

## Internationalization Characteristics of Research Topics in International Journal Articles: A Case Study of China' s Education Field

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### Abstract

[Objective] To achieve multi-dimensional measurement and multi-type classification of the internationalization characteristics of research topics in international journal articles. [Method] Taking China' s education field as an example, this study compares the distribution of research topics between domestic and international journal articles to reveal their differences; analyzes the internationalization characteristics of research topics in international journals from four dimensions: research object, leading country, citation impact, and audience diversity; and constructs a TPUR topic classification framework to categorize research topics in international journals into different types and summarize relevant patterns. [Results] International publications in China' s education field present a dual landscape of "China focusing on international issues" and "the international community focusing on China," with differences in focus and impact between China-led and other-country-led papers; comparatively speaking, theoretical research topics dedicated to solving common international problems and practical research topics focusing on indigenous Chinese issues exhibit more distinctive internationalization characteristics. Conclusion Researchers need to grasp the issues of concern to the international academic community and appropriately choose between domestic and international journals for publication; research management departments also need to establish reasonable research evaluation orientations to provide scientific guidance for researchers' selection of publication channels.

### Full Text

### Abstract

[Purposes] This study aims to achieve a multidimensional measurement and diverse categorization of the internationalization features pertaining to the re-

search topics of international journal articles. **[Methods]** Taking the field of education in China as an example, we compared the distribution of research topics in domestic and international journal articles to reveal the differences between them. Analyzing from four dimensions—research objects, leading countries, citation impact, and audience diversity—we dissected the internationalization features of research topics in international journal articles. We constructed the TPUR thematic classification framework to categorize research topics in international journal articles into different types to summarize relevant patterns. **[Findings]** The publication of international articles in the field of education in China presents a dual perspective of China focusing on international issues and the international community focusing on China. There are differences in the focal points and impact of articles led by China and other countries. In comparison, theoretical research topics dedicated to addressing international common issues and practical research topics focusing on China’s local issues exhibit more distinct internationalization features. **[Conclusions]** Researchers need to appropriately grasp topics of interest in international academia and choose suitable channels for publication. Research management departments should establish a rational evaluation framework to guide scholars in selecting appropriate publication channels.

**Keywords:** Research Topic; Internationalization Features; Education; Bibliometric Analysis

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Researchers in China’s humanities and social sciences typically face a choice when publishing academic papers: should they publish in domestic journals or international journals? While this decision may seem straightforward, it has become a complex issue shaped by policy, cultural, and social environmental factors. On one hand, publishing in international journals is a practical necessity for advancing researchers’ careers, expanding institutional international influence, and enhancing national academic discourse power. Since the 1978 reform and opening-up ushered in scientific globalization, China has implemented a series of policy initiatives to encourage international academic exchange. Today, China’s research output not only commands global attention in terms of volume but has also risen to first place worldwide in citation scale, a trend equally evident in the humanities and social sciences. On the other hand, establishing an autonomous knowledge system, particularly in the humanities and social sciences, requires rooting research in domestic academic contexts and strengthening disciplinary localization. China’s research evaluation system was once heavily influenced by the “SCI/SSCI baton,” an orientation that could lead to neglect of local issues and even affect indigenous thinking and academic critical capacity. Since humanities and social sciences research is closely connected to social reality in terms of both research objects and methodologies, the negative consequences of weakening local research become particularly pronounced. Against this backdrop, scholars in China’s humanities and social sciences must carefully navigate the dual trends of internationalization and local-

ization when selecting appropriate publication channels—actively participating in international exchange to enhance China’s influence and academic discourse power while simultaneously ensuring that research addresses domestic needs and “writes papers on the land of the motherland.”

However, at the practical level, how should researchers appropriately choose between domestic and international academic journals? Existing research has primarily focused on either the localization or internationalization trends of paper publication, with fewer studies offering targeted recommendations regarding the dialectical relationship between the two. Fundamentally, the choice between domestic and international journals should be based on the research itself, depending on whether the research topic exhibits local concern or international orientation. Specifically, whether the research topic addresses problems specific to a particular country or universal issues faced by all nations, whether the research requires multinational collaboration rather than being completed by a single country alone, and whether the topic attracts international audience attention and generates global impact—all these factors collectively determine the appropriate publication channel for papers on that topic. Therefore, multi-angle characterization of the internationalization features of research topics can help determine whether papers are suitable for the international academic exchange environment, thereby providing scientific guidance for publication channel selection.

Based on this, this study adopts a research topic perspective, taking China’s education field as an example (see Section 1.2 for case selection rationale), to reveal differences between domestic and international journal research topics, further analyze the internationalization level of international paper research topics, and distill the characteristics of research topics suitable for international journal publication. This study aims to reflectively analyze whether research topics in China’s international journal articles truly possess internationalization features, with results providing insights for researchers in selecting publication channels and thereby promoting more effective academic communication and dissemination.

## 1.1 Overall Framework

The research framework of this study is shown in Figure 1 [Figure 1: see original paper]. Based on the background of paper publication localization versus internationalization, we selected appropriate case samples. From the perspective of research topics, we conducted analysis around three aspects. First, we compared research topics between domestic and international journal papers to highlight the differentiated characteristics of international journal paper topics. Second, we multi-dimensionally depicted the internationalization features of international journal paper research topics to reveal the internationalization levels of different topics. Finally, based on an appropriate thematic classification framework, we categorized international journal paper research topics to distill characteristics suitable for international publication channels. Building

upon this, we discussed and proposed recommendations regarding the selection between domestic and international journals and promoting academic communication and dissemination. The following sections elaborate on the relevant concepts, data, and methods from four aspects: case selection and data acquisition, research topic extraction, multi-dimensional measurement of internationalization features, and thematic classification framework construction.

## 1.2 Case Selection and Data Acquisition

This study selected journal papers in China's education field as case samples, primarily considering the dual representativeness of education as a typical discipline in humanities and social sciences facing the localization-internationalization dilemma, and China as a typical country building an autonomous knowledge system within a Western-dominated academic framework. First, education research involves both internationally common issues and topics with distinct local characteristics. On one hand, inclusive and equitable quality education is fundamental to improving people's lives and a common pursuit of all nations, which the United Nations has listed as a global sustainable development goal. On the other hand, education systems must be integrated with national cultural, social, and economic environments to effectively promote educational development and reform. Second, as a major education country, China's education research needs to be open and integrated, fully absorbing international advanced achievements while also distilling and enhancing Chinese experience from educational practice to contribute Chinese wisdom to solving common educational challenges for humanity.

Based on this, we selected academic journals in the education field as the basis for sample selection. We obtained paper data from 18 education journals recognized in the *Chinese Social Sciences Citation Index (CSSCI) Source Journals Extended Edition Directory (2021-2022)* from CNKI as representatives of domestic journal papers in China's education field, primarily for comparative reference with international journal papers. From Web of Science (WoS), we obtained paper data from 857 journals under education-related categories (Education & Educational Research; Education, Scientific Disciplines; Education, Special) recognized in the 2021 *Journal Citation Reports (JCR)* as representatives of international journal papers in China's education field, serving as the primary analytical objects for exploring the internationalization features of research topics. We limited the timeframe to 2012-2021, with document type as journal articles and country/region as Mainland China, obtaining 25,981 domestic journal papers, of which 25,848 had complete titles, keywords, and abstracts; and 6,040 international journal papers published by Mainland Chinese scholars (with any authorship), of which 5,483 had complete titles, author keywords, and abstracts. It should be noted that there is no overlap between the aforementioned 18 domestic journals and 857 international journals, eliminating the issue of duplicate counting of the same paper.

### 1.3 Research Topic Extraction

Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) is a classic topic model proposed by David M. Blei et al. in 2003. The LDA model can effectively discover valuable latent topics in academic literature datasets and has been used in existing research for comparative analysis of domestic and international research topics. This study employs the LDA model to extract research topics. First, considering that titles and abstracts typically summarize the core essence of papers, we concatenated the title and abstract of each paper as the text for analysis. Second, we conducted natural language processing on the text, including tokenization, part-of-speech tagging, lemmatization, and stop-word removal. We then calculated TF-IDF weights for each term and constructed a vector space model. Using the LDA model for clustering analysis, we determined the reasonable number of topics  $n$  based on perplexity index. Accordingly, we divided the paper sample into  $n$  topic clusters and, considering the keywords of each cluster and the content characteristics of corresponding papers, assigned topic names to each cluster after discussion and consensus with three researchers experienced in scientometrics or education research.

Two points require clarification in the research topic extraction process: (1) When assigning topic names to clusters, in addition to researchers' domain knowledge, we referenced Clarivate's InCites platform's "macro-meso-micro" three-level Citation Topics classification system for topic naming. This classification system, based on all literature in the WoS database since 1980, uses citation link strength to aggregate related documents into discrete clusters, thereby constructing an article-level thematic classification system. Since our process of clustering papers into topics shares some similarities with its principle and its micro-level topics are relatively granular, this classification system can provide effective reference for our topic naming. (2) To facilitate comparison and interpretation of clustering results, for domestic journal papers, we translated titles, keywords, abstracts, and other fields into English before conducting clustering analysis. After topic clustering and naming, we randomly selected 10 papers from each topic (150 papers total) and manually read their abstracts to verify their alignment with the topics, ensuring that research topic extraction was not affected by translation quality.

### 1.4 Multi-Dimensional Measurement of Internationalization Features

This study characterizes the internationalization features of international journal paper research topics from four dimensions: research objects, leading countries, citation impact, and audience diversity.

The term "research object" has broad meanings. It can be defined at the macro-system level, referring to scientific research taking natural or artificial systems as objects, or at the meso-disciplinary level, referring to core or key issues in a discipline. This study defines research objects at the micro-level of academic

papers, viewing them as important components of a paper's research content. Depending on research purposes, research objects in previous studies can refer to entities of different types, such as countries or regions in geographical terms, or methods and indicators in knowledge terms. For this study, international journal papers in a specific field either address universal international problems or target practical issues in a particular country. Specifically in the education field, many international papers adopt approaches grounded in real-world practice. Therefore, this study considers countries mentioned in article content as their research objects. For example, if Article A analyzes specific practices in the UK for cultivating top innovative talents, the UK is considered its research object. If Article B compares vocational education systems between China and the US, then both China and the US are considered its research objects. If Article C discusses sustainable development of higher education from a global perspective without targeting a specific country, the article has no specific research object. Defining research objects from a national perspective enables linking this feature of research content with the research subject feature of paper affiliation country, thereby providing a new perspective for analyzing the internationalization features of research topics. Operationally, mentioning country names in important positions such as titles, keywords, or abstracts typically includes two situations: first, addressing problems of relevant countries and conducting research centered on that country; second, studying common issues across countries and selecting a country's data sample for research convenience. Through analysis and comparison, we found that for the vast majority of articles, countries identified from titles and keywords belong to the first situation, while countries identified in abstracts but not in titles or keywords belong to the second situation. Accordingly, this study identifies country names and their derivatives from titles and keywords as identifiers of single paper research objects; papers without identified country names or derivatives in titles and keywords are considered as having "no specific research object."

Leading country refers to the country of the core contributors to a paper, representing the source of intellectual and financial resources relied upon for publication. The country of authors playing a core role in a paper can be regarded as its leading country. Considering that the first author is typically the most significant contributor to the entire research process and that the humanities and social sciences field generally recognizes first authors more prominently, this study considers the first author's country as the paper's leading country. Hereafter, "leading" refers to publishing as first author. Given a paper set  $A$ , the leading rate of a country  $B$  in set  $A$  is the proportion of papers in  $A$  whose leading country is  $B$  among all papers in  $A$ .

Citation frequency is an important indicator for measuring academic impact. Typically, citation scales vary across different research fields, and publication year and document type also affect actual citation counts. For example, biology papers usually receive more citations than mathematics papers, and earlier publications generally receive more citations than later ones. Therefore, this study obtained Category Normalized Citation Impact (CNCI) data for individ-

ual papers from the InCites platform using the Unique Article Identifier (UT number) assigned by WoS to each document, as a representation of academic impact. This metric eliminates the influence of differences in publication year, discipline field, and document type, serving as an effective tool for measuring citation impact. After excluding papers with missing CNCI data, we conducted impact analysis on 4,049 international papers (approximately 74%).

Building upon academic impact analysis, this study further reflects the breadth of paper influence through audience diversity. If an article receives high citations but all are generated from the author's own country, the article does not truly possess high international impact. Therefore, this study incorporates the country of first authors of citing documents (termed "major citing countries") into the analysis. It should be noted that since this study takes China's education field as an example, the country distribution of our sample is significantly concentrated in China. To reduce the disproportionate impact of China-led papers on other countries, this study calculates major citing country diversity based on a dataset excluding China-first-author citing documents and comprehensively examines audience diversity of each topic by incorporating China citing rate (the proportion of citations with Chinese scholars as first authors). This study uses the Simpson index to measure the diversity of major citing countries for papers under a topic, calculated as:

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where  $n$  is the number of countries and  $p_i$  is the percentage of papers led by the  $i$ -th country among all countries. Higher values indicate greater diversity.

## 1.5 Construction of Thematic Classification Framework

Different research topics share certain commonalities and differences. Classifying research topics can reduce complexity and describe and compare topic characteristics in a clear and concise manner, helping to summarize relevant patterns and distill conclusions. Wang Chuanyi et al. previously categorized higher education research into four types—universal theoretical research, universal practical research, regional theoretical research, and regional practical research—based on the scope of research problems and research attributes. For international journal papers in a specific country's education field, their research problems similarly cover different scopes such as issues commonly faced worldwide and those targeting national conditions, and their research attributes similarly include different types such as theoretical and practical. Therefore, this study references the above classification model to categorize topics, endowing each type with new connotations based on our sample characteristics, forming the classification framework shown in Table 1. This framework includes two binary dimensions—*theoretical* (Theoretical) vs. *practical* (Practical), and *universal* (Universal) vs. *regional* (Regional) (abbreviated as "TPUR classification framework"). This study classifies research topics of international journal papers in China's education field into four categories to deeply explore what characteris-

tics of international paper research topics are suitable for international academic exchange contexts.

## 2.1 Research Topic Distribution in Domestic and International Journal Papers in China' s Education Field

Based on the LDA model, we identified 15 research topics from domestic journal papers and 18 from international journal papers in China' s education field. Tables 2 and 3 respectively show the top 10 high-frequency keywords for domestic and international journal paper research topics, along with the proportion of papers on each topic among all domestic/international journal papers and their temporal trends.

Overall, basic education (L1) is the most concerned research topic in domestic journal papers, covering 11.75% of papers, followed by teaching practice (L2) at 10.31%, while papers on educational equity (L15) are the least frequent at 0.99%. Temporally, declining topics include talent cultivation (L4) and campus management (L8), while growing topics include basic education (L1), policy and institutions (L3), and mathematical literacy (L9). The localization features of education research are reflected not only in research conducted by domestic scholars and published in domestic journals but also in research content closely related to social reality. For example, the growing trends of topics L1, L3, and L9 align with the macro background of increasingly strong societal demand for cultivating well-rounded talents and ongoing education reforms. Notably, topics L3, discipline construction (L10), and L15 have distinct local characteristics, with keywords all containing "China," while L8 even focuses on Beijing, conducting research around local schools. The development evaluation (L7) topic focuses on the US as an international comparative object.

In international journal papers, policy and institutions (I1) is the most concerned research topic, covering 11.53% of papers, while research on teaching models (I18) is the least frequent, covering only 2.28% of papers. Temporally, declining topics include cross-cultural education (I5), text reading and comprehension (I7), family education and adolescent development (I10), medical education practice (I14), and student engagement and academic performance (I17). In contrast, topics such as methods and technology application (I11) and online learning behavior (I13) have gained significantly increased attention, suggesting that the COVID-19 pandemic may have catalyzed research on online learning. It can be observed that international papers have consistently maintained high interest in China' s macro-level institutional issues, showing great attention to Chinese local teaching practices and innovative applications of methods and technologies. Additionally, medical education and health issues in China are also focal topics in international research, possibly related to the highly internationalized nature of the medical field.

Comparing domestic and international journal paper research topics reveals that topics related to cross-cultural education, medical education, and meth-

ods/technologies are typical concerns of international papers. Issues such as basic education, campus management, discipline construction, and educational equity are closely related to social reality and are typical concerns of domestic papers. Policy and institutions and development evaluation are topics of relatively high concern in both domestic and international papers, while teaching models and scientific/cultural literacy issues have also increasingly attracted attention from both. The coexistence of differences and commonalities between domestic and international journal paper research topics indicates that China's education research addresses both common concerns for domestic and international audiences and different research focuses and concerns, necessitating channel selection based on topic characteristics when publishing papers, which confirms the appropriateness of our research sample.

## 2.2 Internationalization Features of International Journal Paper Research Topics in China's Education Field

This section focuses on analyzing international journal papers, using domestic journal papers as a reference to multi-dimensionally explore the internationalization features of international paper research topics in China's education field.

### 2.2.1 Research Objects

Among international papers in China's education field, 2,256 papers (approximately 41%) could identify research objects, meaning they focus on specific countries. Among these, 92.2% include China as a research object, indicating that compared to focusing on other countries, Chinese scholars' international papers with clear research objects are more dedicated to solving local problems. Papers without identified research objects (i.e., specific countries) focus more on common issues faced by multiple countries globally, and their research topics possess universal applicability. The following analysis focuses on the proportions of these two situations across research topics, as shown in Figure 2 [Figure 2: see original paper].

Topics with higher proportions of papers without identified research objects tend to focus more on methodological mechanisms and technological applications, such as teaching methods (I2), digital transformation (I6), experimental teaching (I8), methods and technology application (I11), and teaching models (I18). These topics typically address universal issues, with fewer papers focusing on Chinese local problems. Topics with higher proportions of papers including China as a research object focus more on local culture and practical realities, such as policy and institutions (I1), cross-cultural education (I5), and student engagement and academic performance (I17). Notably, combined with Table 3, some topics focusing on Chinese local problems show declining trends, but this does not mean that local problem research should be neglected or reduced. On the contrary, we need to further explore local issues of interest to international

scholars and develop research topics with national characteristics in a targeted manner.

### 2.2.2 Leading Countries

Among international papers in China's education field, 2,724 papers (approximately 50%) were completed through international collaboration. In these papers, China's leading rate is about 59.7%, showing a significant upward trend from 34.4% in 2012 to 63% in 2021, reflecting China's growing leadership position in international collaboration in the education field.

Focusing on research topics and combining leading status with research objects, China leads more research on topics with higher proportions of papers without specific research objects, while other countries lead relatively more research on topics focusing on Chinese local problems. As shown in Table 4, China has relatively high leading rates in digital transformation (I6), experimental teaching (I8), methods and technology application (I11), and teaching models (I18), demonstrating Chinese scholars' attention to the application of emerging technologies and advanced concepts/methods in education. Combined with research object analysis, these topics more often address universal issues. Conversely, policy and institutions (I1), cross-cultural education (I5), text reading and comprehension (I7), and family education and adolescent development (I10)—topics where papers focusing on China as a research object are relatively concentrated—are more often led by scholars from the US, Australia, Canada, and other countries. However, as noted above, research on topics focusing on Chinese local problems and led more by other countries shows declining trends. Meanwhile, China increasingly leads international papers in its own education field. In this context, Chinese scholars should not only closely monitor international hot topics but also fully explore local issues of international interest, strengthening China's academic discourse power in international education through high-quality research with national characteristics.

### 2.2.3 Citation Impact

Among international papers in China's education field, 4,094 papers (approximately 75%) have available CNCI values, showing an overall upward trend (as shown in Table 5), reflecting the growing citation impact of China's education field international papers. Focusing on research topics, language teaching practice (I3), educational psychology (I12), and online learning behavior (I13) show significantly higher CNCI values, while digital transformation (I6), experimental teaching (I8), and medical education practice (I14) show relatively lower CNCI values.

Temporally, changes in citation impact across topics are closely related to social development. Topics such as policy and institutions (I1), teaching methods (I2), and online learning behavior (I13) show clear growth trends in CNCI values, reflecting shifts in education research focus triggered by the large-scale migration

of life online during the COVID-19 pandemic and increasing attention to institutional norms. Notably, some topics (such as I12-I15) show CNCI peaks in 2013, which as the “first year of online education” may have caused abnormal fluctuations in related paper impact.

Regarding leading status, China-led international journal papers in the education field generally have lower CNCI values (China-led: overall = 1.48:1.61). China has lower leading rates in high-impact topics and higher leading rates in low-impact topics. Previous scholars analyzing international papers in social sciences have also found that China-led papers have lower quality than those led by other countries, which on one hand reflects that China’s research level in education needs improvement, and on the other hand indicates that Chinese scholars’ grasp of international hot topics needs enhancement. Chinese scholars should fully recognize their research advantages and international readers’ concerns, strengthen international collaboration and exchange, and develop more research topics with both national characteristics and universal value.

#### 2.2.4 Audience Diversity

Audience diversity further reflects the breadth of impact influence based on citation impact. Overall, self-citation is prominent in China’s education field international journal papers, with 6,768 out of 26,709 citations (approximately 25.3%) being China-led after removing self-citations. However, a certain proportion of research has attracted attention from internationally high-level research countries such as the US, Spain, UK, and Australia, whose leading citations account for 12.7%, 4.3%, 3.9%, and 3.9% respectively.

Focusing on research topics (as shown in Figure 3 [Figure 3: see original paper]), the diversity of major citing countries varies by research content. For example, educational psychology (I12) and online learning behavior (I13) show high diversity in citing countries, indicating that related papers inspire scholars from numerous countries rather than being limited to reference by individual countries. In contrast, text reading and comprehension (I7) and science education (I16) show significantly lower diversity in citing countries, indicating relatively concentrated citing country distributions. However, examining specific citing countries reveals that approximately 26% of citations in topic I7 are US-led, and about 23% of citations in topic I16 are US-led (with US-led citations in this topic even exceeding China), indicating that these topics are not lacking international audiences but are more cited by international scholars. Thus, the internationalization features of research topics in terms of audience can be reflected either through diverse international audiences or through a certain scale of international audience.

Therefore, this study further calculates China citing rate to supplement information not captured by major citing country diversity. Research topics in the lower right quadrant of the coordinate system shown in Figure 3 can be considered as having more internationalized audiences. Notably, digital transformation

(I6), methods and technology application (I11), and student engagement and academic performance (I17) show particularly high China citing rates. Despite their relatively high country diversity, the phenomenon of approximately 40% of citations being contributed by China and the overall not-high citation numbers already indicate to some extent that these topics are not particularly favored by international readers. Comparing with domestic journal paper topic distribution in China's education field, these topics are somewhat related to teaching practice (L2), mathematical literacy (L9), and humanities literacy (L13). In fact, the high self-citation rates in topics I6, I11, and I17 are not unique to China. According to the Citation Topics classification system, searching for related topics "Digital Learning" in WoS for corresponding years reveals that Spain, with the highest publication volume, has a self-citation rate (the proportion of citations with Spanish authors as first authors among all citations of Spanish publications) as high as 55%, reflecting to some extent that research on related topics may be more suitable for local contexts.

### 2.3 Analysis of Research Topic Internationalization Features Based on the TPUR Classification Framework

According to the TPUR research topic classification framework constructed above, the 18 international journal paper topics can be divided into four types as shown in Figure 4 [Figure 4: see original paper]. The primary basis for distinguishing between universal and regional is the degree of internationalization from the research object perspective, while the judgment between theoretical and practical is based on the meanings of keywords and specific content corresponding to research topics. Combined with the analysis in Section 2.2, universal theoretical research topics and regional practical research topics show stronger internationalization features, while universal practical research topics and regional theoretical research topics show weaker internationalization features.

Specifically, universal theoretical research topics and regional practical research topics have relatively high citation impact and audience diversity, and most of these topics are more often led by international scholars. For example, against the backdrop of digital transformation driving the continuous development of online education, scholars in education fields both domestically and internationally increasingly focus on online learning behavior (I13). Research on this topic mostly focuses on universal issues, with nearly half of the papers led by international scholars, a CNCI value as high as 2.63, high diversity of major citing countries, and low China citing rate.

In contrast, regional theoretical research topics and universal practical research topics have relatively low citation impact and audience diversity. These topics often overlap with domestic journal paper research topics to some extent, implying they are more suitable for local contexts. For example, issues related to teacher professional development (I4) and student engagement and academic performance (I17) are deeply rooted in social environments and vary due to cul-

tural differences, thus more often taking specific countries as research objects and generating limited mutual inspiration across countries. Such research may be more suitable for publication in domestic journals for readers with the same cultural background. Notably, for medical education and competency assessment (I9) and medical education practice (I14), despite relatively high audience diversity, they show low and declining impact. Although medical research typically has distinct internationalization features, education-related medical topics may need to pay more attention to local contexts. Digital transformation (I6), experimental teaching (I8), and methods and technology application (I11) show certain upward trends in citation impact, focusing on innovative applications of technologies and methods that may gain higher international attention over time.

In fact, for regional issues, due to vast differences in national realities, corresponding theoretical research has limited reference value, but specific practices can attract attention from other countries and provide inspiration. For example, regarding policy and institutions (I1), policy changes can significantly impact China's education industry and related research, and as a major education country, China's relevant policy practices can provide reference for other countries. In a sense, such topics are important entry points for Chinese education scholars to tell "China stories" to the international academic community. For universal issues, they can be jointly explored theoretically by all countries, but specific practices need to be based on local conditions and thus lack reference value in comparison. These results can not only provide reference for paper publication in the education field but also offer inspiration for other fields.

## Conclusion

On May 17, 2016, General Secretary Xi Jinping explicitly proposed at the Symposium on Philosophy and Social Sciences to "accelerate the construction of philosophy and social sciences with Chinese characteristics," emphasizing and discussing the national and global character of philosophy and social sciences: "we must base ourselves on national realities while also conducting research with an open door." Against this background, this study addresses the issue of localization versus internationalization of paper publication in China's education field, comparing similarities and differences between domestic and international journal research topics and further analyzing the internationalization features of international paper research topics. The study yields two main conclusions and implications:

In terms of academic value, this study constructs a research topic analysis pathway based on four dimensions—"research object, leading country, citation impact, audience diversity"—to three-dimensionally measure the internationalization features of international paper research topics in China's education field. Additionally, drawing on previous research, we constructed the TPUR classification framework based on research problem scope and research attributes, dividing international journal paper research topics into four types: universal theoretical

research topics, regional theoretical research topics, universal practical research topics, and regional practical research topics. Therefore, this study can provide beneficial theoretical and methodological guidance for subsequent related research.

In terms of practical significance, taking China's education field as an example, the research results can provide targeted insights for related practices. The study finds that international journal papers in China's education field present a dual picture of China focusing on international issues and the international community focusing on China. On one hand, Chinese scholars show high attention to topics dedicated to solving universal problems, but the corresponding research impact still has considerable room for improvement. On the other hand, Chinese scholars show relatively low attention to many topics dedicated to solving local problems, yet these topics have attracted attention and research from international scholars and generated high and broad impact. In fact, as a major education country, China has many distinctive social phenomena worthy of in-depth research and discussion, but current Chinese scholars have not fully utilized their unique advantages to conduct research of interest to the international academic community. This requires not only improving research quality itself but also being adept at capturing international audience concerns. Not all universal problems are necessarily suitable for exchange in international contexts, nor are all China-focused topics uninteresting to international audiences. For example, China's education system and culture are precisely what international scholars are interested in, and research on such topics should be strengthened to disseminate China's distinctive educational undertakings to the international academic community and expand the international influence of national education research. Precisely grasping international readers' interests and selecting appropriate domestic and international publication channels are important pathways to enhance the academic impact of China's education field research and strengthen China's international discourse power in education. This requires not only individual-level efforts from researchers but also macro-level institutional support from research management departments to explore more scientific research evaluation orientations, fully leveraging their guiding and indicator roles to direct Chinese scholars to publish papers in "appropriate" journals.

This study multi-dimensionally traces the internationalization features of international journal paper research topics in China's education field from four aspects—research object, leading country, citation impact, and audience diversity—and, through comparing domestic journal paper research topics and constructing a thematic classification framework, distills characteristics of research topics suitable for international journals. Admittedly, this study still has limitations to be expanded and deepened. Regarding sample selection, this study only examines papers published by Chinese scholars in CSSCI- and JCR-indexed education journals, failing to cover all research in China's education field, such as education research published in comprehensive journals. Future research could obtain more comprehensive data through more refined retrieval schemes. Re-

garding research design, this study analyzes the internationalization features of research topics based on already-published international journal papers by Chinese scholars, without including analysis of research topics of interest to the international academic community but not yet addressed by Chinese scholars. Subsequent research could incorporate analysis of global scholars' publication data to explore potential research directions for Chinese scholars to pursue in the future.

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