



UDC 378

ISSUES IN CHINESE STUDENTS' OVERSEAS STUDY

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Abstract. In recent years, overseas studying of Chinese students has become more popular. The following trends and characteristics of Chinese university students overseas study should be considered: the scale of overseas study has expanded, and the trend of overseas study is no more considered an elite priority, the main body of studying abroad has changed from government-sponsored to self-funded, the tide of returnees is becoming faster and faster, and the trend of returning home is accelerating. There is an obvious trend of differentiation among overseas students. On the basis of the above analysis, the author puts forward some suggestions to promote the development of university students' overseas study. Those are improving the internationalization level of Chinese universities, expanding government-sponsored projects, and providing more employment and business opportunities for returnees.

Keywords: university students; international students; foreign students; studying abroad; overseas study; higher education; returnee.

With the continuous improvement of China's economic and social development, more and more university students choose to go abroad to receive higher education. As the world's largest exporter of overseas students, the migration trend of Chinese students has a broad and profound influence on the international trend of education. In the new era, influenced by the international situation and domestic development situation, Chinese students studying abroad career has shown new trends and faced some new situations and problems. The question is, how to correctly understand and respond to these new situations based on contemporary reality from the new historical starting point not only affects the future and destiny of young people and their families who study abroad, but also profoundly influences the national higher education undertaking and the overall development of society.

I. Trends in Chinese university students' overseas study. China's overseas study trend is rapidly growing in modern times. The early international students opened new horizons for the closed old Chi-

na, and the returned elites who had accomplished their studies made important contributions to the development of the country. After the establishment of New China, the overseas study business was mainly influenced by the diplomatic environment and policies, and was in a long period of fumbling and changes. After the reform and opening up, especially in the new century, China's overseas study policy has become more and more stable and open, and there has been a boom of university students studying abroad in the last decade [1], and China has become one of the major source countries for international students.

The current situation of university students studying abroad can be summarized in the following aspects. Firstly, the number of students is rapidly rising and the trend of "de-elitism" is emerging. Before the reform and opening up, government sponsored study was dominant, and the number of students studying abroad was subordinated to the needs of national construction for all kinds of talents. During this period, the number of overseas study quotas was limited to no more



than 1,000 per year, and the selection criteria were very strict, so being able to get a place abroad meant being an elite talent of the country [2]. Since the reform and opening up, China's overseas study policy has undergone a process of change from limited quotas to gradual liberalization, and the number of self-funded students gradually increased and became a boom around the turn of the new century. Self-funded means that ability is no longer the only criterion for being able to study abroad, and more young people with financial conditions can study abroad. The competition for limited resources based on ability has been transformed into a common educational choice, with a trend of "de-elitism".

According to the latest statistics of the Education Ministry of People's Republic of China, the total number of Chinese students studying abroad in 2019 was 703,500, an increase of 41,400 or 6.25 % over the previous year; the total number of all types of students returning to China was 580,300, an increase of 60,900 or 11.73 % over the previous year [2]. In recent years, society has been paying more and more attention to the phenomenon of overseas study at a younger age, but in fact, among the current students studying abroad, those who study abroad at the higher education level still account for the majority.

In terms of the country of study, Chinese students' choices are more diversified, but mainly focus on English-speaking countries, mainly the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia. In addition, Japan and Korea, which are also located in East Asia, are among the main destinations for Chinese students. With the gradual promotion of China's "One Belt, One Road" initiative, the number of students studying in countries along the "One Belt, One Road" is also increasing year by year, which further diversifies the destinations for studying abroad.

Secondly, the tide of returnees is growing rapidly and the trend of returning to China is accelerating. The huge wave of returnees shows that China's development environment is very attractive to young talents and reflects the overall progress of China's economic and social development. Since China entered the new era, its strong and dynamic development momentum has attracted the world's attention and made international students look forward to the prospect of development in China. In terms of policy environment, international students, as the main target of national talent reserve, have always been valued by the government and encouraged by policies. From the central government to the local government, the preferential policies provided for the returnees of different levels in terms of treatment, employment, entrepreneurship and settlement are always open. The positive attitude and open posture of the country towards international students and the preferential policies that are put into practice are important factors contributing to the massive wave of returning to China.

Thirdly, there is a clear trend of differentiation within the group of students studying abroad. Whether it is the group of college students who go abroad for higher education or the group of graduates who return home after their studies, there is a more obvious differentiation phenomenon. This differentiation is especially reflected in the motivation and value of studying abroad. There is a natural division between those who want to avoid the pressure of competition for higher education at home and those who want to be among the top universities in the world by virtue of their academic performance. The differentiation of the enrollment groups also leads to the differentiation of the value of overseas study for different groups.

The value of overseas study refers to the gains in professional knowledge, mindset, interpersonal communication, and life expe-



rience made by going abroad for education. On the one hand, the value of studying abroad comes from the training of students' way of thinking and the mastery of knowledge under foreign education; on the other hand, it comes from the benefits brought by the foreign culture living environment, such as the exercise of foreign language ability, the broadening of international vision, the enhancement of communication and adaptation ability, and the enrichment of life experience. The value of studying abroad can be reflected in two aspects: firstly, the advantages in employment salary and development prospect given by overseas diploma; secondly, the improvement of personal ability and comprehensive quality in foreign culture environment. At present, there are divisions within the international student community in both aspects.

II. Suggestions for promoting the benign development of the overseas study business. From the perspective of sociology, university students studying abroad is a transnational cross-border flow of young people due to higher education, which is the expansion of higher education resource selection in the global scope; from the perspective of economics, it is a manifestation of the globalization of education market and an inevitable result of the flow of factors in the global education market, which will have an impact on the education resources and human resources of both the importing and exporting countries. Based on the above analysis about the trend of university students studying abroad, the following suggestions are made to promote the better development of internationalization of higher education.

Firstly, it is suggested to improve the internationalization level of Chinese universities. The way for China to respond to the wave of internationalization of higher education should not only be students going out, but the most fundamental thing is to improve the education quality, and at the same time

improve the internationalization ability to attract more foreign students into China. In order to improve the internationalization of Chinese higher education, it is also necessary to focus resources on creating a number of special programs to attract high-quality students from all over the world.

Secondly, it is recommended to expand the government-sponsored project to provide more opportunity for humble students to study abroad. Considering that self-funded overseas study requires families to have at least a middle-level income, most students cannot afford to go abroad and can only apply for various scholarship programs. In recent years, some universities have noticed the desire and limitation of poor students to go abroad and set up scholarships to support humble students to go abroad through public assignment.

Thirdly, it is suggested to provide more employment and business channels for returnees. At present, the group of students studying abroad in China is mainly self-funded, and it can be said that families bear a large part of the cost of the internationalization of higher education, and they are also responding to the demand of international talents for national construction through individualized investment. While families invest in international education, the state should also support returnees to get their due returns on education through talent policies that help international students return to their home countries for smooth employment. In addition, for the practical problems that returnees lack understanding of local employment policies, miss the domestic recruitment season during the job-seeking period, and face cultural readjustment, it is recommended to provide targeted policies to help them solve their problems and realize the smooth transition from studying abroad to employment in their home countries.

The world needs a more open China, and China needs a more inclusive world. Facing



the increasingly active trend of studying abroad in China, we should not only see the reality of the expanding scale of Chinese students going and returning abroad, but also recognize the various impacts on the domestic education and employment market due to the international mobility of education, analyze the problems and meet the challenges based on the reality. All these will lead to higher quality education, improve the level of internationalization, promote Chinese higher education to the world, and make contributions to the development of the community with a shared future for mankind.

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