuals to be admitted.” Subsequently, media outlets including Caijing.com, Shanghai Morning Post, National Business Daily, 侠客岛, and *Hubei Daily* reposted the same content. The *People’s Daily* Weibo post had particularly strong influence, generating 2,720 reposts, 3,092 comments, and over 57,000 likes by 23:00 on March 16, 2021. Mainstream media including China Youth Net and *China Times* reported on Yang Jiande’s proposal. While most mainstream media simply reported the proposal contents, some provided more comprehensive analysis. For instance, when reporting on Gao Yanming’s proposal, *The Paper* referenced related proposals by Yu Minhong in 2020 and corresponding measures by the Ministry of Education.

### 3.2 Self-Media Coverage

During the Two Sessions, proposals on international student education also received widespread attention from self-media. In terms of format, most related content consisted of text-based articles, with few video works. Content-wise, self-media coverage fell into two categories: trend-following and rational analysis, with the former attracting more attention.

**3.2.1 Trend-Following: Rehashing Negative News and Venting Dissatisfaction** Such articles typically comprised four elements: First, restating the proposals, with most self-media copying news reports or inserting news screenshots to provide context. Second, showcasing netizen comments, using public support for raising admission standards to trigger broader resonance. Third, rehashing negative incidents, with the “study buddy” controversy appearing frequently to intensify public dissatisfaction over low admission thresholds and preferential treatment for international students. Fourth, venting dissatisfaction, with some self-media using extreme language to further incite public resentment toward international students, driving audiences into irrational outrage.

**3.2.2 Rational Analysis: Clear Logic and Sincere Recommendations** Such articles were relatively few but featured clear logic and explicit viewpoints. For example, Douyin user Lawyer He Nianhan posted a short video presenting his views directly. He argued that universities should prioritize quality over quantity in international student recruitment. By March 13, 2021, the video had received 17,000 likes.

Analysis of self-media coverage confirms that the traditional linear transmission model of “media agenda → public agenda → personal agenda” has been disrupted. Public agenda-setting capabilities have strengthened, with public concerns increasingly becoming the “commanding stick” guiding topic selection for both traditional and self-media.

### **3.3 Netizen Attitudes: Unified Support for Proposals and Dissatisfaction with Preferential Treatment**

Weibo served as the primary platform for public opinion fermentation during the Two Sessions. Using “proposal to raise admission standards for international students” as a keyword, we identified 872 original Weibo posts for word frequency analysis. After removing terms inherent to the proposals such as “international students in China,” “raise,” and “standards,” words like “universities,” “support,” “foreign trash,” “unqualified,” and “high quality” emerged as high-frequency terms (see ). Netizens showed unified support for proposals to raise admission standards and tighten controls, while expressing strong dissatisfaction over low admission thresholds, poor student quality, generous scholarships, and superior housing conditions for international students.

Netizen concerns focused on three main issues:

#### **3.3.1 Low Admission Thresholds: Uneven Quality of International Students**

Low admission requirements for international students have long been criticized by netizens. The public has expressed dissatisfaction with international students who cannot speak Chinese and with foreign students being admitted without examinations. In recent years, several legal violations by international students have been attributed to the consequences of low admission standards, deepening public prejudice against the international student community and negatively impacting their overall image.

#### **3.3.2 Preferential Treatment in Scholarships and Housing: Relative Deprivation Intensifies Conflicts**

In today’s interconnected digital era, information about international student treatment spreads rapidly online. When Chinese students discover disparities between their own treatment and that of international students, they instinctively attribute this to “rights being taken away,” triggering feelings of relative deprivation, particularly among domestic students. These feelings generate negative emotions such as anger, resentment, and dissatisfaction, intensifying intergroup conflicts. Additionally, Two Sessions proposals reminded the public of “double-standard” universities that allowed international students to enter and exit campuses freely during the pandemic, negatively impacting institutional reputations.

#### **3.3.3 Privileges for Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan Students: Preferential Treatment Questioned**

Terms like “Taiwan” and “mainland” also appeared with some frequency in related Weibo comments. During the Two Sessions, the public expressed opposition to students from Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan receiving international student treatment when studying in mainland China. These issues involve national sovereignty, possess particular sensitivity, and more easily incite patriotic sentiment. In a late 2020 incident where a female student entered an international student dormitory bathroom and was

questioned, the “international student” involved was actually from Hong Kong, Macao, or Taiwan, immediately triggering public questioning.

## 4. Strategic Paths for Improving International Student Education Quality

### 4.1 Development Philosophy: Shifting from Scale Expansion to Quality-Oriented Connotative Development

After years of rapid development, China’s international student education has achieved remarkable success, yet problems persist in educational quality and management, such as the urgent need to improve student quality at some institutions and insufficiently rigorous process management. To strengthen the “Study in China” brand, the Ministry of Education has proposed a quality-oriented connotative development theme focused on “standardized management and quality improvement,” advocating a transformation from quantitative scale expansion to qualitative quality enhancement. In October 2018, the Ministry issued the *Quality Standards for International Student Higher Education in China (Trial)*, the first national-level standard for international student education. The document establishes quality as the core, emphasizing a connotative development philosophy that balances scale, structure, and efficiency, and provides specific requirements for talent cultivation models, admissions, preparatory education, teaching, and management services.

### 4.2 Management Model: Shifting from “Isolated” Management to Convergent Management

Considering cross-cultural adaptation challenges, early management of international students in Chinese universities primarily adopted “isolated” or “insular” approaches. Research shows that such separated management and teaching models artificially widened the distance between international students and Chinese students and culture. According to Berry’s cross-cultural adaptation model, cultural adaptation includes four types: integration, separation, assimilation, and marginalization. A study on cultural integration strategies among international medical students in China found that separation adaptation dominated (58.3%), followed by marginalization (27.0%), while integration accounted for only 12.3% and assimilation a mere 2.5%. This adaptation pattern leads to prolonged adaptation periods and low adaptation levels, resulting in dissatisfaction with education and teaching quality. As globalization deepens, traditional special management approaches for international students waste educational resources. Convergent management has become the trend, as exemplified by Tsinghua University’s comprehensive implementation of convergent management for Chinese and international students in 2018, aiming to integrate management, teaching, research, practice, and cultural education to achieve convergent cultivation and management. Convergent management accelerates international students’ integration, enhances their sense of belonging, and improves manage-

ment efficiency. Applying identical educational standards ensures educational quality and provides international students with the same teaching quality as domestic students, helping attract more foreign students to China.

### **4.3 Teaching Quality Evaluation: Shifting from Spontaneous Models to Third-Party Quality Certification**

During the scale expansion phase, teaching quality evaluation was conducted spontaneously and independently by each university, lacking unified, convincing, and widely recognized social assessments of cultivation quality, teaching standards, and effectiveness. In the connotative development phase, establishing a quality assurance and evaluation system suited to China's national conditions has become imperative. Since 2016, the Ministry of Education has commissioned the China Education Association for International Exchange to conduct national quality certification for international student higher education. This initiative introduces a third-party certification organization to standardize international student education at the national level, establish a certification method and system with Chinese characteristics, provide objective standards for evaluating teaching quality, and deliver impartial certification results to government and society. The certification indicator system comprises five first-level indicators, fifteen second-level indicators, and thirty-six main observation points, assessing universities' international student education from perspectives including educational philosophy, management and service levels, conditions, teaching and practice, and educational outcomes. The certification process emphasizes "promoting improvement, construction, and management through evaluation," with principles of voluntariness, impartiality, effectiveness, and transparency. Universities scoring 60 points while meeting all specific standards qualify for certification. Certification validity periods are determined by scores: 60-70 points for 2 years, 71-80 for 4 years, 81-90 for 6 years, and 91 or above for 8 years. Upon expiration, universities must reapply.

## **5. Implementation Strategies**

### **5.1 Using Two Sessions Proposals to Address Public Concerns**

From the 2020 proposal to "cancel super-national treatment for international students" to the 2021 proposal to "raise admission standards for international students," public demands have focused on "admission standards" and "treatment." These demands reflect a strong desire for "fairness" arising from intense "social deprivation feelings," which, despite complex social roots, require serious attention. The 2021 proposal to raise admission standards provides an opportunity for relevant departments and universities to gradually elevate admission requirements and publicize these changes, allowing the public to perceive tangible responses from national and institutional authorities. Raising admission thresholds directly addresses uneven student quality and can be approached through language proficiency and academic standards. First, Chinese language

requirements should be strengthened during admissions. Currently, most international students primarily communicate in English with low Chinese proficiency requirements. Universities should recognize that using China's national language and script in international student education is crucial for promoting traditional Chinese culture and maintaining cultural sovereignty, necessitating greater emphasis on Chinese Proficiency Test (HSK) scores in admissions, scholarship applications, and institutional evaluations. Second, academic proficiency examinations should be prioritized to implement a "strict admission and strict graduation" model. Universities should thoroughly implement convergent management for Chinese and international students, ensuring support policies for international students remain within reasonable bounds to improve overall student quality.

## 5.2 Building a Tripartite "Feedback Mechanism" Among Government, Media, and Universities

In recent years, the number of Two Sessions proposals related to international student education has gradually increased, with related topics drawing greater public attention, primarily focusing on admission thresholds and management standardization. Similar proposals trigger heated public discussion annually, creating a cyclical pattern of "proposal introduction → surging public support → declining attention → similar proposal reintroduction." This cycle indicates insufficient follow-up and publicity regarding implementation progress, preventing the public from perceiving concrete results. For example, during the 2020 Two Sessions, CPPCC member Yu Minhong proposed standardizing international student admissions to prevent "international gaokao immigration." In late May 2020, the Ministry of Education revised and issued the *Notice on Standardizing the Acceptance of International Students by Chinese Higher Education Institutions*. This notice reached Weibo's trending list on June 10, 2020, with most netizens expressing approval, though some questioned whether the policy addressed root causes, arguing that admission thresholds for foreign nationals remained too low, potentially enabling "international gaokao immigration" and "export-to-domestic" phenomena, and calling for cancellation of super-national treatment and stricter qualification reviews to ensure equal treatment.

During the 2021 Two Sessions, Yu Minhong's proposal was revisited and even spread by some self-media as a so-called new proposal, indicating that implementation of related proposals has not been fully effective or adequately communicated to the public. Addressing this requires joint construction of a "feedback mechanism" among government, media, and universities. First, the government must promptly implement and adopt reasonable suggestions to optimize the international student education system. Second, media should strengthen publicity by connecting proposals with follow-up progress and providing timely responses. Finally, universities should enhance positive publicity while appropriately managing external communications to avoid sensitive points that trigger public deprivation feelings, fostering a healthy public opinion environment for

the development of China' s higher education internationalization.

### 5.3 Developing Advantageous Disciplines and Chinese Language Teachers as Foundational Projects

Implementing “higher-level opening up and pioneering a new phase of win-win cooperation” requires gradually improving Chinese universities’ research capabilities and academic competitiveness to enhance their soft power for attracting international talent. As the saying goes, “one must be strong to forge iron.” Improving China’ s educational internationalization must start with internal development, building advantageous disciplines as the core to drive related disciplines into clusters, and shaping each discipline’ s leadership, uniqueness, and irreplaceability to support world-class university development and enhance international competitiveness. This will attract outstanding global talent and enable Chinese culture to “go global.” Moreover, cultural identification is based on emotional and value identification, necessitating innovation and development in discourse systems for cultural communication. China urgently needs to cultivate a large cohort of Chinese language teachers passionate about teaching Chinese as a foreign language, guiding international students from learning the language to loving Chinese culture, identifying with Chinese values, and ultimately disseminating Chinese spirit and philosophy.

## References

- [1] Zhu Guohui. Research on Cross-Cultural Adaptation Issues of International Students in Chinese Universities [D]. Shanghai: East China Normal University, 2011: 70-74.
- [2] Zhang Hongjing, Zhang Cancan, Jiang Qihai. Investigation and Educational Countermeasures on Cross-Cultural Psychological Adaptation of International Medical Students in China [J]. China Higher Medical Education, 2019 (6): 39-40.
- [3] Zhang Maizeng. How to Advance the “Double First-Class” Construction [EB/OL]. (2019-04-16) [http://www.qstheory.cn/llqikan/2019-04/16/c\\_1124374624.htm](http://www.qstheory.cn/llqikan/2019-04/16/c_1124374624.htm).

**Author Biographies:** Shen Jinxia (1975-), female, from Minquan, Henan, Associate Researcher, research interests: public opinion governance, internet content production and dissemination, higher education; Wang Baohua (1963-), male, from Ruzhou, Henan, Professor, research interests: public opinion governance, big data applications and research; Wan Xuting (1996-), female, from Taiyuan, Shanxi, Master’ s student at Institute of Internet Information, Communication University of China, research interests: internet governance; Hu Yu (1996-), female, from Jinan, Shandong, graduate student at Institute of Communication Studies, Communication University of China, research interests: public opinion governance.

---

## Computing Power Networks and Media Technology

To thoroughly study and implement Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era and the spirit of accelerating big data center construction from the Fifth Plenary Session of the 19th CPC Central Committee, and to fully implement the *Outline of the 14th Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development of the People's Republic of China and the Long-Range Objectives Through 2035* regarding “accelerating the construction of a national integrated big data center system, strengthening intelligent scheduling of computing power coordination, and building several national hub nodes and big data center clusters,” the National Development and Reform Commission, Cyberspace Administration of China, Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, and National Energy Administration jointly issued a notice on February 17, 2022. The notice approved the launch of national computing power hub node construction in eight regions: Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei, Yangtze River Delta, Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, Chengdu-Chongqing, Inner Mongolia, Guizhou, Gansu, and Ningxia, and planned ten national data center clusters. This completed the overall layout design of the national integrated big data center system and officially launched the East Data West Computing Project.

Computing power network construction forms the foundation for supporting national strategies including Cyberpower, Digital China, and Smart Society. It provides crucial support for aligning with national planning and implementing the East Data West Computing Project, represents a new path for advancing the construction of new infrastructure, and will powerfully promote the sustained and healthy development of the digital economy. *China Media Technology* focuses on and deeply analyzes the key forces driving the development of media technology in contemporary China. To actively leverage the driving role of “science-technology-innovation” and strengthen research on the integration of East Data West Computing and media technology, this special issue on “Computing Power Networks and Media Technology” has been specially planned. This issue aims to help the media industry grasp the innovative development opportunities of East Data West Computing and computing power networks, and contribute modestly to building an innovative development system that unleashes the new generation of digital productivity in media technology.

*Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.*

*Source: ChinaXiv – Machine translation. Verify with original.*