

The Mobility of International Students from a Chinese Perspective

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Abstract: This paper focuses on examining the progression of the international education market, the number of international students in various countries, and China's policy to support and liaise with the international universities. From the perspective of "talent demand," this research will provide valuable insight into China's acquisition of talents and higher education internationalization development.

Keywords: Mobility; International education market; Talents; International education

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1. Introduction

With the continuous expansion of globalization, the relationship between various countries has strengthened. Many countries participate in the fierce parading of their scientific and technological talents in order to attract and retain international students from all over the world. Both developed and developing countries have devised related policies and implemented national strategies to appeal to overseas people with expertise while encouraging long-term overseas talents to return and reside in the country^[1]. According to statistics obtained from the World Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development^[2], the quantity of international students worldwide multiplied from 2,087,702 in 2000 to 4,528,044 in 2012, an increase of 116.89%.

Furthermore, currently there are approximately 135 million of international students receiving higher education globally^[3]. International student mobility refers to the number of international college students studying within their home country, this accounts for a part of the total number of college students. International students have obtained a degree in a different country in which they were born^[4]. The primary forms of international talent mobility include immigration, overseas study, and phased mobility. With the continuous progression of emerging countries in recent years, nations around the world have augmented their recruitment of international expertise: implementation of policies to assist the launching of talents, talent-inducing environments have been continuously upgraded, and the pattern of international talent flow is subject to increasing diversification^[5]. Additionally, the proportion of international students seeking the acquisition of skills that appeal to the labor market through overseas study has fulfilled immigration's purpose and is instrumental to the movement and fluency of the world's knowledge^[6]. Subsequently, many countries try to plug the disparities between current national demand and future supply via international liquidity.

2. Personal narrative

I love language, it is a vessel for conveying the beauty and thoughts. The meticulous study of language may be perceived as monotonous and tedious, but for me it is an unfathomable, awe-inspiring ocean, leading to a journey of delight. During grade 10, I attended an English language summer camp at California State University, Northridge. The course began with English acquisition followed by the opportunity to meet alumni who originated from over 85 different countries and now were immersed in American culture. The English language is an indispensable bridge connecting me with humanity, its magnetic pull, urging me closer to further my exploration.

As part of my professional development and to differentiate myself from my peers, I participated in an undergraduate student exchange program at the University of Central Oklahoma. This was in the midst of my sophomore year when my language acquisition had advanced to an impressive level. I still can recall my first Speech class in America. My teacher separated us into groups and tasked us with creating a piece of artwork that symbolized campus culture. A combination of dialogue and cooperation led to a piece of work that incorporated our characteristics and allowed us to bond. I discovered that active participation has a valuable role in learning, I observed students and more specifically how they exercised initiative in their learning activities. Merging two cultures within my language acquisition has demonstrated that specific factors govern the effects of language learning.

Furthermore, I engaged in multiple extra-curricular activities to further integrate myself into American culture. Serving as the Chinese Student Union Arts Department minister, I organized a varied program of activities aimed at bringing Chinese students together in playing games. Students could draw upon their Asian culture, whilst developing their language and social skills upon interacting with one another. Additionally, I delivered several presentations to educate others on Chinese New Year and Confucius Institute by utilizing my proficient communication skills. This experience enabled my realization that language learning is not an isolated process. Translating my experience into universal paradigms for English learners in China is an intriguing process alongside which I continue my postgraduate study in the United Kingdom (UK). After experiencing the cultural and educational environment of China and the United States (US), I hope that I further enhance my self-development when I am in UK.

3. The status quo of the development of international students in China

3.1. Chinese students who want to go abroad

With the rapid growth of both population and economy, China, as a developing country, plays a crucial role in the development of global economy^[7]. With the continuous growth of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) every year, materialistic demand within China has expanded significantly. Among its many services and through the pursuit of luxury brands, the importance of education investment is evident. Although traditionally Chinese students are accustomed to studying in domestic institutions of higher learning, ever-expanding globalization initiates opportunities for overseas study. Wang^[8] highlighted that during its 30 years of reform, China's economic growth has attracted worldwide interest. The quantity of students being educated in China has increased from 43,000 in 1998 to more than 238,000 in 2009, at an average annual rate of 20% increase. Simultaneously, the number of individuals studying abroad has also increased sharply. It is expected to grow from 3.1 million in 2003 to 5.8 million in 2020, a growth rate of over 87%.

The decision-making process, whereby students choose to venture abroad for higher education consists of three main stages^[9]. Firstly, the formation stage involves the generation of ideas and intentions for future study. This is followed by research into suitable colleges and universities, ends with an application to the student's desired college. Finally, students formally register for admission and travel abroad and relocate,

commencing their overseas education.

Furthermore, academic, social, and economic standards are the three vital criteria that influence the decision-making process in choosing a university. These three requirements consist of many factors, including the institution's prestige and curriculum, future employment prospects and career development, internship opportunities and bursary scholarships, and the realization of self-worth. The reputation and ranking of institutions are essential for Chinese international students when making the choice. The rank position of a school directly reflects the optimum educational quality^[10]. Receiving an education in a high-reputation college will expose them to superior content, thereby enabling greater competitiveness within the Chinese professional market^[11]. Besides, the destination country should create a worthwhile learning and living environment, a two-way political atmosphere, and provide practical first-hand information to support international students.

3.2. Foreign students who want to come to China

With the continuous progression of globalization, the global education market has significantly grown, consequently growing in international fluidity and cohesion. To encourage and attract overseas students to China, the Chinese government has implemented a series of policies and programs^[12]. China's role is instrumental in the global education market because China is a chief exporter of international students and provides a sound infrastructure along with the policy support to accept a large number of overseas students.

Numerous international education cooperation projects in China consist of university and vocational education. Many overseas educational providers successfully liaise with Chinese colleges and universities, and partake in cooperation projects, such as student exchange to promote and enhance exchange relationships. Gu and Wang^[13] stated that course costs in China are significantly lower than the cost of completing a course in other countries. In recent years, the number of international students that enroll in China has been on the rise, as a result of the Chinese government's promulgated management policies related to international students alongside the diversified and premium courses offered by Chinese universities.

In recent years, China's political, economic, and demographic circumstances have dramatically altered and progressed, and China's international status has additionally improved. An increasing number of knowledgeable and skilled international students are coming to China to seek high-level educational opportunities and career development. The number of foreigners who elect to reside in China continues to multiply. This can be attributed to China's rapid development and China's international status as the global economic power^[14].

4. Problems in China's education market

By comparing the Chinese education system with other countries, such as the US and Australia^[15], it is clear that there are still many areas for improvement in the Chinese education system. To adapt and compete with the arrival of scientific and technological talents, these educational limitations should be resolved.

The first point of improvement is related to educational purposes. Unlike other countries, Chinese education system aims to provide education and achieving superior academic results in teaching and learning. As opposed to Western countries which deliver traditional subjects with an added priority of enhancement and personal development.

Secondly, the educational environment is a point of weakness as the choice of education in China is limited. Chinese education lacks variety in terms of education type, level of education, and consideration of personal interests and preferences. The Chinese economy is highly concentrated, thus leading to the high

concentration of the education system, the administrative management of the central and local governments should be improved, thereby the institutions can refine offered services to overseas students by focusing on the expansion of course diversity and flexibility.

Thirdly, the pedagogical methods should be revised. The majority of Chinese universities and schools encourage independent learning with reliance on purposeful and available research resources. On the contrary, students from Western higher education institutions operate through close communication and cooperation with teachers and classmates to obtain high-level knowledge.

Moreover, insufficient capital investment is an issue that is detrimental to China’s quality of education. Compared with developed countries, China, although it is vigorously developing its economy, has not invested sufficient time and resources in the local education sector. Despite the fact that, in recent years, the government has gradually prioritized overseas education, intervention with educational institutions, and targeted policies are still insufficient. The management is still lacking in initiative, leadership, and enthusiasm.

Finally, there is a lack of higher education institutions in China. Whilst maintaining its original cultural circumstances and characteristics, the Chinese education sector should establish more high-level colleges and universities. Consequently, there will be a broader platform for Chinese students to receive advanced education, including more opportunities for overseas students within China. Diversified and high-level schools are vital if China is to develop talent reserves.

5. The status quo of international students in other countries

5.1. A consideration of the number of international students in 2018

The mobility of international students is a popular research topic within the academic world ^[16], the consequential impact on national development has gradually been realized. **Figure 1** demonstrates the top ten countries in the world based on the number of international students in 2018.

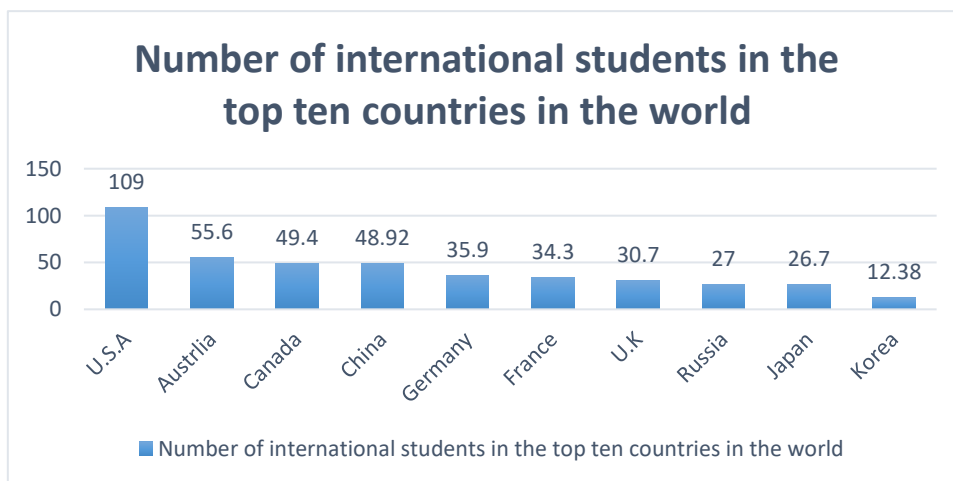


Figure 1. International students and the countries in which they received their education

According to “Open Doors” policy released by the Institute of International Education in 2018 ^[17], the number of international learners studying in US universities reached a high record of 1.09 million with a 1.5% increase yearly. This is also the third consecutive year that the sum of international students in the US has exceeded 1 million. The trend in growth, indicating that the US is the first choice for higher education ^[18]. Approximately, 360, 000 students originating from China are now educated in the US, accounting for

33% of the overall number and making it the largest source country. 60% of Chinese students who are seeking for overseas education chooses the US as their choice of interest.

Likewise, Australia's education provision is categorized as world-class. The two major cities of Sydney and Melbourne have attracted a wealth of international students due to their superior geographical environment, the abundance of prestigious schools, and the intensive learning atmosphere. In May 2018, the number of international students in Australia reached 556,987, increased 11% when compared with the same period in 2017^[19]. Students studying in Australia consist of undergraduates, postgraduates, and high-school students. Again, China is the largest provider of students in Australia, consist of 31% of the total number of international students.

Additionally, the Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE)^[20] declared that the latest data from Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) suggests that there were 642,480 international students in Canada by the end of 2019, a 13% increase from 2018, and this growth rate is higher than previous years (2018 is marginally lower than the 16% increase in 2017). The number of international students studying in Canada was 498,735, an annual increase of 14.5%. Once again, China sources the greatest number of international students, accounting for 28% of the total number. Interestingly, East Asia, South Asia, and Africa are the top three sources of international students in Canada.

Based on the word report of "Science Metropolis 2018,"^[21] the number of international students in German universities has peaked. From the perspective of foreign university students and researchers, Germany is an attractive destination. In 2018, the number of registered Chinese students exceeded 36,900, ranking first among international students, accounting for 13.1% of the total number of international students in German universities.

6. Factors that affect overseas student's school choice

With regards to the division of geographical regions, international students from Asia account for an increasing proportion of an international students who relocate to Europe and North America. When categorized by income classification, international students accepted by high-income countries, especially from Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries, saw an increase in the proportion of international students from middle-income nations. It is apparent that Asian students or students from middle-income countries play an increasingly vital responsibility in the globalization of education^[22].

Over the last 15 years, the number of international students in China has displayed a distinct upward trend, with an average annual growth rate of 16.92%. However, the proportion of international students in China with academic prowess is only 40%, implicating that China's academic education is insufficiently desirable^[23]. To increase its appeal, an understanding of the influencing factors of students' willingness to study abroad, is essential. Exploration of strategies and influencing factors will lead to an increased appeal, the push-pull theory which is most widely used^[24]. On a macro level, Zheng^[25] believes that political stability, economic development, higher education advantages, spatial distance, and language influence are the key point attracting international academic talent. Likewise, the research of Song^[17] and others supports the above conclusion, and believes that mutual recognition of academic qualifications between importing and exporting countries will have an impact on international talent attraction. Research shows that the primary motivation to study in China is a student's enthusiasm for Chinese culture, history, and social environment^[15], while teaching quality, development opportunities, and educational research facilities is relatively secondary^[24].

7. Conclusion

The mobility of talents on a global scale is a fundamental feature of an open world economy [25]. From a macro perspective, this paper first classifies the phenomenon of Chinese students' "calling in and going out" of substantial data, and then identifies the three stages of students' expectations from inception to implementation. As well as exploring the importance of school reputation, qualifications, social systems, and international environmental factors. Subsequently, a list and data analysis of the countries with numerous international students were performed. The motives behind international studies based in China were briefly summarized. Finally, this paper analyses the relationship between international education industry and Chinese market from the perspective of government policy support, friendly cooperation between international universities, economic development, and cultural attraction.

Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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