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China's effort to construct the Asian postgraduate education zone: how should scholarship policy react? (0542)

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Introduction

In recent years, the scale of China's higher education has been rapidly expanding. With the continuous growth of China's economic influence, its postgraduate education has become increasingly attractive to international students. International student mobility has reached an all-time high with over 4.1 million international students enrolled in higher education institutions worldwide in 2013, doubling from 2 million in 2000 (UNESCO 2016). There is a bigger share of international students who are going to China for the pursuit of further study, the absolute number is increasing in a dramatic speed. Recruitment of international students is a popular way of internationalizing higher education institutions (Altbach and Knight 2007). In this context, the Chinese government and its universities are trying to take some measures, in order to expand the scale of the enrollment of international students, and expect to get the advantageous voice under the increasingly fierce international competition of higher education.

International students experience unique challenges navigating their education within a new sociocultural environment, with academic and social challenges intimately intertwined with each other and gaining most prominence (Lacina 2002; Lee and Rice 2007; Ryan 2011; Marginson 2012). This empirical study reveals the attitudes and recognition for postgraduate scholarship of foreign students in Chinese universities. Although studies have documented the mobility of international students in Asia and the challenges they face, few investigated the desire for choosing China as the destination nation in terms of postgraduate scholarship and how it could affect their college experience. Thus, this study aims to answer the research question: What are the consideration for applying the postgraduate scholarship of international students in Chinese universities? How could postgraduate scholarship can improve their college experience? What Chinese government could do to increase the attraction through the postgraduate scholarship policy?

Literature review

Scholarship aid continues to be crucially important in attracting and retaining students in higher education institutions (Abrahamson & Hossler, 1990; Cabrera, Nora, & Castaneda, 1992; Paulsen & St.John, 1997; Schuh, 2000; St. John, 1992; St. John et al., 1994; Terkla, 1985). Although the general concept and effect of financial

assistance is complex, the impact of scholarship aid on college selection and student persistence is significant (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Schuh, 2000; Somers, 1995; St. John et al., 2000; Wilcox, 1991). Strategy in scholarship policy development and the impact of aid policy are subjects worthy of increasing attention at the individual institutional level. (Schuh, 2000; Somers, 1996) The OECD and IBRD/World Bank Report (2010) on Chile's BCP scheme drew international comparisons with some other countries that have established scholarship programmes to develop their human capital. In particular, it referred to the China Scholarship Council's State Sponsored Study Abroad Programme (SSSAP) which aimed to develop China's exchanges with other countries in the fields of education, and science and technology. (Poi G 2017)

Evaluation studies of undergraduate financial aid programs were briefly examined to identify which indicators of outcomes were used. St. John (1990) analyzed five types of potential impacts: access to university, choice of school, persistence, choice of major, and macroeconomic outcomes.

Some studies assessing postdoctoral scholarship programs have been published (Fogarty International Center, 1989; Institute of Medicine, 1986; NSF - National Science Foundation, 1988b; Teichler, 1991). These studies analyzed academic position, research grants, scientific publications and citations of former fellows. Two published studies that present results of postgraduate scholarship program outcomes. The NJSDHE study (New Jersey State Department of Higher Education, 1989) presents many indicators of outcomes, based on data from a survey of former fellows of the NJSDHE postgraduate scholarship program. Sheridan and Pyke (1994) summarized the question of the time to complete graduate studies, including its relationship with financial support.

Golding, Lang, Eymard, and Shadish (1988) conducted a longitudinal study of the American Psychological Association Ph.D. Fellowship Program. They determined absolute and relative values of the grants in relation to overall income over the years.

However, they did not analyze program outcomes. A report prepared for Supply and Services Canada (Programs Evaluation Teamwork Study Group, 1985) presented an administrative evaluation of several postgraduate fellowship programs in various federal departments and agencies.

Theoretical framework

As this study was a subset of a larger one around postgraduate scholarship policy for international student, it utilized a hybrid sociocultural framework as its theoretical framework. The hybrid sociocultural framework conceives concepts and principles from psychological, anthropological, and postmodern work around culture, and three of these tenet being most relevant to the research. (T.T. Heng 2017) The first tenet - that humans are embedded within and shaped by their sociocultural contexts- suggests that human learning, behavior, and development are interwoven with their sociocultural milieu, which is in turn shaped by transformations in human behavior and phenomena across history (Vygotsky 1978; Rogoff 2003; Nasir and Hand 2006). The second tenet - that humans participate in more than one sociocultural context, and their participation, motivations, attitudes, and behaviors may change across context and across time - stresses the multi-dimensionality and intersectionality of human experience as humans cross different boundaries (e.g. school, home, country) in their

lives (Abu-Lugbod 1991; Gutiérrez and Rogoff 2003; Erickson 2011). The third tenet - that humans possess agency in improvising, interacting, or contesting the values, beliefs, and behavior associated with different sociocultural contexts - privileges humans as 'active appropriators' (Willis 1981, 175), not passive agents, who play a part in shaping social structures and behaviors.

Methodology

The hybrid sociocultural framework mirrors qualitative research's emphasis on finding meaning within authentic context. (T.T. Heng 2017) This study adopted qualitative methodology including semi-structure interviewing and observation in data collection. Doing so allowed rich, holistic details of international student voices to emerge in a naturalistic manner (Hatch 2002).

Participants

The research object of this article are international postgraduate graduate students who obtained Chinese Government Scholarship, they are studying at the A,B,C three universities. (Table 1) Most of them are friends of the researchers, we usually communicate in the classroom or weekend party and have been really familiar with each other. Universities A,B,C are located in a certain city in southeast China, it has a higher degree of internationalization among Chinese universities, thus there is large number of foreign graduate studying in and the international distribution is more extensive. Among them, A university is a first-class comprehensive university, B university is A first-class local university, and C university is A first-class research institution.

Table 1. Summary of participants.

Name	Year	Subject	Institution	Gender	HSK	GPA
Paul	1st	Engineering	A	Female	Band 4	3.3
	1st	Computer science	A	Female	Band 4	3.7
Locke	1st	Economics	B	Male	Band 5	3.5
Lisa	1st	Literature	B	Female	Band 4	4.1
Araon	1st	Education	C	Male	Band 4	3.7
Sara	1st	Undeclared	A	Female	Band 4	No info
Sam	1st	Chemistry	C	Male	Band 4	3.7
Rudy	1st	Finance	B	Male	Band 5	3.6
Wiliamm	1st	Chinese language	B	Male	Band 4	3.0

Jesse	2nd	Economics	C	Female	Band 4	3.9
Christy	2nd	Undeclared	C	Female	Band 4	4.3
Shaw	2nd	Business	A	Male	Band 4	2.9
Mintery	2nd	Chinese language	A	Female	Undeclared	4.5
Songhui	2nd	Education	B	Male	Band 4	No info
Qishan	2nd	Biology	B	Male	Band 4	2.7
Julian	3rd	Undeclared	B	Female	Band 4	3.8
Houcuizuan	3rd	Education	A	Female	Band 4	2.9
Dengkai	3rd	Chinese language	C	Female	Band 5	3.9
Maybin	3rd	Medicine	C	Male	Band 4	3.5
Peter	3rd	Economics	A	Male	Band 4	3.5

Data collection and analysis

Participants completed a simple questionnaire and were interviewed twice in a academic year—at the beginning and the end of it, and for about 60 minutes each time. During the interview, participants were encouraged to answer a series of questions about how they prepared themselves for applying the postgraduate scholarship, and their opinions about the scholarship policy. These semi-structured interviews were conducted in participants' preferred language (mostly English) to aid articulation of difficult or culturally embedded ideas (Davies 2008). Using Atlas.ti data analysis software, interview and journal data were first broadly sorted using etic codes from the conceptual framework and research questions (e.g. challenges, suggestions, teachers, host peers). Within these categories, LeCompte and Preissle's (1993) approach was applied by first identifying high frequency item-level data.

Findings and Implications

The cost to study abroad and the growing international influence of Chinese universities, is the major consideration in scholarship, the scholarship to their learning and life has brought great convenience, play a crucial role for them. Through various forms of scholarships, the Chinese government has stimulated their enthusiasm for learning, enabling them to study in school and improving their academic performance greatly. The Chinese government attracts a large number of outstanding graduate students to study in China through generous scholarships, which is conducive to enhancing China's academic influence in east Asia and the world at large. China's efforts to build the education region for east Asian graduate students through the

reform of the scholarship policy are conducive to accelerating the transformation from a elite country of education, and it's fundamental for Chinese government to build a strong country of education.

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