

# A Study on the Correlation Between Overseas Study Experiences of Chinese University Faculty and Innovations in Their Teaching Methods

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**Abstract:** This paper investigates the relationship between the overseas study experiences of Chinese university faculty and the innovation of their teaching methods. Through a comprehensive literature review, the study explores the impacts of overseas study on teachers' educational beliefs, professional identity, and academic capabilities, as well as the implications for teaching method innovation. The findings indicate that overseas study experiences can broaden academic horizons, transform teaching concepts, enhance innovative awareness and practical skills, thereby promoting innovations in teaching content, formats, and assessment methods.

**Keywords:** University Faculty; Overseas Study Experience; Teaching Method Innovation; Academic Exchange

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## Introduction

In the context of globalization, international academic exchange and collaboration have become increasingly frequent. Many Chinese university faculty members enrich their academic backgrounds and enhance their professional skills through overseas study. As educational reform continues to deepen, innovation in teaching methods has become a crucial factor in improving the quality of education. This paper aims to explore how the overseas study experiences of university faculty influence their teaching method innovations, providing a reference for further enhancing the quality of university education.

With the development of higher education internationalization, an increasing number of Chinese university faculty members are opting to study abroad to elevate their academic levels and teaching capabilities. Investigating the relationship between the overseas study experiences of university faculty and the innovation of teaching methods helps to understand the practical impact of these experiences on teachers' professional development. It also provides a basis for universities to formulate faculty training and teaching reform strategies.

The primary objective of this paper is to systematically review the literature and conduct empirical analyses to explore the specific impacts of overseas study experiences on the innovation of teaching methods among Chinese university faculty. The study aims to elucidate the pathways through which these experiences influence teaching method innovation and to propose corresponding improvement suggestions.

## 1. Literature Review

### 1.1 Impact of Overseas Study Experience on University Faculty Development

A multitude of studies underscores the significant influence of overseas study experiences on the professional development of university faculty. Yan Tianxin and Yang (2020) discovered that such experiences bolster the professional identity of foreign language teachers, providing them with motivation and rich material for their teaching endeavors. Zhu and Zhang (2020) highlighted the positive impact of study abroad experiences on the teaching abilities of engineering faculty, noting that the duration of these experiences had no significant effect. Gao (2020) further emphasized the role of teaching reflection and overseas academic visits in shaping university English teachers' educational beliefs, advocating for the renewal of traditional teaching ideologies. Similarly, early research by Zhong (2007) indicated that study abroad experiences of faculty in regional universities significantly contributed to their professional growth, proposing relevant management strategies.

### 1.2 Theoretical Foundations of Teaching Method Innovation

The innovation of teaching methods has long been a focal point in educational research. He and Lv (2023), in their exploration of innovative teaching methods for university Chinese courses, employed techniques such as situational teaching and cooperative learning, achieving

notable success in enhancing academic performance and student engagement. Lei (2024), through the course “Cultural Etiquette and Modern Image,” analyzed general education reform plans and teaching strategies, emphasizing the crucial role of innovative teaching methods in improving educational outcomes. Zhang (2023) examined teaching methods in university physical education, asserting that PE teachers should diversify their theoretical approaches and focus on the design and arrangement of practical teaching activities to elevate students’ physical literacy and athletic capabilities.

### **1.3 Current Status and Gaps in Related Research**

Despite the numerous studies investigating the impact of overseas study experiences on university faculty development and the innovation of teaching methods, certain gaps remain. Kong and Li (2024) pointed out that the application of new media technologies in ideological and political education courses can expand teaching dimensions in both space and time, fostering innovation and development in these courses. However, Sun and Xia (2024), along with Zong (2023), noted that ideological and political educators in universities need to further innovate their teaching methods in the new media environment to enhance the appeal and effectiveness of education. Zuo (2023) studied the influence of overseas study experiences on university faculty beliefs, finding that while gender had no significant effect, factors such as teaching experience, academic qualifications, and overseas teaching experiences significantly influenced faculty beliefs. Zuo advocated for increased support for female returnee faculty members.

## **2. Analysis of Characteristics of Overseas Study Experiences**

### **2.1 Selection of Countries and Regions for Study Abroad**

The choice of countries and regions for study abroad profoundly impacts students’ experiences. Disparities in educational systems, cultural backgrounds, linguistic environments, and levels of economic development among different countries and regions collectively shape the quality of students’ learning and living experiences <sup>[1]</sup>. The education system and academic prestige of the host country or region are pivotal considerations for students. Western countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, and France attract a substantial number of international students with their high-quality higher education systems and world-renowned universities. Institutions like the Ivy League in the U.S. and the Russell Group in the U.K. are lauded for their premier academic research and teaching quality. Germany is famed for its engineering programs, and France for its arts disciplines. In contrast, Asian countries such as Japan, Singapore, and South Korea, with their unique educational advantages and relatively lower study costs, have become popular choices for Asian students.

Cultural background and linguistic environment also play crucial roles in the selection of study destinations. For many students, studying abroad is not solely about receiving higher education but also about experiencing diverse cultures, broadening horizons, and enhancing cross-cultural communication skills <sup>[2]</sup>. English-speaking countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand, attract numerous students from non-English-speaking nations due to the global prevalence of the English language. Additionally, some non-English-speaking countries offer international programs taught in English, catering to students seeking specialized knowledge in certain fields. Economic development levels and living costs are significant factors influencing the choice of study destinations. While the academic standards in the U.S. and U.K. are high, the cost of living is also relatively high. Conversely, countries like Germany, France, and those in Northern Europe offer free or low-tuition higher education, coupled with lower living costs, which is particularly appealing to students with limited budgets <sup>[3]</sup>.

### **2.2 Academic Exchange and Collaboration During Study Abroad**

Academic exchange and collaboration during overseas study are vital components of the students’ learning experience abroad. These interactions not only elevate students’ academic proficiency and research capabilities but also expand their academic perspectives and professional networks, laying a solid foundation for future career development. International students typically have increased access to world-class academic resources and research platforms in foreign universities. Many prestigious universities are equipped with advanced laboratories, libraries, and research facilities, providing robust support for students’ academic endeavors <sup>[4]</sup>. These institutions frequently host various aca-

ademic lectures, seminars, and conferences, inviting eminent scholars and experts to share the latest research findings and cutting-edge developments in their fields.

Students studying abroad have the opportunity to engage in diverse forms of academic collaboration. Numerous universities encourage interdisciplinary and cross-border research collaborations, offering students a wealth of cooperative opportunities. For instance, students may participate in their mentors' research projects, serve as research assistants, or form research teams with other international students to undertake joint studies. Moreover, students can broaden their academic horizons and international perspectives through participation in international academic exchange programs<sup>[5]</sup>. Some universities offer exchange or joint degree programs, allowing students to study and conduct research at different institutions in multiple countries, thereby experiencing varied educational systems and academic cultures. Academic exchange and collaboration during study abroad extend beyond the campus. Many students engage in internships, part-time jobs, or community service, establishing connections with local businesses, research institutions, and non-governmental organizations to undertake practical project collaborations.

### 2.3 Duration and Depth of Study Abroad Experiences

The duration and depth of study abroad experiences significantly influence students' academic achievements and personal growth. Different lengths and depths of study abroad experiences have varied effects on students' academic outcomes, cultural adaptation, language proficiency, and career development<sup>[6]</sup>. The duration of study abroad experiences markedly affects students' academic accomplishments. Short-term study programs, typically lasting from a few months to a year, often include exchange programs, summer schools, or short-term research projects. The advantage of these programs lies in their brevity, allowing students to experience different educational systems and cultural environments within a limited time, thereby broadening their perspectives. However, due to time constraints, students' engagement in in-depth academic research is limited, making it challenging to undertake long-term research projects or engage in comprehensive academic discussions. Long-term study programs usually span over a year or even encompass entire degree courses.

The depth of study abroad experiences also impacts students' academic and personal growth. In-depth study abroad experiences usually involve not only academic pursuits but also participation in extracurricular activities, community service, and cultural exchanges. For example, students can join academic societies, student organizations, and volunteer services, accumulating rich practical experience and expanding their social networks. The duration and depth of study abroad experiences significantly influence students' language proficiency and cross-cultural adaptation abilities. While short-term programs can enhance language skills, the limited time restricts substantial progress in language application and cultural adaptation. Long-term study programs provide more opportunities for students to interact and communicate with local people, thereby comprehensively improving language proficiency and cross-cultural adaptation skills. In-depth study abroad experiences allow students to engage in various practical activities, enabling them to practice language skills in real-life situations and enhance cross-cultural communication and adaptation abilities by deeply understanding and integrating into the local culture.

## 3. Manifestations of Innovation in Teaching Methods

### 3.1 Innovation in Teaching Content

Innovation in teaching content is a pivotal aspect of pedagogical innovation. As society evolves and technology advances, the pace at which knowledge is updated accelerates, leading to increasingly diverse and personalized learning demands among students. Traditional teaching content often lags behind real-world applications and cutting-edge research, failing to meet students' learning needs. Innovation in teaching content is evident in the continuous updating of knowledge and curriculum design. Educators must regularly update their knowledge base, integrating the latest research findings and practical applications into their teaching materials. Moreover, educators can offer elective courses or special lectures to cater to students' interests in various knowledge domains, thereby enhancing their learning initiative and enthusiasm.

Furthermore, innovation in teaching content is reflected in the design of interdisciplinary and comprehensive courses. In modern society, knowledge from various fields increasingly intersects and integrates, rendering single-discipline knowledge insufficient for solving re-

al-world problems. Educators need to break down disciplinary barriers, creating interdisciplinary courses that foster students' comprehensive skills and innovative capacities. Additionally, innovation in teaching content includes the diversification and digitalization of teaching materials. Traditional textbooks, often monotonous and lacking in interactivity and engagement, fail to inspire students. By incorporating various forms of teaching materials, such as e-books, videos, and animations, educators can enhance the vividness and appeal of teaching content.

### **3.2 Innovation in Teaching Formats and Techniques**

Innovating teaching formats and techniques is a crucial pathway to enhancing teaching effectiveness and student engagement. Traditional teaching formats, primarily lecture-based, involve unidirectional knowledge transfer from teacher to student, with students passively receiving information, thereby lacking interaction and engagement. With the development of educational technology and the advancement of educational philosophies, the innovation of teaching formats and techniques has become an essential component of pedagogical innovation. Innovation in teaching formats is manifested in the enhancement of interactivity and participation. Educators can employ various interactive teaching methods to stimulate students' interest and enthusiasm for learning. Additionally, techniques such as flipped classrooms, where some teaching content is transferred to pre-class study, with in-class time dedicated to discussions and interactions, can enhance students' autonomous learning abilities and classroom participation.

Innovation in teaching techniques is evident in the application of information technology. With the development of the internet and information technology, novel teaching methods such as online education, virtual reality, and augmented reality are gradually being integrated into the educational process. The application of virtual reality and augmented reality technologies can provide students with immersive learning experiences, rendering abstract knowledge concrete and engaging. Moreover, the application of multimedia technology allows educators to integrate various forms of teaching resources, such as text, images, videos, and audio, thereby enhancing the vividness and attractiveness of teaching content. For instance, in history teaching, educators can use historical documentaries and animated videos of historical events to help students better understand historical contexts and processes, thereby improving their interest in and retention of the material.

### **3.3 Innovation in Teaching Evaluation Methods**

Innovation in teaching evaluation methods is a vital means of enhancing teaching quality and student learning outcomes. Traditional teaching evaluation methods primarily rely on examination results, focusing mainly on students' knowledge acquisition while neglecting their comprehensive qualities and practical abilities. With the shift in educational philosophies and the development of educational technology, innovation in teaching evaluation methods has become an important aspect of pedagogical innovation. Innovation in evaluation methods is reflected in the diversification of evaluation criteria. Traditional examination-based evaluations often emphasize students' memory and understanding of knowledge while ignoring their practical abilities and comprehensive qualities. Innovative evaluation methods should focus on multiple aspects of students' abilities, including knowledge mastery, practical skills, creative thinking, and teamwork. For instance, educators can use project assessments, group collaborations, and case analyses to comprehensively evaluate students' comprehensive qualities and practical application abilities.

Additionally, innovation in evaluation methods is reflected in the diversification of evaluation formats. Traditional evaluation formats are predominantly written exams, which are singular in form and unable to comprehensively reflect students' learning outcomes. Innovative evaluation methods should combine various evaluation formats, such as oral exams, presentations, essays, and lab reports, to comprehensively assess students' learning outcomes and overall abilities. For instance, in language learning, educators can use oral exams and presentations to assess students' speaking abilities and practical application levels, rather than solely relying on written exams to evaluate their grammar and vocabulary mastery.

Innovation in evaluation methods also includes the transparency of the evaluation process and the timeliness of feedback. Traditional evaluation methods often lack transparency, making it difficult for students to understand their learning progress and existing issues. Innovative evaluation methods should emphasize process transparency, allowing students to clearly understand their learning status and problems. Timely feedback is crucial to helping students improve their learning methods and enhance their learning outcomes.

## **4. Pathways Through Which Overseas Study Experiences Influence Teaching Method Innovation**

### **4.1 Broadening Perspectives and Transforming Teaching Concepts**

Overseas study experiences serve not only as crucial milestones in personal academic and career development but also as significant opportunities for educators to innovate their teaching methods. By immersing themselves in diverse educational systems and teaching methodologies abroad, educators can broaden their perspectives, transform their teaching concepts, and garner a wealth of inspiration for pedagogical innovation. These experiences enable educators to understand and adopt various educational systems and teaching methods from different countries. Each country's educational system varies significantly in terms of curriculum design, teaching content, and instructional formats. Through these overseas experiences, educators can firsthand experience these differing systems, evaluate their strengths and weaknesses, and incorporate successful practices into their own teaching. For instance, the U.S. higher education system is renowned for its flexible curriculum design and emphasis on fostering students' autonomous learning abilities. Educators studying in the U.S. can adopt these flexible curriculum designs and teaching methods upon returning home, thereby enhancing students' self-directed learning and creative thinking.

Overseas study experiences help educators shift their teaching paradigms towards student-centered learning. Traditional teaching paradigms often place educators in authoritative positions, with students passively receiving knowledge. However, many developed countries' educational systems emphasize student-centered teaching philosophies, focusing on cultivating students' autonomous learning and practical abilities. Through overseas experiences, educators can personally experience these student-centered teaching philosophies, transforming their own teaching concepts to better cater to students' personalized needs and learning experiences. Moreover, these experiences allow educators to familiarize themselves with cutting-edge educational technologies and teaching resources. In many developed countries, the application of educational technology and teaching resources is widespread and advanced. By experiencing these firsthand, educators can understand their application methods and effectiveness, integrating them into their own teaching practices. For example, in the U.K., virtual reality and augmented reality technologies are extensively used in education. Educators can learn and master these advanced technologies during their overseas study and subsequently apply them to their teaching, enhancing the vividness and appeal of their teaching content and improving students' learning interest and outcomes.

### **4.2 Promoting International Academic Exchange and Collaboration**

Overseas study experiences provide educators with abundant opportunities for international academic exchange and collaboration, which not only enhance their academic and research capabilities but also offer substantial support and inspiration for teaching method innovation. These experiences help educators build international academic networks, fostering global academic exchange. Through studying and conducting research at foreign universities, educators have the opportunity to connect with scholars and experts worldwide, participate in various academic conferences, seminars, and lectures, and stay abreast of the latest research findings and frontiers. Through such academic exchanges, educators can acquire a wealth of academic resources and research inspiration, incorporating the latest research findings and theories into their teaching to update content and methodologies, thus improving teaching quality. For instance, by attending academic conferences abroad, educators can learn about the latest educational technologies and teaching methods, which they can then apply upon returning home to enhance teaching effectiveness and student learning experiences.

Overseas study experiences offer educators ample opportunities for international collaborative research. Many foreign universities encourage and support cross-border collaborative research, allowing educators to engage in various international research projects during their study abroad, thereby enhancing their research capabilities and levels. Additionally, these experiences enable educators to understand and adhere to international academic norms and standards. Through studying and conducting research at foreign universities, educators can learn and master globally accepted academic norms and standards, such as paper writing conventions and academic integrity guidelines, thereby enhancing their academic literacy and research standards. By applying these academic norms and standards in their teaching, educators can

set higher academic expectations for their students, fostering improved academic literacy and research abilities among students, thereby enhancing overall teaching quality. Through building international academic networks, promoting global academic exchange, providing opportunities for international collaborative research, and understanding and adhering to international academic norms and standards, overseas study experiences offer substantial support and inspiration for teaching method innovation. Through these exchanges and collaborations, educators can continuously update teaching content and methodologies, improving teaching quality and students' academic levels, thereby driving the continual innovation and development of teaching methods.

### **4.3 Enhancing Innovation Awareness and Practical Abilities**

Overseas study experiences not only broaden educators' academic perspectives and teaching concepts but also significantly enhance their innovation awareness and practical abilities. By immersing themselves in different educational philosophies and teaching methods abroad, educators can elevate their innovative capacities and practical skills, laying a solid foundation for teaching method innovation. These experiences foster enhanced innovation awareness among educators. Educational systems abroad typically emphasize the cultivation of students' innovative thinking and capabilities. Through overseas experiences, educators can personally experience these educational philosophies, enhancing their own innovation awareness and abilities. For example, the U.S. higher education system emphasizes fostering students' autonomous learning and innovation capabilities. By studying in the U.S., educators can learn and adopt these educational philosophies, boosting their own innovation awareness and abilities. Upon returning home, educators can focus more on cultivating students' innovative abilities by designing innovative courses and projects, thereby stimulating students' creative thinking and capabilities and enhancing their overall competencies and competitiveness.

Moreover, overseas study experiences help educators improve their practical abilities. Educational systems abroad often emphasize practical teaching. Through these experiences, educators can firsthand experience these practical teaching methods, enhancing their own practical skills and levels. For instance, Germany's engineering education system emphasizes the integration of theory and practice, requiring students to engage in extensive experiments and project-based learning to develop practical application skills. Educators studying in Germany can adopt these practical teaching methods, enhancing their own practical skills and levels. Upon returning home, educators can emphasize practical teaching by designing practical courses and projects to help students develop practical application skills, thereby enhancing students' practical abilities and competitiveness. Furthermore, overseas study experiences allow educators to familiarize themselves with cutting-edge educational technologies and teaching resources. Through studying and conducting research at foreign universities, educators can understand and master the latest educational technologies and resources, such as online education, virtual reality, and augmented reality, thereby enhancing their technological application abilities and teaching standards. For example, the U.K. educational system extensively utilizes virtual reality and augmented reality technologies in teaching. Educators can learn and master these advanced technologies during their overseas study and subsequently apply them to their teaching, enhancing the vividness and appeal of teaching content and improving students' learning interest and outcomes.

## **5. Summary and Outlook**

### **5.1 Research Conclusions**

Innovation in teaching methods is pivotal for enhancing teaching quality and student learning outcomes. Innovations in teaching content, formats and techniques, and evaluation methods elevate the comprehensiveness, interactivity, and scientific rigor of education from various perspectives and levels. These innovations not only enrich teaching materials and methods but also improve students' comprehensive qualities and practical abilities, meeting the demands of modern education for holistic student development. Overseas study experiences significantly impact the innovation of teaching methods. Through these experiences, educators can engage with diverse educational systems and teaching methodologies, broadening their perspectives, transforming their teaching concepts, and enhancing their innovation awareness and practical capabilities.

Furthermore, overseas study experiences promote international academic exchange and collaboration, helping educators establish



extensive international academic networks, acquire the latest academic resources and research findings, and provide substantial support and inspiration for teaching method innovation. The main pathways through which overseas study experiences influence teaching method innovation include broadening perspectives and transforming teaching concepts, promoting international academic exchange and collaboration, and enhancing innovation awareness and practical capabilities. Through these pathways, educators can continuously update teaching content and methods, improve teaching quality and student academic levels, and drive the ongoing innovation and development of teaching methods.

## 5.2 Future Outlook

Looking ahead, with the continuous advancement of society and rapid technological development, teaching method innovation and international academic exchange and collaboration will face new opportunities and challenges. To further enhance teaching quality and student comprehensive qualities, educators need to deepen the innovation of teaching methods. Teachers should continually update their knowledge base and teaching philosophies, actively exploring new teaching content, formats, and techniques to meet the diverse and personalized learning needs of students. Educational institutions should provide more training and learning opportunities for educators, helping them master the latest educational technologies and teaching resources, thereby enhancing their innovation capabilities and practical skills.

Strengthening international academic exchange and collaboration is essential. Educators should actively participate in international academic exchanges and collaborations, establishing extensive international academic networks to access the latest academic resources and research findings. Educational institutions should encourage and support educators to study abroad and participate in academic visits, providing them with ample opportunities for international exchange and collaboration to enhance their academic and teaching capabilities.

Emphasis should be placed on cultivating students' innovation awareness and practical abilities. Educators should focus on developing students' innovative capabilities by designing innovative courses and projects that stimulate students' creative thinking and abilities. Through practical courses and projects, educators should help students master practical application skills, enhancing their practical abilities and competitiveness. Education policies and systems should provide support and guarantees for teaching method innovation and international academic exchange and collaboration. Educational authorities should formulate and implement policies and measures conducive to the innovation of teaching methods and international academic exchange and collaboration, creating a favorable educational environment and conditions for educators and students, and promoting the continuous development and progress of modern education.

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