

Misalignment between Goal Recognition and Resource Allocation in International Talent Cultivation: A Bourdieusian Study of Social Work Students in China

Ning Feiping¹ and Mohd Haizzan Bin Yahaya²

¹Guangdong University of Finance, School of Public Administration, Guangzhou 510521, China

²Universiti Sains Malaysia, School of Social Sciences, Penang 11800, Malaysia

Correspondence: ningfeiping@student.usm.my | ORCID: 0009-0002-5511-2045 | Corresponding author ORCID: 0000-0002-2255-0076

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ABSTRACT

International talent cultivation has emerged as a strategic cornerstone of China's Guangdong–Hong Kong–Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) initiative, yet social work education in Guangzhou exhibits a persistent and structurally rooted misalignment between its stated internationalisation objectives and the institutional resources available to pursue them. Grounded in Bourdieu's concepts of field, capital, and habitus, this study employs a sequential mixed-methods design comprising a survey of 291 undergraduate social work students across five Guangzhou universities, followed by semi-structured interviews with 10 purposively selected participants. The findings reveal that students hold strong and internally consistent endorsement of eight international talent cultivation goals (all $M > 4.0$), yet institutional support across five corresponding resource dimensions averages only $M = 3.27$ —a structural gap of approximately one full scale point. Multiple linear regression analysis demonstrates that students' perceptions of resource provision significantly predict goal alignment ($R^2 = 0.048\text{--}0.102$). Multicultural training and foreign-language materials emerge as the most effective activators of international habitus, while foreign faculty recruitment and international cultural activities exhibit unexpected negative associations—evidence of capital provision that lacks field legitimacy. Qualitative analysis identifies three structural drivers: economic capital deficits, social capital monopolisation by elite disciplines and institutions, and policy-level constraints on cross-boundary academic content. Together, these findings advance understanding of how Bourdieu's field-capital-habitus triad operates within applied, marginalised disciplines in China's regional higher education landscape.

Keywords: *Social work education; International talent cultivation; Resource allocation; Goal recognition; Bourdieu's theory of practice; Greater Bay Area; Institutional capital; Habitus*

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1. INTRODUCTION

In February 2019, the Chinese government released the Outline Development Plan for the Guangdong–Hong Kong–Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA), proposing the construction of an education and talent hub alongside an international education demonstration zone (CPGPRC, 2019). Within this strategic framework, the GBA has become not merely a geographic entity but an institutional experiment in talent-driven regional integration—one whose success depends critically on the capacity of its universities to produce graduates equipped for cross-cultural professional practice. Xi Jinping's 2023 directive explicitly designates the GBA as one of China's three planned hubs of high-end international talent, alongside Beijing and Shanghai, in support of the national

modernisation goal by 2035 (PMC, 2025). Yet translating such macro-level policy ambition into institution-level practice requires something that policy documents rarely specify: equitable and disciplinarily inclusive resource allocation.

The gap between aspiration and provision is not uniform across disciplines. Research on GBA talent policy evolution (2019–2024) identifies three developmental phases, yet notes that talent concentration in the GBA remains well below peer international bay areas: while 46% of the San Francisco Bay Area labour force holds a bachelor's degree or higher, the corresponding figure in the GBA stands at only 17.47% (PMC, 2025). This aggregate deficit is compounded by sharp within-GBA

*Author for Correspondence: ningfeiping@student.usm.my

inequalities: applied humanities disciplines such as social work—positioned at the intersection of cross-cultural governance, mental health, and community welfare—receive disproportionately little of the internationalisation investment channelled primarily toward STEM and business fields.

Guangzhou holds a distinctive position in this landscape. As the cradle of social work education in China (Chen, 2020), it bears particular responsibility for shaping the discipline's international trajectory. Yet its social work programmes continue to face documented structural constraints: below-average internationalisation among professionals, a restricted pool of high-level applied talent, and underdeveloped mechanisms for cross-border cultivation, recruitment, and mobility (Liu Sijin, 2019). These constraints are not incidental; they reflect deeper choices embedded in how educational institutions allocate symbolic and material capital across disciplines.

This study is motivated by a straightforward but consequential observation: students are increasingly internalising the values and aspirations of international talent cultivation, yet the institutions responsible for supporting those aspirations are not providing the resources necessary to realise them. This misalignment between habituated goal recognition and structurally deficient resource provision constitutes the central analytical problem. Drawing on Bourdieu's theoretical framework of field, capital, and habitus, we map eight international talent cultivation objectives against five dimensions of institutional resource provision as perceived by 291 undergraduate social work students, and interrogate the structural mechanisms sustaining the gap through in-depth interviews with ten participants. The aim is not merely to document the disparity but to theorise its institutional origins and derive policy-relevant remedies grounded in the logic of capital redistribution.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Defining and Conceptualising International Talent

There is no universally accepted definition of “international talent” in academic or policy discourse; the term operates simultaneously as an aspiration, a category of practice, and an ideological construct (Knight, 2007). Most scholarly accounts converge on a description of individuals who possess global awareness, world-class knowledge structures, and the capacity to compete and exercise leadership in globalised environments (Zhang, 2003; Kong, 2017; Tang, 2016; Xu, 2022). China's National Medium- and Long-Term Education Reform and Development Plan Outline (2010–2020) institutionalises this framing by characterising international talent as individuals with an international perspective, a solid understanding of international norms, and the capacity for effective participation in global affairs (CPGPRC, 2010). What is notable about this formulation—and what the literature has insufficiently interrogated—is its aspirational completeness: it specifies desired outcomes without articulating the institutional conditions necessary for their realisation.

Bourn (2008) identifies six core global competencies essential for international talent: effective cross-cultural communication, collaborative capacity, respect for differing worldviews, structural awareness of global influences on local societies, problem-solving orientation, and engagement across multiple geographic scales. These attributes map with precision onto the professional ethics of social work, as codified in the Council on Social Work Education's 2022 Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards, which mandate attention to anti-racist practice, cultural humility, and global human rights (CSWE, 2022; Lee et al., 2024). The overlap suggests that social work education—if adequately resourced—is structurally well-positioned to produce internationally competent graduates. The problem is not conceptual misalignment between discipline and objective, but a structural failure of resource provision.

Jeffrey Lemon (2013) offers a developmental perspective, proposing nine personal traits indicative of international readiness: curiosity, empathy, inquisitiveness, logical reasoning, patience, creativity, scientific literacy, intercultural adaptability, and multilingual proficiency. More recent scholarship cautions that such traits cannot develop through mere exposure; they require structured, critically reflective, and institutionally supported pedagogical processes (Sylwia et al., 2024). This caveat is theoretically significant: it relocates responsibility for international competence development from the individual student to the institution, and from the institution to the structural conditions shaping institutional capacity.

A distinctively Chinese dimension concerns the relationship between global competence and national identity. Wen and Jiang (2015) and Kong (2017) argue that Chinese international talent must maintain a strong sense of national character and cultural rootedness even as they navigate multicultural environments—a dual mandate that creates real pedagogical tensions in a GBA context where Mainland, Hong Kong, and Macao cultural logics coexist and often conflict (Zhang & Su, 2023). For social work students, this tension is especially acute: the profession's cosmopolitan ethics of human rights and anti-discrimination may sit uncomfortably alongside state narratives of cultural exceptionalism, and educators navigating this terrain typically receive little institutional guidance.

2.2 Resource Allocation Challenges in the Internationalisation of Higher Education

The internationalisation of higher education is not a singular process with uniform preconditions; it is a field-specific, resource-dependent, and institutionally mediated set of practices whose outcomes vary dramatically across disciplines, institution types, and national contexts (Marinoni & de Wit, 2019). At the conceptual level, models for international talent development in many countries remain underspecified, producing implementation plans that are ambitious in rhetoric but imprecise in the identification of mechanisms and responsibilities (Kong, 2017). At the operational level, the most frequently documented constraints include:

inadequate foreign-language proficiency among professional instructors (Xu & Xue, 2019); inequitably distributed student mobility opportunities (Kong, 2017); the absence of dedicated international training platforms; and the underdevelopment of digital infrastructure for cross-border knowledge access (Liu Sijin, 2019).

A recent assessment of internationalisation efficiency across 30 Chinese provinces (2020–2023) using Data Envelopment Analysis reveals persistent regional disparities: eastern provinces consistently outperform central and western counterparts across all internationalisation output dimensions (Frontiers in Education, 2025). This provincial inequality is reproduced at the institutional level, where private universities face compounded disadvantages due to limited state funding and restricted access to international partnership networks (Mai et al., 2024). The structural inequality in resource endowment functions as a mechanism of capital reproduction: institutions that are already well connected attract further connections, deepening existing hierarchies.

In China's social work programmes, the resource allocation problem takes a particularly acute form. The discipline's trajectory has been characterised by what Xu X (2023) terms a "logical transformation": a historically localisation-oriented path of selective foreign knowledge adaptation that has produced a discipline with limited global knowledge production, marginal international visibility, and correspondingly weak leverage in institutional negotiations over resource allocation. The discipline's applied, practitioner-oriented knowledge base resists easy quantification in the bibliometric terms that increasingly govern Chinese university assessment, further diminishing its capacity to compete for internationalisation resources. Scoping reviews of international students in social work education globally (Hanna et al., 2024) confirm that language barriers, placement difficulties, and institutional inattention are not accidental but structurally produced conditions.

The consequences of chronic underinvestment are self-reinforcing. Liu M (2017) documents the cascade: limited academic influence begets reduced disciplinary status, which begets reduced student and faculty interest, which begets reduced institutional investment—a classic Matthew effect. Chen and Wan (2023) show how programmes respond by redirecting resources toward producing visible social work services for external stakeholders rather than investing in disciplinary and talent development. Zhang Le (2021) traces the endpoint of this cycle: programme termination. The implication for internationalisation is sobering: a discipline struggling to justify its existence cannot credibly advocate for the additional resources required to internationalise.

2.3 Internationalisation of Social Work Education: Global Models and Local Constraints

Comparative scholarship on social work education internationalisation has documented a diverse ecosystem of institutional approaches. Leading programmes in the United States embed global human rights content and

cross-national case studies throughout their MSW curricula and combine these with structured international field placements (CSWE, 2024). Short-term international mobility, service-learning, and virtual exchange have all demonstrated capacity to enhance cross-cultural competence when accompanied by structured critical reflection (Sylwia et al., 2024; Cronley et al., 2025; Sofyan et al., 2025). Yet outcomes are highly contingent on institutional scaffolding: students exposed to international environments without adequate support show limited or inconsistent competence gains (Roholt & Fisher, 2013, as cited in Cronley et al., 2025).

A sustained critique challenges the quality of much institutionalised internationalisation in social work. Vavrus and Pekol (2015) and Waddling et al. (2019) identify a persistent tendency toward "symbolic internationalisation": organising visible international events and hosting foreign guest lecturers without substantively transforming pedagogy or institutional culture. The negative regression associations with foreign faculty recruitment (B2) and international cultural activities (B4) documented in the present study are consistent with this critique: capital provision that lacks field legitimacy—not embedded in the logic of professional social work practice—may produce alienation and cognitive dissonance rather than competence development.

Lee et al. (2024) deepen this critique by interrogating cultural competence frameworks themselves. Drawing on focus groups with Canadian social work students and faculty, they find that prevailing cross-cultural practice frameworks are experienced as conceptually vague and institutionally inconsistent, alternately condemned as oppressive and celebrated as anti-oppressive. Their findings point to the need for epistemically grounded rather than bureaucratically mandated approaches to intercultural learning—an insight with direct implications for how Chinese universities design their internationalisation activities. In the GBA context, a study of joint postgraduate training policies (PMC, 2025a) identifies "resource integration" and "collaborative governance" as the two key mechanisms through which talent cultivation policies translate into outcomes. Both mechanisms are largely absent in GBA social work education—not through oversight, but through the field-level logic that systematically excludes applied humanities from elite cooperation networks.

2.4 Theoretical Framework: Bourdieu's Theory of Practice

This study employs Bourdieu's theory of practice as its principal analytical lens because it provides conceptual tools capable of explaining not just the existence of a gap between goals and resources, but the structural mechanisms through which such gaps are produced, sustained, and legitimated. The theory is organised around three mutually constitutive concepts—field, capital, and habitus—whose interaction Bourdieu (1990) summarises in the formula: [(habitus)(capital)] + field = practice. Table

A provides a systematic mapping of these concepts to the present study’s empirical content.

The field is a structured social space constituted by objective relationships between positions, with its own internal logic, hierarchy of valued attributes, and rules of play (Swartz, 2012). In this study, the relevant field is the higher education system for social work in Guangzhou, embedded within a broader national policy field that prioritises STEM disciplines. Social work’s position within this field is marginal—not because of essential disciplinary weakness, but because its structural location, determined by its relationship to more resourced disciplinary positions, affords it limited capacity to accumulate or deploy the forms of capital that the field’s dominant logic valorises.

Capital is the currency of the field, taking economic, cultural, and social forms (Bourdieu, 1986). Crucially, capital without field legitimacy—even if objectively present—cannot be effectively mobilised. The current study’s finding that foreign faculty recruitment (B2) and international cultural activities (B4) correlate negatively with goal alignment is precisely a case of capital provided without attending to the conditions for its legitimation within the specific logic of social work education. It is not that these resources are inherently ineffective, but that they have been deployed without the institutional intelligence to make them recognisable—and therefore motivating—within the social work educational field.

Habitus is the system of durable, transposable dispositions acquired through sustained exposure to particular social conditions (Bourdieu, 1990). Students’ strong and internally consistent endorsement of all eight international talent cultivation goals ($M > 4.0$, $SD < 0.82$) reflects the formation of a recognisable international habitus, shaped by years of exposure to national policy discourse, institutional internationalisation rhetoric, and the broader symbolic economy of a globalising Chinese higher education system. The disjuncture identified in this study—habitus formed, but capital to actualise it absent—corresponds to what Bourdieu (1990) describes as a disposition without the material conditions for its expression: a “feel for a game” that students have internalised but cannot yet play.

Recent scholarship confirms the framework’s continued analytical power. Xu and Stahl (2025) demonstrate how Chinese VET students develop international habitus through institutional inculcation even in resource-constrained settings. Lai (2024) shows how institutional habitus shapes postgraduation plans in transnational higher education. Wolniak and Houston (2023) make an explicit case for Bourdieu’s relevance to contemporary social work practice and education. Collectively, these studies affirm that the framework is not merely a retrospective explanatory tool but a generative lens capable of identifying structural points of intervention.

Table A: Bourdieusian Conceptual Framework Applied to the Internationalisation of Social Work Education

Bourdieu Concept	Theoretical Meaning	Application in This Study	Empirical Indicator(s)
Field	Structured social arena with its own rules, hierarchies, and forms of capital	The higher education system for social work in Guangzhou; shaped by national policy priorities, institutional type (985/211 vs. applied), and disciplinary status	University tier; GBA policy zone context; "Double First-Class" resource allocation patterns
Capital – Economic	Material and financial resources that can be mobilised in the field	Institutional funding for internationalisation initiatives, exchange subsidies, library acquisition budgets, faculty recruitment	Mean score B3 (foreign materials, $M=3.85$); cost barriers cited by R1, R4, R10
Capital – Cultural	Codified knowledge, credentials, and skills recognised as legitimate within the field	Foreign-language proficiency of faculty and students, international SW knowledge, bilingual teaching capacity	Goal items A2 ($M=4.37$), A3 ($M=4.20$); improvement items C7–C8 ($M=4.12–4.17$)
Capital – Social	Networks and institutional relationships enabling access to resources and opportunities	International partnerships, exchange agreements, GBA cross-boundary HK–Macao alliances, alumni networks	Mean scores B2 (foreign faculty, $M=3.07$), B5 (exchange, $M=3.09$); R2 and R10 interview excerpts
Habitus	Durable, transposable dispositions shaped by	Students’ internalised “international habitus”:	All 8 goal recognition items $M>4.0$; low SD

	accumulated socialisation within a field	aspiration to become globally competent SW professionals, independent of actual resource access	(0.643–0.819) indicating intersubjective consensus
Practice	Concrete outcome of habitus interacting with capital within a field	Actual internationalisation behaviours: course choices, exchange participation, language-learning efforts, career planning	Structural gap: goal recognition avg M=4.23 vs. resource support avg M=3.27 ($\Delta \approx 1.0$); regression $R^2=0.048-0.102$

Note. Framework synthesised from Bourdieu (1986, 1990) and operationalised for the Chinese social work context. SW = Social Work.

2.5 Summary and Research Gaps

Three converging bodies of knowledge inform this study. First, international talent is a multidimensional construct whose operationalisation in policy documents tends to prioritise aspirational outcomes over enabling conditions (Zhang, 2003; Bourn, 2008; CPGPRC, 2010). Second, effective higher education internationalisation is resource-intensive and structurally unequal, with applied disciplines in non-elite institutions facing compounding disadvantages that reproduce existing hierarchies (Marinoni & de Wit, 2019; Mai et al., 2024; Xu X, 2023). Third, Bourdieu’s theory of practice offers a theoretically coherent account of how the interaction between unevenly distributed capital and field-specific logic produces structural misalignments between institutional aspiration and student experience (Bourdieu, 1986, 1990; Xu & Stahl, 2025).

What remains underexplored is the empirical specification of this misalignment in a specific disciplinary and geopolitical context: social work in China’s Greater Bay Area. Existing studies either quantify internationalisation outcomes without theorising their structural determinants, or theorise structural inequality without grounding the analysis in systematic empirical data from a specific disciplinary case. This study addresses both gaps simultaneously, contributing an empirically grounded Bourdieusian account of how structural capital deficits translate into student-level experience in one of China’s most strategically significant regional higher education contexts.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

3.1 Research Design

This study employs a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design in which the qualitative phase follows and explains the quantitative findings. This design is selected because the research problem has both an empirically measurable dimension—the extent and direction of the goal-resource gap—and an interpretively complex dimension: the structural mechanisms, lived experiences, and institutional logics that sustain it. The design reflects the epistemological commitments of Bourdieu’s theory of practice, which insists that social phenomena cannot be adequately understood through purely objectivist or purely subjectivist accounts; the two must be brought into productive dialogue (Bourdieu, 1990; Kumar, 2014). The

quantitative phase provides systematic, generalisable measurement of the misalignment’s magnitude and patterning. The qualitative phase provides the depth necessary to interpret why those patterns exist and how they are lived by the students most directly affected.

Bourdieu’s framework shapes both phases methodologically. The survey operationalises habitus as the degree of student alignment with internationalisation goals, capital as the perceived adequacy of institutional resource provision, and the gap between them as a field-level structural index. The interviews illuminate the field-level logic—the rules, hierarchies, and distribution mechanisms—that sustains the gap. This dual operationalisation allows the study to move between the structural and the experiential, connecting aggregate statistical patterns to the institutional logics and biographical experiences that produce them.

3.2 Data Sources and Sampling

The study targeted undergraduate social work students from five universities in Guangzhou, selected through stratified purposive sampling to capture institutional diversity across three dimensions: programme enrolment scale (large, medium, small), institutional type (comprehensive vs. applied-science vs. finance-oriented), and geographic distribution within the city. This ensures the study population reflects the range of institutional contexts in which social work education is delivered in the GBA’s core city.

Online questionnaires were distributed through institutional WeChat groups. A total of 291 valid responses were collected, satisfying the minimum sample size requirement calculated using G*Power software ($f^2=0.05$, $\alpha=.05$, power=.80 for multiple regression with five predictors). Ten junior and senior students were purposively selected from the survey pool—two per institution—chosen for their extended exposure to curricula, faculty, and institutional resources. Participants were selected to represent diversity in gender, year of study, and self-reported internationalisation experience. Thematic saturation was confirmed through a theoretical saturation test on three reserved transcripts, yielding no new categories.

3.3 Research Instruments

The questionnaire was developed through item generation from the literature review, expert review, and cognitive pretesting. It comprises three variable dimensions: (1) alignment with eight international talent development

objectives (scale $\alpha=0.880$), (2) perceptions of five dimensions of institutional resource allocation (scale $\alpha=0.958$), and (3) expectations for ten improvement measures (scale $\alpha=0.903$). All items were rated on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The formal survey achieved Cronbach's $\alpha=0.939$ and KMO = 0.904, indicating high internal consistency and construct validity.

Semi-structured interviews used a protocol organised around eight thematic domains covering academic background, perceptions of international learning, course satisfaction, faculty internationalisation, resource provision, career planning, self-assessed impact, and expectations for programme development. Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes and was audio-recorded with informed consent. Interview data were analysed using NVivo 14.0 with independent co-coding of 20% of transcripts to establish reliability.

3.4 Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS 26.0 in two stages. First, descriptive statistics characterised students' goal recognition, resource perceptions, and improvement expectations. Second, four multiple linear regression models were estimated—one each for A1 (International Perspective), A2 (International Professional Knowledge),

A3 (Cross-Cultural Communication), and the overall composite A—with B1–B5 as simultaneous predictors. Regression assumptions (normality, homoscedasticity, absence of multicollinearity) were verified prior to model estimation. Standardised beta coefficients enable direct comparison of predictor magnitudes across dependent variables.

Qualitative analysis followed a constructivist grounded theory framework (Charmaz, 2014), proceeding through iterative open, axial, and selective coding. Analytic memos documented interpretive decisions and alternative conceptualisations. Findings from both phases were integrated at the interpretive stage, with qualitative data used to explain, contextualise, and challenge patterns in the quantitative analysis.

4. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The findings are presented in five sections corresponding to the study's main analytical dimensions. We begin with a visual overview of the goal-resource gap (Figure 1), then examine goal recognition (4.1), perceived institutional support (4.2), regression results (4.3), student expectations (4.4), and structural explanations from interviews (4.5). Throughout, Bourdieu's field-capital-habitus framework serves as the interpretive lens.



Figure 1: Goal Recognition vs. Institutional Resource Support

(Mean Scores on 5-Point Likert Scale, N = 291)

Figure 1. Goal Recognition vs. Institutional Resource Support (Mean Scores on 5-Point Likert Scale, N=291) Note. The outer polygon (blue, solid) represents student goal recognition; the inner polygon (red, dashed) represents perceived institutional resource provision. The persistent gap across all eight dimensions—averaging approximately 1.0 scale point—is the empirical signature of the structural misalignment analysed in this study.

4.1 Students' Recognition of International Talent Development Goals

Students assigned high ratings to all eight internationalisation objectives ($M > 4.0$; $SD = 0.643-0.819$), and the low dispersion across items indicates not merely average agreement but an intersubjective consensus—a shared evaluative disposition that transcends individual variation. In Bourdieusian terms, this consistency across students from five institutionally diverse universities signals the formation of a common international habitus, shaped by years of exposure to GBA policy rhetoric, institutional internationalisation discourse, and the broader symbolic economy of Chinese higher education in which “international competence” has been elevated to a form of positional good.

Within the pattern of strong overall endorsement, meaningful hierarchies are apparent. The highest-rated goals—“proficiently mastering international social work knowledge” ($M = 4.37$), “becoming a truly international Chinese individual” ($M = 4.30$), and “possessing a broad international vision” ($M = 4.29$)—all have a strongly aspirational, identity-oriented character. The lowest-rated items—“ability to process international information” ($M = 4.08$) and “proficiency in international rules and conventions” ($M = 4.09$)—are more operationally specific and depend most directly on exposure to international content and practice settings. This within-scale variation is not trivial: it suggests that students' habitus is more strongly orientated toward the symbolic dimensions of internationalisation—those reinforced through discourse—than toward the procedural competencies most sensitive to structural capital deficits.

This is consistent with Bourdieu's (1990) account of habitus formation through symbolic socialisation. Students can aspire to international professional identity and global vision because these aspirations are continuously reinforced through language and institutional culture; they find it harder to aspire to the procedural competencies whose development requires concrete resources that are structurally unavailable. The data thus capture a habitus in formation: aspirationally coherent, but experientially unfulfilled.

4.2 Perceived Institutional Resource Support

Against the backdrop of strong goal recognition, students' evaluations of institutional resource support reveal a systematic pattern of inadequacy. Four of five resource dimensions received ratings below 3.5, with three—international cultural activities (B4: $M = 3.04$), foreign faculty (B2: $M = 3.07$), and exchange opportunities (B5: $M = 3.09$)—clustered near the scale midpoint. Only library

foreign-language materials approached adequacy (B3: $M = 3.85$), likely because library resources represent the form of institutional investment most readily provided without requiring substantial social capital (institutional partnerships) or economic capital (faculty salaries, exchange subsidies). The aggregate gap between goal recognition ($M = 4.23$) and resource support ($M = 3.27$) amounts to approximately one full scale point—a structurally significant disparity.

The high standard deviations for B2 ($SD = 1.267$) and B5 ($SD = 1.259$) carry their own interpretive weight. This variance is not random noise but a statistical signature of the institutional stratification that qualitative data subsequently explains: students at institutions with stronger international networks report meaningfully better access; those at finance-oriented or lower-tier institutions report near-total absence. The variance indexes the uneven distribution of social capital across the five universities sampled.

Interview data contextualise these patterns with precision. R3 articulated the double marginalisation of a discipline that lacks both domestic practicum resources and international exposure: “There is already very little practical experience, and even less when it comes to international elements.” R8's comment is structurally revealing: “Accounting and other majors have overseas programs, but social work majors like us may not have such specialized opportunities”—pointing not to the absence of internationalisation infrastructure in the institution, but to the disciplinary exclusion of social work from that infrastructure. R6 captured the performativity problem directly: “Our university often holds international lectures, but the content is mostly language competitions, which have little relevance to the social work profession”—capital provision that lacks field legitimacy.

4.3 Regression Analysis: Resource Support as a Predictor of Goal Alignment

All four regression models achieved statistical significance (A1: $F = 6.505$, $p < .001$; A2: $F = 3.436$, $p < .01$; A3: $F = 2.876$, $p < .05$; A4: $F = 5.332$, $p < .001$), with R^2 values ranging from 0.048 to 0.102. Whilst these effect sizes are modest in absolute terms, they are consistent with the magnitude expected when measuring perceptions of institutional environment as predictors of attitudinal orientation in large survey samples. More importantly, the direction and patterning of individual predictor coefficients carry substantial theoretical significance. Figure 2 visualises the standardised beta coefficients across all four models.

*Author for Correspondence: ningfeiping@student.usm.my

Figure 2: Regression Analysis - Impact of Resource Support on Goal Identification (Standardised Beta Coefficients; ** p<.01, * p<.05)

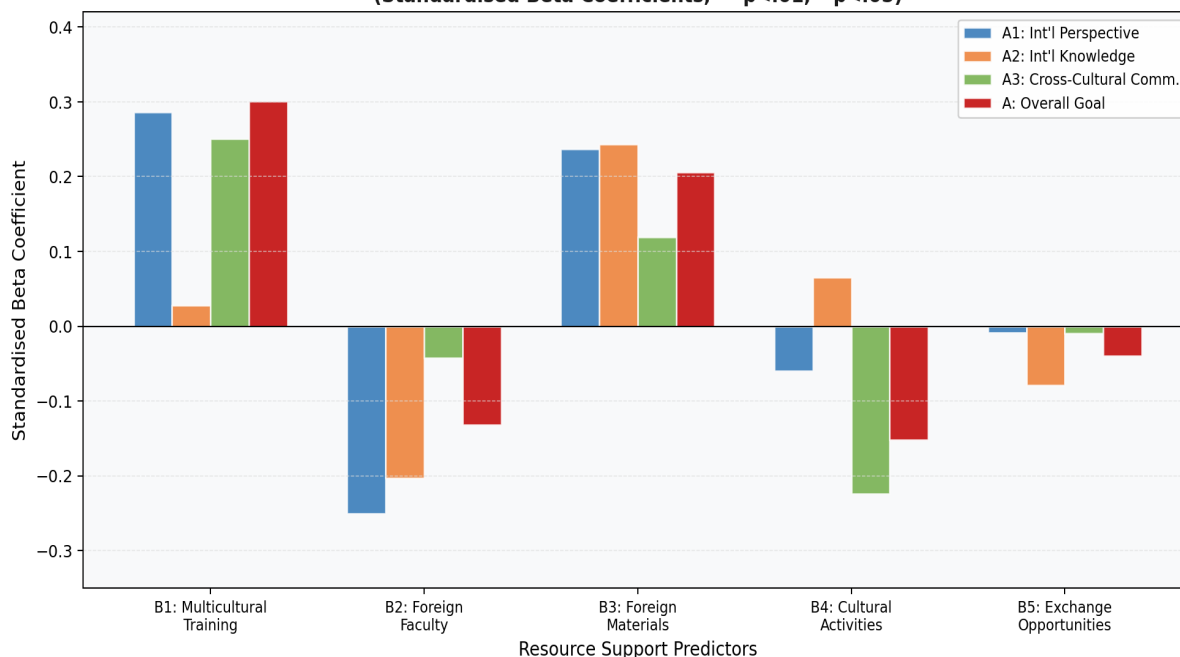


Figure 2. Regression Analysis – Impact of Resource Support Dimensions on Goal Identification (Standardised Beta Coefficients; ** p < .01, * p < .05, N = 291) Note. Positive bars indicate resource dimensions that strengthen goal alignment; negative bars indicate dimensions associated with reduced alignment, signalling capital provision that lacks field legitimacy. Models control for all five predictors simultaneously.

The most theoretically interpretable finding is the differentiated effect of capital types. B1 (Multicultural training) and B3 (Foreign-language materials)—both forms of institutionalised cultural capital with direct field relevance—emerge as the two consistently positive and significant predictors. B1 shows the strongest effects: A1 ($\beta = 0.286, p < .01$), A3 ($\beta = 0.251, p < .01$), and A ($\beta = 0.301, p < .01$). B3 is positively associated with A1 ($\beta = 0.237, p < .01$), A2 ($\beta = 0.243, p < .01$), and A ($\beta = 0.206, p < .01$). Both share a defining characteristic: they provide knowledge-based, field-legitimate content that students can actively incorporate into their existing international habitus, activating and reinforcing dispositional alignment rather than merely signalling institutional internationalisation to external observers.

By contrast, B2 (Hiring foreign teachers) is a significant negative predictor in A1 ($\beta = -0.251, p < .05$) and A2

($\beta = -0.203, p < .05$). B4 (International cultural activities) is a significant negative predictor of cross-cultural communication ability (A3: $\beta = -0.224, p < .05$) and shows a negative tendency in the overall model ($\beta = -0.152$). These negative associations exemplify what happens when capital is provided without attending to its legitimacy within the specific logic of the educational field: foreign faculty not embedded in local social work practice culture, and cultural events that replicate general internationalisation discourse rather than SW competency development, may actively undermine students' sense of coherence, producing alienation rather than alignment. B5 (Exchange opportunities) returns non-significant coefficients across all models—not because exchange is irrelevant, but because its structural availability is so low that it has not yet been incorporated into students' habitus as a realisable aspiration. Table C provides the integrated capital analysis.

Table C: Capital Deficit Analysis by Resource Dimension (Bourdieusian Lens)

Resource Dimension	Survey Item	Mean (SD)	Capital Type	Regression Effect ($\beta, sig.$)	Bourdieusian Interpretation
Multicultural Training	B1	3.29 (1.094)	Cultural	A1: $\beta = 0.286^{**}$; A3: $\beta = 0.251^{**}$; A: $\beta = 0.301^{**}$	Strongest activator of international habitus; provides field-legitimate experiential learning that directly activates dispositional alignment
Foreign Faculty	B2	3.07	Cultural +	A1: $\beta = -0.251^*$; A2:	Capital without contextual

Recruitment		(1.267)	Social	$\beta=-0.203^*$	legitimacy produces counterproductive effects; foreign faculty not embedded in SW field logic create symbolic disconnect
Foreign-Language Materials	B3	3.85 (0.921)	Cultural	A1: $\beta=0.237^{**}$; A2: $\beta=0.243^{**}$; A: $\beta=0.206^{**}$	Highest-rated and most consistent resource; institutionally grounded cultural capital directly incorporated into student habitus
International Cultural Activities	B4	3.04 (1.207)	Cultural + Social	A3: $\beta=-0.224^*$; A: $\beta=-0.152$ (n.s.)	Performative activities decoupled from professional practice deepen cognitive dissonance between goals and experiential reality
Exchange Opportunities	B5	3.09 (1.259)	Social	n.s. across all models	Structural absence of social capital means exchange remains aspirational; students cannot convert it into habitus because the infrastructure is absent

Note. N=291. All five predictors entered simultaneously. *** $p<.001$, ** $p<.01$, * $p<.05$; n.s. = not significant. Capital typology follows Bourdieu (1986).

4.4 Students' Expectations for Improving Resource Allocation

All ten improvement items received ratings above $M = 4.0$, and the narrow standard deviations (0.692–0.837) indicate not a diffuse endorsement of internationalisation in the abstract, but a specific and consensual demand for particular types of institutional investment. The rank ordering is theoretically instructive: the highest-rated measures were all oriented toward substantive academic and professional engagement. Opportunities for research collaboration with foreign institutions ($M = 4.22$) and participation in international academic conferences ($M = 4.21$) ranked highest, followed by access to foreign-language materials ($M = 4.17$), foreign expert lectures ($M = 4.12$), and English-taught professional courses ($M = 4.10$). Students are not simply asking for more, but for the right kind of capital: substantive, field-legitimate, and academically grounded.

The comparison between Table 4 (current provision) and Table 6 (improvement expectations) reveals the structure of unmet demand most clearly. The measures rated as most urgently needed—research collaboration, conference participation, database access—are precisely those requiring substantial institutional social capital: established international networks, reputational standing, bilateral research agreements. These are the forms of capital most monopolised by elite universities and most inaccessible to applied-discipline programmes at non-elite institutions. Students are, in effect, requesting the

redistribution of the very capital that the field's operative logic is structured to concentrate elsewhere.

Interview data add qualitative texture. R2's proposal to establish a "Guangzhou Social Work University Alliance" to share HK-Macao mentorship resources reflects an acute awareness of the potential for horizontal social capital creation as a partial substitute for vertical access to elite networks. R3's call for courses incorporating refugee services and climate change migration, R5's proposal for a compulsory cross-cultural communication course, R7's advocacy for Social Work English, and R10's proposal for joint community service projects in Guangzhou's international communities collectively reveal a student body that is not merely a passive recipient of institutional internationalisation but an active theorist of the pedagogical changes required to bridge the goal-resource gap.

4.5 Interview Theme Analysis: Structural Explanations for the Mismatch

Thematic analysis identified three interconnected structural categories explaining why the goal-resource gap persists despite strong student aspiration and policy-level rhetoric (Table 7). Each maps onto a specific dimension of capital deficit.

Funding Shortages and Economic Capital Deficits. Students consistently described financial constraint as foundational. R1's observation that "studying abroad is too expensive, and not all students have the opportunity" identifies the cost-shifting mechanism by which institutions transfer economic capital requirements to individual students—systematically disadvantaging those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and reproducing, within the internationalisation domain, the class-based

inequalities that Bourdieu identified as central to educational reproduction. R4’s lament that faculty “can’t even support” adequate resources reflects the downstream consequences of economic capital deficit: a generalised institutional incapacity that diminishes the quality of all educational provision, not merely international activities. R10’s observation that “other majors have overseas programmes, but social work majors probably don’t” identifies the disciplinary dimension of economic capital allocation: it is not that the institution lacks internationalisation funds, but that social work is structurally excluded from the disciplines deemed worthy of such investment.

Institutional Stratification and Social Capital Monopolisation. Students articulated with precision the mechanisms through which social capital—international partnerships, exchange agreements, research networks—concentrates in high-prestige disciplines and institutions. R4’s account of studying social work at a finance-oriented university as a condition of near-total resource invisibility illustrates how disciplinary identity within an institutional context determines social capital access: social work does not benefit from the finance department’s international networks because those networks are constructed around

economic logics that do not recognise social work’s disciplinary value. R6’s account of exclusion from a 2+2 exchange programme documents the formalisation of this exclusion in institutional policy—not merely an absence, but a structured exclusion.

Policy Constraints and the Atrophied Institutional Field. The third category concerns the regulatory and ideological constraints of the Chinese educational field. Faculty’s excessive caution in integrating international content—R4’s teacher who introduced a Hong Kong case study before immediately retreating to declare that “in mainland China, we only discuss the three major methods”—is not idiosyncratic timidity but a rational response to a field whose rules penalise content that might be construed as politically sensitive. R5’s recourse to a VPN for research points to the same logic operating infrastructurally: the absence of institutionally vetted international academic database access is not a resource oversight but a governance choice. When the institutional field treats international content as a risk rather than a resource, it signals to students and faculty alike that international aspiration, however strongly endorsed at the level of habitus, is not fully supported at the level of institutional practice.

Table B: Comparative Overview of Internationalisation Strategies, Resource Requirements, and Observed Gaps

Strategy Category	Key Literature	Objectives Addressed	Resource Type Required	Observed Gap in Study
International student mobility / exchange	Cleak et al. (2016); Sylwia et al. (2024); Sofyan et al. (2025)	Cross-cultural competence; professional identity; adaptability	Economic (funding) + Social (bilateral agreements)	B5 rated lowest (M=3.09, SD=1.259); SW excluded from 2+2 programmes (R6, R8)
Foreign faculty recruitment	Xu & Xue (2019); Kong (2017); Marinoni & de Wit (2019)	International knowledge transmission; pedagogical modelling	Economic (salaries) + Cultural (qualifications, field experience)	B2: M=3.07, SD=1.267; negative regression beta on A1 and A2—suggests lack of field legitimacy
Internationalised curriculum & bilingual instruction	Bourn (2008); CSWE (2022); Lee et al. (2024)	Global SW knowledge; communication skills; cultural humility	Cultural (curriculum redesign) + Economic (development costs)	C1–C4 rated >4.0 by students but virtually absent; policy constraints cited (R4, R5)
International academic collaboration	Marinoni & de Wit (2019); Kanmodi et al. (2024); PMC (2025a)	Research networks; publication impact; global knowledge production	Social (prestige, networks) + Economic (grants)	C9–C10 highest-rated needs (M=4.21–4.22) yet virtually absent; SW excluded from joint-cultivation projects
International cultural programming	Vavrus & Pekol (2015); Waddling et al. (2019)	Cultural sensitivity; symbolic capital; international	Cultural + Social (speaker networks)	B4: M=3.04; negative beta on A3 ($\beta=-0.224^*$);

		identity		perceived as performative and disconnected (R6)
Digital internationalisation (online courses, databases)	He et al. (2024); Quaiocoe & Pata (2020)	Access to global SW knowledge; language development	Cultural (content) + Economic (platform licensing)	C5 rated M=4.08; VPN restrictions block access (R5); no vetted institutional alternatives

Note. Gap indicators cross-reference survey data (N=291) and interview analysis (N=10). All ratings on 5-point Likert scale. SW = Social Work.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 The Formation and Fragility of International Habitus

The study’s most striking finding is the consistency and strength of students’ goal recognition across all eight dimensions—reflecting the successful formation of an international habitus not through institutional support, but through the cumulative force of symbolic socialisation: repeated exposure to GBA policy rhetoric, national talent cultivation discourse, and the broader symbolic economy of a Chinese higher education system in which international competence is increasingly positioned as a marker of educational value and graduate employability. As Bourdieu (1990) would predict, this socialisation operates below the level of deliberate choice: students do not consciously decide to endorse international goals; they come to experience them as natural, obvious, and integral to their developing professional identity.

Tran’s (2016) Bourdieusian analysis shows that students across diverse national contexts incorporate international experience into their self-development trajectories as a form of habitual future-orientation, independent of current access. Xu and Stahl (2025) demonstrate that international habitus can be formed through institutional inculcation even where material opportunities are limited. The present study extends these insights in a theoretically significant direction: it shows that habitus formation under conditions of structural capital deficit is not a neutral process, but a potentially destabilising one. When students’ dispositional alignment with internationalisation goals is strong but institutional resources are inadequate, the habitus becomes aspirational rather than practice-generative—a “feel for a game that cannot be played.” This fragility is evidenced precisely in the negative associations between poorly designed resource provision (B2, B4) and goal alignment: capital delivered without field legitimacy disrupts rather than reinforces habitus coherence.

5.2 Capital Asymmetry and the Structural Reproduction of Deficit

The study’s quantitative and qualitative findings converge on a coherent structural narrative: the goal-resource gap is not a temporary imbalance but a structurally reproduced condition sustained by the asymmetrical distribution of economic, cultural, and social capital. At the macro level, this asymmetry is inscribed in national policy priorities

that channel internationalisation resources toward strategically advantaged disciplines while treating applied humanities as residual beneficiaries. The expansion of “Double First-Class” AI programmes (China.org.cn, 2025) while social science programmes face closures is not an isolated choice but an expression of the field’s operative logic: capital flows where the dominant criteria of the field deem it most productive, and social work’s inability to generate the quantifiable outputs that these criteria privilege means it is structurally positioned to receive less.

At the meso level of institutions, social capital accumulation operates through the dynamics Bourdieu (1986) identifies as central to network formation: the tendency for networks to consolidate around already-prestigious participants and to exclude those who lack relational credentials for admission. Social work programmes at non-elite or specialist institutions are doubly disadvantaged: they lack both the institutional prestige to attract bilateral exchange agreements and the disciplinary visibility to be included in partnerships the institution does have. The result is what R4’s interview captures with unusual clarity: structural invisibility within an institution that does possess some international capital—but allocates none of it to social work.

The comparison with international contexts confirms this is not a uniquely Chinese phenomenon. Kanmodi et al. (2024), Moshtari and Safarpour (2024), and Mai et al. (2024) all document structurally similar patterns: applied disciplines in non-elite contexts are systematically marginalised, and this marginalisation is reproduced through the very mechanisms—competitive resource allocation, reputation-based partnership formation, performance-metric-driven funding—designed to improve overall internationalisation quality. The contribution of the present study is to demonstrate that this global structural logic produces locally specific consequences when applied to social work in the GBA, consequences that are not merely technical but epistemic and professional.

5.3 The Field’s Operative Logic and the Limits of Well-Intentioned Provision

The third dimension of the discussion concerns not the quantity of resources but their quality—specifically, the alignment between capital provided and the field-level logic within which it must operate. The finding that foreign faculty recruitment (B2) and international cultural activities (B4) are negatively rather than positively associated with goal alignment is, from a managerial perspective, counterintuitive. From a Bourdieusian perspective, it is precisely predictable: foreign faculty

recruited without regard for their embeddedness in social work’s professional logic, and cultural events that replicate the logic of general internationalisation discourse rather than SW competency development, may actively undermine students’ sense of coherence between their internationalised habitus and their actual educational experience.

This finding operationalises Bourdieu’s (1986) insight that capital’s effectiveness is not a function of its quantity but of its alignment with field-specific legitimacy criteria—what he calls “symbolic efficacy.” Institutions that deploy internationalisation resources without first asking whether those resources are recognisable as valuable within the specific logic of social work professional education are, in effect, providing capital that the field cannot convert. The practical implication is equally clear: institutions should focus not on scaling up the volume of internationalisation provision but on redesigning its form and logic so that it becomes field-legitimate and therefore motivating within the specific educational context of social work.

This argument has broader implications for how internationalisation is evaluated and governed in Chinese higher education. Metrics that count the number of foreign faculty, the number of international events, or the number of exchange programmes—without attention to their disciplinary relevance, professional embeddedness, or field legitimacy—systematically misrepresent the quality of internationalisation provision and may incentivise precisely the kind of performative capital deployment that produces negative rather than positive outcomes. Reform of assessment and accountability frameworks is thus as important as reform of resource allocation, and should be designed to reward the right kind of capital, not merely the visible kind.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has examined the structural misalignment between goal recognition and resource allocation in the international talent cultivation of social work students in Guangzhou, China, using a sequential mixed-methods design theorised through Bourdieu’s field-capital-habitus framework. The findings are consistent, convergent, and theoretically coherent: students hold strong endorsement of international talent cultivation goals, yet institutional resource provision falls systematically short of what would be required to actualise those goals, producing a structural gap of approximately one full scale point across all dimensions and all institutional contexts sampled.

Multiple regression analysis reveals that this gap is not merely descriptive but functionally significant: students’ perceptions of resource provision significantly predict goal alignment ($R^2 = 0.048\text{--}0.102$), with the direction of

individual predictor effects carrying critical theoretical implications. The two field-legitimate, knowledge-based resource dimensions—multicultural training (B1) and foreign-language materials (B3)—emerge as genuine activators of international habitus. By contrast, foreign faculty recruitment (B2) and international cultural activities (B4) are associated with reduced rather than enhanced goal alignment, revealing the counterproductive consequences of capital provision that lacks field legitimacy. Exchange opportunities (B5) return null effects, reflecting a resource dimension so structurally absent that it has not yet entered students’ habitus as a realisable aspiration.

Qualitative analysis grounds these statistical patterns in lived institutional experience, identifying three structural drivers: economic underfunding that is both absolute and disciplinarily targeted; the monopolisation of social capital by elite disciplines and institutions through exchange and partnership mechanisms from which social work is routinely excluded; and regulatory constraints that restrict faculty autonomy in integrating international content and limit students’ access to international academic resources. Together, these conditions constitute a field whose operative logic systematically prevents the conversion of students’ strong international habitus into the practice-relevant competencies that GBA governance and social development require.

The theoretical contributions are threefold. First, the study provides an empirically grounded Bourdieusian account of the goal-resource misalignment in an under-studied disciplinary and geopolitical context. Second, it extends scholarship on international habitus formation (Xu & Stahl, 2025; Lai, 2024; Tran, 2016) by demonstrating that habitus formed under structural capital deficit is inherently fragile and may be actively disrupted by poorly designed provision. Third, it contributes an original analysis of the conditions under which capital provision produces counterproductive effects, advancing the literature on symbolic internationalisation (Vavrus & Pekol, 2015).

Practical implications are summarised in Table D, which translates the study’s analysis into targeted structural interventions organised by challenge, Bourdieusian diagnosis, responsible actor, and expected outcome. These recommendations address specific mechanisms identified in the data: establishing a GBA social work internationalisation endowment; mandating disciplinary inclusion in bilateral exchange agreements; redesigning foreign faculty hiring and cultural programming for field legitimacy; pursuing GBA-specific policy exemptions for cross-boundary content; linking SW internationalisation metrics to institutional assessment; and establishing vetted international academic database access.

Table D: Policy and Institutional Recommendations for Bridging Goal–Resource Misalignment in SW Internationalisation

Challenge Identified	Bourdieu Lens	Recommended Action	Responsible Actor	Expected Outcome	Priority
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Chronic underfunding of SW internationalisation	Economic capital deficit	Establish dedicated GBA social work internationalisation endowment; earmark ministry-level grants for applied-discipline exchange and faculty development	MoE; Provincial Education Dept.	Equitable economic capital access across disciplines; removal of cost as structural barrier	High
Exclusion from elite exchange and joint cultivation	Social capital monopoly by high-prestige fields	Mandate disciplinary inclusion quotas in bilateral exchange agreements; establish formal GBA Social Work University Alliance modelled on HK Youth Employment Initiative	University leadership; MoE; GBA Education Bureau	Redistribution of social capital; dismantling disciplinary stratification in exchange access	High
Performative foreign faculty and cultural programming	Misaligned cultural capital lacking field legitimacy	Redesign foreign faculty hiring criteria to require applied SW international experience; co-design cultural activities with SW practitioners	School of Social Work; University HR	Field-legitimate cultural capital activated; reduced cognitive dissonance in student learning	Medium
Policy restrictions on cross-boundary academic content	Institutional social capital deficit at policy level	Develop GBA-specific exemptions for cross-boundary case studies; accelerate HK–Macao qualification mutual recognition; establish transparent faculty guidance on international content	MoE; cross-border policy bodies; GBA Education Bureau	Structural barriers to knowledge flow removed; expanded field-legitimate internationalisation	High
Matthew effect: low institutional investment in SW	Self-reinforcing capital deficit	Link SW internationalisation metrics to institutional assessment and accreditation; develop sector-specific rankings to visibilise applied-discipline achievements	MoE; accreditation bodies	Virtuous cycle replaces vicious cycle; SW gains symbolic legitimacy as internationalisation field	Medium
Digital access barriers (VPN, database gaps)	Cultural capital blocked by field-level governance rules	Establish vetted international SW academic resource whitelist; negotiate CNKI-equivalent global database access; develop SW-specific digital literacy training	University library; IT governance; MoE	Equitable access to international cultural capital regardless of physical mobility	Medium

Note. Recommendations derived from interview analysis (N=10), regression results, and literature synthesis (Kanmodi et al., 2024; Zhang & Su, 2023; Guo & Li, 2025; PMC, 2025). SW = Social Work; MoE = Ministry of Education.

Future research should pursue three agendas. First, longitudinal studies tracking students from first-year goal recognition through early career trajectories would assess whether structural cycles identified here are reproduced or

disrupted by institutional reforms. Second, comparative research across GBA cities and institutional tiers would extend the findings beyond the five Guangzhou universities sampled. Third, action research collaborations between researchers and social work programmes engaged in reform would provide empirical evidence on the effectiveness of specific interventions in activating field-legitimate capital—evidence currently absent from both Chinese and international literatures on social work education internationalisation.

Data Tables

Table 1: Information on Interview Participants

No.	Gender	University	Major	Grade	Location	Code
1	Female	University 3	Social work	Junior	Guangzhou	R1
2	Male	University 3	Social work	Junior	Guangzhou	R2
3	Male	University 1	Social work	Junior	Guangzhou	R3
4	Female	University 1	Social work	Junior	Guangzhou	R4
5	Female	University 2	Social work	Junior	Guangzhou	R5
6	Female	University 2	Social work	Junior	Guangzhou	R6
7	Female	University 5	Social work	Junior	Guangzhou	R7
8	Female	University 5	Social work	Junior	Guangzhou	R8
9	Male	University 4	Social work	Junior	Guangzhou	R9
10	Male	University 4	Social work	Senior	Guangzhou	R10

Note. All participants are undergraduates from five Guangzhou universities. Universities anonymised per ethical protocol. R1–R9 = juniors; R10 = senior.

Table 3: Recognition of International Talent Development Objectives (N = 291)

Item	Str.D%	D%	N%	A%	SA%	M	SD
1. Broad international vision and feelings	0.0	2.1	4.1	56.7	37.1	4.29	0.643
2. Proficiency in international SW expertise	0.0	1.4	4.8	49.1	44.7	4.37	0.643
3. Proficiency in at least one foreign language	0.0	3.1	11.0	48.8	37.1	4.20	0.753
4. Understand other countries' social development	0.0	1.4	7.9	56.7	34.0	4.23	0.649
5. Proficiency in international rules & practices	0.0	3.8	11.7	56.7	27.8	4.09	0.735
6. Can process international information	0.7	3.4	15.5	48.5	32.0	4.08	0.819
7. Cross-cultural communication ability	0.3	2.1	5.8	55.0	36.8	4.26	0.689
8. True "international Chinese" identity	0.0	2.1	9.6	44.7	43.6	4.30	0.726

Note. Str.D = Strongly Disagree; D = Disagree; N = Neutral; A = Agree; SA = Strongly Agree; M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation.

Table 4: Institutional Resource Support (N = 291)

Resource Dimension	Str.D%	D%	N%	A%	SA%	M	SD
B1: Foreign multicultural training	5.5	19.6	29.2	32.3	13.4	3.29	1.094
B2: Employment of foreign faculty	12.7	23.4	24.1	24.4	15.5	3.07	1.267
B3: Library foreign-language materials	1.7	6.9	20.3	47.4	23.7	3.85	0.921
B4: International cultural activities	10.3	25.4	28.9	21.0	14.4	3.04	1.207
B5: International exchange opportunities	12.0	23.7	22.7	26.5	15.1	3.09	1.259

Note. Five-point Likert scale. Resource support avg M=3.27 vs. goal recognition avg M=4.23; structural gap ≈ 1.0 scale point. High SDs for B2 and B5 reflect sharp inter-institutional stratification.

Table 5: Multiple Regression – Impact of Resource Support on Goal Identification (N = 291)

Predictor	A1 β	A1 t	A2 β	A2 t	A3 β	A3 t	A β	A t
B1: Multicultural training	0.286	3.12**	0.028	0.30	0.251	2.66**	0.301	3.25**
B2: Foreign faculty	-0.251	-2.62*	-0.203	-2.07*	-0.042	-0.42	-0.132	-1.37
B3: Foreign-language materials	0.237	3.41**	0.243	3.42**	0.119	1.67	0.206	2.94**
B4: Cultural activities	-0.060	-0.59	0.065	0.63	-0.224	-2.14*	-0.152	-1.49
B5: Exchange opportunities	-0.009	-0.09	-0.079	-0.77	-0.010	-0.09	-0.040	-0.40
R ² / F	0.102	6.50***	0.057	3.44**	0.048	2.88*	0.086	5.33***

Note. *** p < .001, ** p < .01, * p < .05. β = standardised regression coefficient. A1 = Int'l Perspective; A2 = Int'l Professional Knowledge; A3 = Cross-Cultural Communication; A = Overall composite.

Table 6: Students' Perceived Need for Internationalisation Resource Support Measures (N = 291)

Improvement Measure	Str.D%	D%	N%	A%	SA%	M	SD
C1: Increase foreign-language teaching proportion	0.3	4.8	13.1	58.4	23.4	4.00	0.768
C2: Increase bilingual teaching proportion	0.3	3.4	11.3	61.2	23.7	4.04	0.720
C3: Foreign instructors for specialist courses	0.7	4.1	13.1	56.4	25.8	4.02	0.785
C4: Multiple foreign-language/multicultural courses	0.7	3.4	11.0	59.5	25.4	4.05	0.750
C5: International online and cross-border courses	1.4	2.1	9.6	61.5	25.4	4.08	0.744
C6: Introduce foreign pedagogical methods	1.0	4.5	14.8	51.9	27.8	4.01	0.837
C7: Foreign expert academic lectures and forums	1.0	1.4	8.9	61.9	26.8	4.12	0.702
C8: Abundant foreign-language discipline materials	1.0	1.7	6.5	60.8	29.9	4.17	0.706
C9: International academic conference participation	1.0	2.1	3.1	62.2	31.6	4.21	0.692
C10: Research collaboration with foreign institutions	1.0	1.7	4.8	58.8	33.7	4.22	0.706

Note. All items M > 4.0; low SDs (0.692–0.837) indicate strong consensus. Top-rated items (C9, C10) require institutional social capital currently monopolised by elite disciplines.

Table 7: Main Categories and Themes Generated from Interview Thematic Analysis

Selective Coding (Core Category)	Axial Coding (Sub-Category)	Open Coding (Concepts)
Structural Capital Deficits	Funding allocation mechanism	Costs transferred to students; utilitarian project preference; disciplinary exclusion from institutional funding
	Hierarchical institutional stratification	2+2 exclusion; marginal programme invisibility; social capital monopoly by elite disciplines and

		institutions
	Regulatory and policy constraints	Localisation ideology constrains international content; tightened censorship; stagnant cross-border qualification recognition; VPN dependence for academic access

Note. Coding conducted in NVivo 14.0 using constructivist grounded theory. Three-level coding: open → axial → selective. Theoretical saturation confirmed via reserved transcripts. N = 10.

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