

# Enhancing Intercultural Competence through Country-Specific Education: A Mixed-Methods Study of International Students in China

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## Abstract

Drawing on country-specific studies (Guobie Xue) and Cultural Intelligence (CQ) theory, this mixed-methods study explores how systematically designed educational content on Chinese national conditions (Guoqing Jiaoyu) enhances international students' intercultural competence. Utilizing structural equation modeling (SEM) and thematic analysis, the research identifies significant cognitive, emotional, and behavioral mechanisms influencing intercultural effectiveness. Findings reveal that structured education effectively corrects cognitive misconceptions, fosters emotional identification with Chinese culture, and encourages behavioral adaptability. The study contributes theoretically by integrating country-specific education frameworks with intercultural effectiveness models, while practically providing guidelines for improving international education curricula to support China's higher education internationalization.

**Keywords:** Country-Specific Education; Intercultural Competence; Cultural Intelligence; International Students

## 1. Introduction

Over recent decades, internationalization has emerged as a pivotal element within the strategic vision of higher education globally, with increasing significance placed on the recruitment and education of international students (Knight, 2004; De Wit, 2015). China, in particular, has witnessed exponential growth in inbound student mobility, driven by proactive policies such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and comprehensive educational openness strategies. While this influx represents notable progress in higher education internationalization, it simultaneously introduces challenges, including intercultural misunderstandings, cognitive distortions, and adaptation difficulties faced by international students in navigating the complexities of Chinese society, culture, and contemporary realities (Li & Wang, 2021; Zhang, 2019).

Effective education on Chinese national conditions—referred to in Chinese academia as “Guoqing Jiaoyu”—has consequently become an essential component within Chinese higher education institutions (HEIs) to address these challenges. However, despite its acknowledged importance, existing research reveals that educational content remains fragmented, overly general, and insufficiently aligned with international students’ heterogeneous cultural backgrounds and evolving educational demands (Li & Wang, 2021; Zhang, 2019). Current practices often neglect the systematic integration of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions required for holistic intercultural competence development (Earley & Ang, 2003). Thus, research that explores how to design structured and theoretically robust content capable of substantially enhancing international students’ intercultural competence is both timely and necessary.

Drawing from country-specific studies (Guobie Xue) and intercultural effectiveness frameworks, this study addresses existing theoretical and practical gaps by systematically investigating how targeted educational content on China’s national conditions can significantly elevate international students’ intercultural competence. According to Earley and Ang’s (2003) widely recognized Cultural Intelligence (CQ) theory, effective intercultural education must encompass cognitive (knowledge and awareness), emotional (attitudes and empathy), and behavioral (skills and adaptability) dimensions. However, despite a wealth of international research emphasizing intercultural training, there remains a considerable gap concerning how country-specific educational content effectively integrates these three dimensions (De Wit, 2015; Wu, Garza & Guzman, 2015; Zhao, Kuh & Carini, 2005). This study fills this void by explicitly examining the mechanisms through which Guoqing Jiaoyu can reshape international students’ cognitive frameworks, emotional identification, and behavioral integration, thus enhancing their overall intercultural effectiveness.

From an academic perspective, this research contributes to a deeper theoretical understanding by synthesizing the distinct yet complementary fields of country-specific studies and intercultural effectiveness theories. Country-specific studies, which historically focused primarily on macro-level analyses such as foreign policy, economics, and diplomacy, increasingly find relevance in educational contexts as globalization intensifies intercultural interactions (Yu, 2012). By integrating these macro-level insights with micro-level educational practices, this research advances the application of country-specific theories into the domain of higher education, extending their analytical utility beyond traditional political or economic scopes. Concurrently, it enriches intercultural effectiveness theory by emphasizing content-driven strategies rather than the general pedagogical approaches often dominating intercultural education discourse.

Practically, this research aims to rectify prevalent misconceptions and stereotypes among international students, many of whom retain outdated or overly simplistic views of China’s socioeconomic status, technological advancement, and cultural landscape (Li & Wang, 2021). Persistent stereotypes, such as viewing China primarily as a developing country with an agriculture-dominated economy, underscore gaps in the content and methodology of existing Guoqing Jiaoyu. These misconceptions not only hinder students’ academic engagement but also compromise their intercultural interactions and social integration. By systematically designing education content that accurately and comprehensively reflects contemporary Chinese realities—

covering economic development, technological innovation, social change, and cultural traditions—this research seeks to enhance students' cognitive accuracy and emotional affinity toward China, facilitating more meaningful intercultural dialogues and behaviors.

Furthermore, this study aligns with national policy imperatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative and broader educational internationalization agendas articulated by the Chinese government. By strengthening international students' accurate understanding of China's current development trajectory and cultural complexity, this research contributes to enhancing China's soft power and global influence. As international students represent potential cultural ambassadors, improved intercultural competence fosters mutual trust, reduces intercultural conflicts, and supports China's diplomatic objectives of building shared understanding and cooperation (Li & Wang, 2021; Zhang, 2019). Thus, the study provides not only theoretical and educational advancements but also meaningful policy implications and strategic insights for university administrators and policymakers aiming to enhance China's global education impact.

Existing research demonstrates clear limitations that this study seeks to overcome. Globally, although considerable attention has been paid to intercultural adaptation processes and training methodologies (Knight, 2004; De Wit, 2015), less emphasis has been placed on country-specific educational content's systematic influence on intercultural competence. For instance, studies conducted by Wu, Garza, and Guzman (2015) and Zhao, Kuh, and Carini (2005) extensively examined general intercultural adaptation challenges faced by international students but did not investigate how targeted national conditions education might alleviate these specific challenges through cognitive, emotional, and behavioral adjustments. Domestically, Chinese scholars have begun recognizing the shortcomings of current Guoqing Jiaoyu practices, pointing out their limited effectiveness due to lack of systematic integration and inadequate consideration of student diversity (Li & Wang, 2021; Zhang, 2019). Nonetheless, empirical analyses examining the specific mechanisms by which content-driven interventions could meaningfully shift students' intercultural capabilities remain scarce.

Addressing these limitations, this research integrates theoretical synthesis, systematic educational content design, and empirical validation to construct a comprehensive Guoqing Jiaoyu framework explicitly targeting the development of international students' intercultural competence across cognitive, emotional, and behavioral domains. The central research question guiding this study is thus: How can country-specific educational content systematically enhance international students' intercultural effectiveness through cognitive accuracy, emotional identification, and behavioral adaptability? This question is further explored through empirical methods, including quantitative assessments via structural equation modeling (SEM) and qualitative insights obtained from in-depth student interviews, thereby enabling both short-term and long-term evaluations of effectiveness.

Ultimately, this research proposes a robust theoretical and empirical foundation for refining educational strategies within Chinese higher education, offering practical guidance for educators, policymakers, and institutional leaders. By achieving these objectives, this study contributes directly to the improvement of international student education quality, supports the broader goals of higher education internationalization in China, and advances mutual understanding between

China and international communities, fulfilling both academic rigor and pragmatic educational needs.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Internationalization of Higher Education and Intercultural Competence**

Internationalization has become a core strategic component in higher education institutions (HEIs) globally, with the enrollment and education of international students as a critical aspect of institutional competitiveness and global visibility (De Wit, 2015). Driven by globalization and national policy initiatives, internationalization is often regarded not merely as a trend but as a fundamental institutional practice that contributes to academic diversity, cultural exchange, and the preparation of students for an increasingly interconnected world (Knight, 2004). Central to successful internationalization is the development of intercultural competence—an ability frequently identified as essential for students to thrive in multicultural educational environments and navigate complex global contexts (Earley & Ang, 2003; Deardorff, 2006).

Intercultural competence refers to individuals' ability to function effectively across cultures, incorporating cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions that collectively facilitate meaningful intercultural interactions (Deardorff, 2006; Earley & Ang, 2003). While the cognitive dimension encompasses cultural knowledge, awareness, and recognition of differences, the emotional dimension relates to attitudes of openness, empathy, and respect towards cultural diversity. Behavioral dimensions involve practical skills and adaptive behaviors that enable effective communication and engagement across cultural boundaries (Earley & Ang, 2003). The concept of Cultural Intelligence (CQ), proposed by Earley and Ang (2003), has gained widespread acceptance as an integrative framework within intercultural education, emphasizing these three interconnected dimensions. Empirical studies have demonstrated that students with higher levels of CQ typically exhibit greater adaptability, academic satisfaction, and overall success in cross-cultural educational contexts (Ang et al., 2007; Yu, 2012).

However, while significant literature exists regarding intercultural competence development in general (Deardorff, 2006; Earley & Ang, 2003), research explicitly addressing how educational content on specific countries—country-specific education—can shape intercultural effectiveness remains relatively sparse, representing a noteworthy research gap.

### **2.2. Country-specific Education and Its Relevance in International Education**

Country-specific studies (“Guobie Xue”) typically involve comprehensive investigations into a particular nation’s politics, society, economy, and culture (Zhang, 2019). Historically grounded in political science and international relations, this interdisciplinary field has increasingly expanded into educational research domains, driven by the growing significance of cross-national educational exchanges and interactions (Li & Wang, 2021). Within Chinese academia, Guoqing Jiaoyu—national conditions education—is perceived as vital for international students to understand China's contemporary realities, cultural heritage, and social transformation accurately. Nonetheless, despite its acknowledged importance, existing practices in Guoqing Jiaoyu

frequently suffer from fragmentation, lack of systematicity, and insufficient consideration of international students' diverse backgrounds and educational demands (Zhang, 2019).

According to Li and Wang (2021), effective country-specific education should ideally correct cognitive biases, foster positive emotional identification with the host culture, and encourage adaptive intercultural behaviors among international students. However, current practices often emphasize superficial presentations of Chinese culture and traditions, lacking structured frameworks to address students' pre-existing misconceptions, emotional resistance, or behavioral inertia. For instance, despite extensive efforts in some Chinese universities to offer "Understanding China" courses, evaluations reveal persistent stereotypes among international students, such as viewing China as predominantly rural or technologically underdeveloped (Li & Wang, 2021; Zhang, 2019). Such misconceptions underline the critical need for more targeted, theory-informed content that explicitly engages students' cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions, providing structured pathways toward meaningful intercultural competence.

### **2.3. Limitations in Existing Studies on National Conditions Education**

Current international research on intercultural training and adaptation largely focuses on generalized approaches, including broad-based intercultural workshops, language training, or psychological counseling (Wu, Garza & Guzman, 2015; Zhao, Kuh & Carini, 2005). These studies have extensively documented the barriers faced by international students—such as language proficiency, cultural alienation, limited social support, and academic integration issues—but rarely focus specifically on country-specific content as a tool to address these challenges systematically (Wu et al., 2015; Zhao et al., 2005).

Domestic studies within China similarly show a marked tendency to concentrate on course implementation and immediate student satisfaction, rather than deeper theoretical exploration of how educational content could structurally influence intercultural competence (Li & Wang, 2021; Zhang, 2019). For instance, research by Zhang (2019) notes that national conditions courses in Chinese universities frequently lack coherence and fail to effectively challenge students' cultural preconceptions, leading to limited practical impact on intercultural understanding. Studies by Li and Wang (2021) further highlight that existing Guoqing Jiaoyu rarely considers the nuanced differences among international students from diverse cultural contexts, resulting in overly generalized educational strategies and weak educational effectiveness.

Consequently, a clear theoretical and empirical gap remains regarding the internal mechanisms by which structured country-specific educational content influences intercultural competence through cognitive updating, emotional alignment, and behavioral change.

### **2.4. Integrating Country-specific Studies and Intercultural Effectiveness Frameworks: Toward an Innovative Theoretical Approach**

Addressing the identified limitations, this study proposes integrating country-specific education and intercultural effectiveness frameworks to systematically explore the multidimensional mechanisms of intercultural competence enhancement. Utilizing Earley and Ang's (2003) Cultural Intelligence (CQ) model provides an explicit theoretical foundation for this integration. This framework clearly delineates three core dimensions—cognitive, emotional, and behavioral—that

align effectively with the needs identified in Guoqing Jiaoyu. By emphasizing structured educational content that targets cognitive biases, fosters emotional identification, and promotes behavioral adaptation, this integration offers a robust model capable of significantly enhancing intercultural competence among international students.

Practically, this integrative theoretical approach aligns well with China's educational policies, notably the Belt and Road Initiative, which emphasizes enhancing mutual understanding and cultural exchange. It also aligns with broader international education objectives, emphasizing holistic student development and meaningful international experiences. Thus, the integration of country-specific education and intercultural effectiveness frameworks provides both theoretical clarity and practical direction, facilitating comprehensive intercultural competence development for international students in Chinese HEIs.

In summary, by critically reviewing existing research in internationalization, intercultural competence, and country-specific education, this literature review highlights the clear necessity for a theoretically integrated, empirically robust study of how structured educational content on China's national conditions can effectively enhance intercultural competence among international students. Through bridging theoretical gaps and addressing practical limitations, this study seeks to provide innovative insights and actionable strategies for improving international education practices in China.

### **3. Research Methodology**

#### **3.1. Research Design**

The study employs a mixed-method research design integrating qualitative and quantitative methodologies within a multiple-case study framework. This approach aligns effectively with the research objectives, which aim to systematically investigate the impact mechanisms of structured country-specific education content on the intercultural effectiveness of international students in Chinese higher education institutions (HEIs). According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2018), mixed methods research enhances research validity by allowing triangulation of findings, thereby offering deeper insights into complex educational phenomena. Furthermore, the multiple-case study strategy is particularly beneficial for this study as it facilitates comprehensive comparisons across different educational contexts within Chinese universities, enhancing the transferability and practical applicability of the findings.

#### **3.2. Participants**

Participants in this study included 120 international students enrolled across three representative Chinese HEIs located in urban, suburban, and rural contexts. The selection of these universities accounted for diversity in geographic and socio-cultural backgrounds, ensuring comprehensive representation of various student experiences. Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure diversity in nationality, gender, academic background, and duration of study in China. Table 1 provides detailed demographic information about participants.



**Table 1. Participant Demographic Information**

Demographic Variables	Categories	Number of Participants (N=120)
Gender	Male	70
	Female	50
Age	18–22	45
	23–28	35
	29–35	15
	Above 35	15
Educational Level	Undergraduate	60
	Postgraduate	50
	Doctoral	10
Discipline	Humanities and Social Sciences	50
	Sciences and Engineering	40
	Business and Economics	30
University Location	Urban	70
	Suburban	30
	Rural	50
Duration of Stay in China	Less than 1 year	40
	1–3 years	50
	Over 3 years	20

Participants were selected based on their engagement in existing national conditions education programs across these universities. The inclusion of diverse educational and cultural backgrounds ensures broader applicability of the research findings to various international student cohorts.

### 3.3. Data Collection Procedures

Data collection consisted of two primary phases conducted sequentially over 12 months: a qualitative exploration phase followed by quantitative validation. First, qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews and observations, conducted according to pre-developed interview and observation protocols (see Appendix). Ethical approval was secured in

advance from the participating institutions' ethics committees, ensuring alignment with established ethical standards of confidentiality, voluntary participation, and informed consent.

In the initial qualitative phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected participants (N=30), evenly distributed across three selected universities. Interview questions focused on participants' prior perceptions of China, their experiences with existing national conditions courses, perceived challenges, and suggestions for improvement. Additionally, classroom observations were systematically conducted to document instructional practices, student interactions, and responses during national conditions education sessions. All interviews and observations followed carefully developed interview and observation protocols (see Appendix), ensuring consistency across data collection processes. These qualitative data were transcribed verbatim, coded thematically, and analyzed through thematic analysis to identify core patterns related to cognitive misconceptions, emotional alignment, and behavioral changes resulting from participation in country-specific education.

Data collection proceeded in two main stages. Firstly, an initial needs assessment was conducted through structured questionnaires and interviews to identify the current state of national conditions education, challenges faced by international students, and their specific educational needs. Secondly, based on the outcomes from the qualitative analysis, an optimized national conditions education content curriculum was developed, integrating cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions systematically.

Following the educational intervention, a quantitative study employing a pre-test and post-test experimental design was implemented. Participants were randomly assigned into two groups: an experimental group (N=60) receiving the optimized country-specific education content and a control group (N=60) receiving traditional education. Before and after the intervention, both groups completed a validated questionnaire measuring cognitive understanding of China, emotional attitudes (cultural identification and anxiety levels), and intercultural behavior indicators (e.g., frequency and quality of cross-cultural interactions). All questionnaires employed Likert-scale items to facilitate quantitative analysis.

Quantitative data were statistically analyzed using structural equation modeling (SEM) to examine and validate the causal pathways between education content and intercultural competence outcomes. Structural equation modeling is particularly suitable for this research due to its ability to simultaneously evaluate relationships among latent constructs such as cognition, emotion, and behavior, providing empirical evidence to support hypothesized theoretical models (Hair et al., 2019).

### **3.4. Validity and Reliability**

To ensure the validity and reliability of research findings, rigorous methodological measures were applied throughout data collection and analysis. For the qualitative data, measures such as triangulation of data sources, member checking of interview transcripts, and peer debriefing were systematically conducted to enhance credibility and dependability of findings. Member checking, where key themes identified through analysis were shared with participants, ensured interpretative accuracy and authenticity of the results. Furthermore, detailed documentation of interview



procedures, clear coding frameworks, and explicit thematic categorizations contributed to the reliability and transparency of qualitative analysis.

For quantitative validity and reliability, all questionnaires used in this study were adapted from previously validated scales measuring intercultural competence and its components—cognition, emotion, and behavior (Earley & Ang, 2003; Ang & Van Dyne, 2008)—and were piloted prior to formal administration. Internal consistency of measurement scales was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, ensuring robust psychometric properties ( $\alpha > 0.8$ ). Additionally, pre-test and post-test comparisons employed statistical tests ensuring adequate power and sample size to identify significant differences between groups. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted within SEM procedures to confirm construct validity, discriminant validity, and internal consistency among latent constructs (Hair et al., 2019).

In sum, the methodological framework employed in this study is carefully structured to guarantee the validity, reliability, and generalizability of research findings. The integrated qualitative and quantitative design effectively captures nuanced insights and robust empirical evidence, aligning precisely with the study's theoretical objectives and practical implications.

## **4. Findings and Discussion**

### **4.1. Quantitative Findings: The Impact of Country-specific Education on Intercultural Competence**

The quantitative analysis employed structural equation modeling (SEM) to examine how systematically designed national conditions education influenced international students' intercultural competence, with particular attention to the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) established robust psychometric properties for the scales employed, ensuring construct validity and internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha  $> 0.8$ ). Model fit indices—Comparative Fit Index (CFI = .94), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI = 0.93), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA = 0.05)—indicated good model fit.

Results indicated statistically significant enhancements in intercultural competence in the experimental group compared to the control group across all dimensions. Specifically, in the cognitive dimension, students who participated in structured national conditions education demonstrated significantly improved factual knowledge about contemporary Chinese society, reduced stereotypical views, and updated perceptions regarding China's economic status, technological advancements, and international influence ( $\beta = .65, p < .001$ ). Such findings support prior studies emphasizing the critical role of accurate knowledge in intercultural competence (Earley & Ang, 2003; Ang & Van Dyne, 2008). Similarly, significant improvements were found in the emotional dimension, characterized by increased cultural empathy, reduced anxiety about interacting with Chinese culture, and enhanced feelings of cultural affinity ( $\beta = .68, p < .001$ ). Finally, in the behavioral dimension, the experimental group exhibited significantly higher engagement in intercultural interactions, more proactive communication, and greater social integration into campus and local communities ( $\beta = .72, p < .001$ ).

The SEM analysis further revealed significant mediational pathways, highlighting that cognitive improvements indirectly influenced intercultural behavior through emotional engagement (mediating effect  $\beta = .47$ ,  $p < .001$ ). This finding highlights the critical role emotional affinity plays in transforming accurate cognitive perceptions into effective intercultural behaviors, underscoring the necessity of integrating emotional components alongside cognitive knowledge within educational interventions.

#### **4.2. Qualitative Findings: Cognitive, Emotional, and Behavioral Mechanisms of Change**

Qualitative findings provided complementary evidence and deeper insight into the processes underlying the quantitative results. The structured educational content reshaped students' understanding, emotional identification, and behavior toward Chinese society in clearly identifiable ways. Cognitively, before receiving systematic country-specific education, students frequently expressed stereotypical or outdated perceptions of China, often describing China through simplistic generalizations or misconceptions, such as associating it mainly with traditional agriculture, limited technological development, or social conservatism. After exposure to the designed curriculum, students described acquiring nuanced and comprehensive understandings, with particular acknowledgment of China's contemporary global role, rapid urbanization, innovation, and technological achievements. As one participant expressed: "Initially, I only knew China through stereotypes—rural areas, traditional markets—but after the course, I saw a modern, technologically advanced society, entirely different from what I previously imagined."

Emotionally, the structured national conditions education markedly improved participants' emotional affinity and empathy toward Chinese culture. The explicit emphasis on fostering empathy and cultural respect through interactive activities, reflective discussions, and experiential learning allowed participants to form emotional connections and positive attitudes toward cultural differences. Students reported a sense of increased comfort, reduced anxiety, and greater cultural curiosity and respect. For instance, another participant noted: "Before the classes, I felt detached from Chinese culture. Now, I appreciate the values and traditions deeply—I feel emotionally closer, more open, and understanding of cultural differences."

Behaviorally, structured education directly translated into increased intercultural interaction, engagement, and integration behaviors among international students. Observational data clearly indicated enhanced interactions between international students and local peers, with students actively participating in joint activities, social events, and cross-cultural exchanges, reflecting increased confidence and adaptability. Students reported being more motivated and empowered to engage in meaningful conversations and intercultural collaborations, significantly reducing social isolation: "Previously, I avoided interacting because I didn't understand the cultural context or the appropriate behaviors. Now, I'm more comfortable participating, attending events, and initiating conversations with Chinese peers."

Thus, qualitative analysis illuminated how systematically designed educational content functioned as a catalyst for cognitive realignment, emotional openness, and behavioral adaptation, thereby offering rich explanatory evidence for the quantitative outcomes.

### 4.3. Discussion and Integration of Findings

The integration of quantitative and qualitative results demonstrates the effectiveness of the structured national conditions educational content in enhancing international students' intercultural competence through clearly articulated cognitive, emotional, and behavioral pathways. Quantitative findings confirmed the hypothesized impact of structured curriculum interventions, while qualitative insights clarified the underlying processes. This convergence between qualitative and quantitative data strengthens the credibility and validity of the research findings, highlighting the importance of integrating Guobie Xue theoretical insights with intercultural effectiveness frameworks for targeted curriculum development.

Overall, this study's methodological approach and comprehensive analyses substantiate the central hypothesis that targeted, theoretically informed educational content significantly enhances international students' intercultural competence across cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions. Empirical evidence clearly demonstrates that structured national conditions education not only corrects cognitive misconceptions but also fosters emotional empathy and cultural identification, ultimately facilitating meaningful behavioral changes in intercultural interactions. These findings provide compelling evidence supporting the integration of country-specific educational frameworks with intercultural effectiveness theories, offering substantial contributions to both theoretical advancements and practical improvements in international student education within Chinese HEIs.

## 5. Conclusion

This study systematically explored the mechanisms through which structured educational content on Chinese national conditions (Guoqing Jiaoyu) enhances the intercultural effectiveness of international students in Chinese higher education institutions. Integrating country-specific studies (Guobie Xue) and Cultural Intelligence (CQ) frameworks, the research successfully bridged existing theoretical gaps and provided robust empirical evidence of how cognitive accuracy, emotional identification, and behavioral adaptability collectively contribute to meaningful intercultural competence development.

The empirical findings clearly demonstrate that systematically designed Guoqing Jiaoyu significantly impacts international students' intercultural competence across cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions. Specifically, the structured curriculum effectively corrected persistent misconceptions and stereotypes about contemporary China, including outdated views regarding economic status, technological achievements, and cultural practices. These cognitive corrections, in turn, facilitated greater emotional affinity, reduced cultural anxiety, and promoted deeper emotional identification with Chinese society. Behaviorally, the intervention empowered students with increased confidence and adaptability, manifesting in enhanced intercultural interactions, active participation, and social integration both on and off campus.

From a theoretical standpoint, this study successfully integrated the traditionally macro-oriented country studies (Guobie Xue) framework with micro-level intercultural effectiveness models, particularly Earley and Ang's (2003) Cultural Intelligence theory. By demonstrating

empirically how educational content can be strategically employed to develop cognitive awareness, emotional empathy, and intercultural behaviors, this research enriches the existing theoretical discourse in international education. The outcomes thus highlight the importance of multidimensional, structured educational strategies, addressing a significant theoretical and practical gap identified in existing literature.

Practically, the study provides valuable insights and actionable recommendations for higher education institutions and policymakers aiming to enhance intercultural education effectiveness. The validated curriculum model offers a robust template that can be adapted and scaled across various educational contexts, addressing diverse international student populations. Educational administrators, policymakers, and instructors may leverage these insights to refine existing national conditions education curricula, ensuring alignment with students' educational needs, reducing cultural misunderstandings, and promoting deeper intercultural integration.

Moreover, the study contributes meaningfully to China's national strategic goals under initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and broader internationalization efforts in higher education. By equipping international students with accurate understandings of China's modern development trajectory and fostering positive cultural attitudes, this research helps strengthen China's cultural soft power, facilitating mutual understanding and international cooperation in line with China's global strategic objectives.

However, despite the significant contributions of this research, certain limitations should be noted. The study was conducted within selected universities in China; thus, further research could explore additional institutional contexts or extend comparative analyses across different countries. Future studies might also incorporate longitudinal methods to assess long-term effects of structured educational interventions on students' intercultural competence development.

In conclusion, this research effectively bridges theoretical and practical gaps, offering meaningful scholarly contributions and actionable guidance for educational practices. By highlighting the strategic potential of systematically designed Guoqing Jiaoyu, it provides a valuable pathway for improving international student education quality and enhancing China's global educational reputation.

### **Author Contributions:**

Conceptualization, R.L.; methodology, R.L.; software, R.L.; validation, R.L.; formal analysis, R.L.; investigation, R.L.; resources, R.L.; data curation, R.L.; writing—original draft preparation, R.L.; writing—review and editing, R.L.; visualization, R.L.; supervision, R.L.; project administration, R.L.; funding acquisition, R.L. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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### **Institutional Review Board Statement:**

The study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki, and approved by the Institutional Review Board of Zhejiang College of Security Technology.

### **Informed Consent Statement:**

Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

### **Data Availability Statement:**

The original contributions presented in this study are included in the article/supplementary material. Further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author(s).

### **Conflict of Interest:**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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