

Analysis of the Challenges of Overseas Students Returning to China for Employment in the Labor Market—Based on the Re-discussion of the Value of Western Higher Education

Lisi Liu

Cardiff University of Business Management, Cardiff CF103Eu, England

LiuL63@cardiff.ac.uk

Keywords: Chinese Students, Employment Issues, Employment status

Abstract: With the steady growth of Chinese economy in recent years, more and more Chinese families choose to send their children abroad for further study, on the one hand, children can receive different education systems, broaden their horizons and get experience. On the other hand, children can upgrade their academic qualifications, so that they can be better employed in the future and have more possibilities for development. However, whether student's study at home or abroad, they all end up entering society on their own and facing employment. Therefore, through comparative analysis and literature research, this paper takes Chinese international students studying in the UK as an example to discuss the employment status of Chinese students and give suggestions on how to solve some employment problems.

1. Introduction

In recent years, due to various social factors and the global health security situation, the problem of unemployment has become particularly prominent. There are many factors that contribute to the problem of unemployment. First, discrimination, sexism, academic discrimination, and racial discrimination have become common in today's job market. Taking academic discrimination as an example, there is no shortage of highly educated talents in any country, especially in a country with such a large population base as China. With the change of social requirements, the requirements for employees to apply for positions are getting higher and higher, and a large number of undergraduate graduates are inferior to graduate students and doctoral students in the job competition. Especially during the epidemic in the past two years, some graduates failed to find jobs in time, resulting in a backlog of talents, resulting in greater social pressure and fierce social competition. Second, the world economic problem, in recent years, the global economy has been unprecedentedly tense, many enterprises are closing down every day, and the number of unemployed is increasing. Especially in the UK, the Russian-Ukrainian war has led to a continuous increase in the price of natural gas in the UK, resulting in a continuous increase in the cost of living in the UK, making it more difficult for Chinese students to stay in the UK. Therefore, we must pay attention to these issues. What are the employment prospects for international students in China and the UK? What are the advantages and disadvantages of employment in China and the UK? What challenges will Chinese students face when returning to China for employment? What can be used to alleviate the employment problem of Chinese students? These questions will be answered in this article.

2. Analysis of Employment Status of Chinese Students Studying in the UK

2.1. Analysis of the Current Situation of the Employment Market in China and the UK

It is reported that there are some findings from an online poll fielded that a third of workers in Canada and the US report that they have lost at least half of their income due to the Covid-19 crisis, compared with a quarter in the UK and 45 per cent in China [1]. At the same time, people face price gouging, which greatly increases the cost of living. Not only the people of all countries are facing the problem of survival, but also the enterprises of various countries are facing the problem of huge losses,

so in order for enterprises to recover their own economy quickly, and the current situation of the world job market competing for low-cost labor has formed. Recently, due to the problem of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, many refugees have flowed into various countries, which to some extent also provides cheap labor for the host country, because refugees start at a lower employment and income level [2]. Many Chinese manufacturers have begun to set up foundries in countries with cheap labor and look for cheap labor like refugees around the world. Many of Chinese specialty service industries have also begun to develop new ideas, profiting by marketing them with the gimmicks of foreign culture brought about by cheaper foreign labor. This also provides a lot of employment opportunities for the unemployed. However, for Chinese international students, they are not satisfied with being a simple labor force, they feel that they can get better work treatment in terms of the cost of learning and personal ability. This is also one of the factors affecting the employment choices of international students.

2.2. Analysis of the Employment Status of Chinese Students in the UK

Many Chinese students who want to stay in the UK for employment face the high cost of living and work visas. As for the cost of living, various tax rates have risen sharply, many businesses bear a high tax rate of 40%, and people's cost of living continues to soar. And the rent in the UK is also notoriously expensive, and the general wages of many wage earners are used to pay rent. And because of COVID-19, the UK's unemployment rate is already in a situation of rising year by year, and the labor market characteristic, which is unstable in the UK because of its high unemployment, will be more affected [3]. This situation makes it even more difficult for Chinese students to find jobs. In addition, the conditions for Chinese students to obtain a permanent residence certificate in the UK are also very stringent, it requires that they must have spent ten years in the UK and the number of days aboard for no more than 540 days, and they must be able to guarantee that they can always have a visa for job. For Chinese students from ordinary families, the cost of one year in the UK is already very large, let alone ten years in the UK. According to statistics, in recent years, the number of people who can get work visas accounts for only 1% of all Chinese students. This means that only 10 out of 10,000 people will be able to stay in the UK for employment, while the rest will face returning to work in China, increasing competition not only for jobs in the UK but also in China.

2.3. Analysis of the Employment Status of Returned International Students in China

At present, the overall employment situation in China is not optimistic. Due to the prolonged lockdown policy in response to COVID-19, many businesses in China have been unable to return to work due to the shortage of materials mitigated by the epidemic, and supply chains have been disrupted [4]. Many jobs have had to come to a standstill, which has caused great social and economic trauma. This not only affects the jobs of many office workers, but also affects the employment of college graduates. During the pandemic, the simultaneous delay in graduation and employment has led to a large backlog of unemployed students, and the cumulative number has put great pressure on the job market, and even dozens of people have begun to compete for a position [5]. In the early years, international students must be the target of competition by major companies. However, with the continuous improvement of China's education level and comprehensive strength, many companies only recognize graduates of the world's top 100 or even top 50 universities, which makes international students no longer have as big an advantage in employment as before. In addition, in terms of employment contacts, some domestic graduates can be directly recommended by their mentors to work in large companies, but for international students, such network resources are relatively rare.

3. A Comparative Analysis of the Living Conditions of International Students in China and the UK

3.1. Comparison of Employment Welfare Policies for International Students in China and the UK

After returning to China, Chinese students have a series of welfare policies, such as enjoying the

status of fresh graduates to participate in school recruitment, enjoying housing and living subsidies, being able to purchase tax-free cars, priority recruitment in academic research, talent introduction policies in different provinces, and settlement policies in first-tier cities, etc., which have reduced the burden of returning to China to a large extent. Nowadays, housing affordability become an obstacle for innovation development. In order to improve the living conditions of talents and optimize the environment for innovation activities, local governments have formulated a variety of talent housing policies [6]. Housing problem is undoubtedly a major problem facing young people in employment, and the domestic housing subsidy policy for talents will increase the desire of talents to stay in the city. In contrast, the UK does not have so many welfare policies for international students, but they have only lowered the application threshold for work visas. As a result, China's welfare policies are more generous, and the talent introduction policies of various cities have also provided new opportunities for many international students who want to stay in big cities and develop and settle.

3.2. Take the UK Master of Project Management as an Example to Compare Employment Treatment in the Two Countries

In China, project management masters are basically required to start from the grassroots level when they return to China, because most domestic companies believe that overseas master's internship experience is small and does not have the corresponding ability to complete projects independently. At the same time, the scope of their employment is relatively narrow, and most managers think that foreign management courses are too theoretical and abstract, which is not very helpful for employment. Moreover, the recognition of international students in China is also affected by the times, and some researchers believe that some of the current academic qualifications are made by money [7]. In the UK, the employment rate of the Master of Project Management is not only high, but also has a wide range of employment. After graduation, they can work in information technology, architectural engineering, service industries, and product development in all industries that require project management. For recent graduates, they also offer project engineers, systems analysts, and engineering planners, allowing graduates to understand the entire operation process while working. Therefore, from the work planning and job prospects of graduates in China and the UK for graduates of a certain major, Chinese companies and markets pay more attention to empiricism. The UK pays more attention to the personal ability of candidates, so for graduates of some majors, there are more employment options and more possibilities for development in the UK.

3.3. Comparison of the Cost of Living for Chinese Students in China and the UK

Take the cost of living in London, UK, for example, housing fees in the UK is the biggest spend, especially in London, which is only the size as Chinese ordinary secondly-tier city but a world-class financial center. The average monthly wage of the average working-class in London is about 2,000 pounds, but housing costs half or more of their salary every month. On this basis, coupled with the sharp increase in the price of natural gas and oil due to the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, people need to pay more for gas and hydropower. This has also led to many nationwide strikes over wages. However, in the UK, people can often buy food at favorable prices, due to the development of animal husbandry and the high degree of rural development, British milk even maintains the same price as drinking water or even lower, and British beef and chicken are often very affordable, the larger the amount of buying, the greater the price concession. Therefore, in terms of food expenses, if you cook at home for a long time, the cost will be very low. In addition, in terms of travel, there are also cheap means of transportation to help people solve travel problems and reduce travel costs. Finally, the most famous in the UK is free medical care for all, community hospitals provide free medical services for the whole people, which allows people to reduce a lot of expenses in medical treatment, and there are many vaccines that can be booked for free, such as the nine-valent human papillomavirus vaccine that is very popular in China recently, which has been robbed by many people in China, and the price is more expensive than other vaccines, about 3000-4000 yuan, but women under the age of 25 in the UK can go to community hospitals to make an appointment for this vaccine for free. It provides great benefits to the medical side of the people.

Taking the cost of living in Beijing, China, as an example, the salary of ordinary wage earners in

Beijing can reach about 5,000 yuan per month, and the rent is about 2,000-3,000 yuan per month, which also accounts for about half of the salary, and faces water, electricity, and catering. However, there is a key factor, many international students do not choose to work independently after returning to China, and Chinese traditional family philosophy has led parents to often leave their children safe, which may include a house, car, savings, work, etc. Therefore, many people do not have to bear these living costs if they return to their home country to accept family arrangements or return to their hometown to live with their parents. Therefore, for international students, staying in the UK needs to face a huge cost of living, followed by having to find a job opportunity on their own. There is also a problem is how to save money while facing a lot of life pressure. However, if they choose to accept their parents' help, the cost of living will be greatly reduced, and their life pressure will be much lower.

The comparison chart is shown in the following Table 1:

Table 1: Comparative table of employment conditions of Chinese students in China and the UK

	Welfare Policy	Employment options	Cost of living
United Kingdom	More lenient for work visa	Diversified Many opportunities	Generally higher
China	Participate in school recruitment as fresh graduates Housing and subsistence allowances Buy the duty-free cars Priority recruitment for academic research Inter-provincial talent introduction policy First-tier city settlement policy	Empiricism Few employment options	Higher cost of living in first-tier cities and super-first-tier cities Parents help with the stress

4. Challenges Faced by Chinese International Students Returning to China for Employment

4.1. Salary Satisfaction

The number of international students in China has always been the first in the world, and it is still increasing year by year. On the one hand, it shows that the country's economic conditions are getting better and better, and there are more and more rich people, who can choose to send their children abroad to study. On the other hand, it shows that China's education level is constantly improving, students are becoming more and more broad-minded, and have great expectations for their future. However, there is always a difference between the ideal and the reality, and there are many graduates who return home with a salary that makes them feel unsatisfied, because their own family conditions are relatively superior, and they are not willing to do these low-paying jobs. However, a survey conducted in 34 provinces in China during the pandemic showed that nearly 50% of Chinese graduates signed up for salaries of 3,001-5,000 yuan [8]. This is not enough for many international students to support their cost of living, resulting in extremely low job satisfaction.

4.2. Treatment Gap

There is an old saying that scarcity is expensive, and in the era when international students were very scarce, all institutions and enterprises had a very urgent need for talents. However, most institutions and enterprises today will not suffer from the problem of lack of talents, undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications can be found everywhere and are facing employment, and the employment situation of international students is more passive.

4.3. Misunderstanding of the Gold Content of Returnees

In the nascent stage of studying abroad, the country and various large companies are very fond of

overseas returnees. And in the past, many talents went abroad to study, in order to learn some advanced experience of the West and come back to build their own country. However, most of today's people go abroad at their own expense, and their main purpose is more to obtain a degree to increase their competitiveness in the job market. Moreover, there are many people who do not study well in the country and their parents spend a lot of money to send them abroad to mix prestigious school graduation certificates. This behavior also greatly reduces the overall gold content of overseas returnees, and it will deepen the misunderstanding of many enterprises about the academic qualifications of international students.

4.4. Psychological Factors Caused by the External Environment

Before the covid-19, the willingness of Chinese students to return to China was in a state of decreasing year by year, but after the emergence of the covid-19, they think that leaving their home to study are perceived as less safe than before the epidemic [9]. In recent years, affected by events such as COVID-19, people around the world have been greatly affected, not only the student group, which makes it impossible for workers to return home for such reasons, so they may be more inclined to choose the city where they live in terms of employment choices, which has also led to the employment limitations of Chinese students.

5. Conclusion

Essentially, one of the main reasons why Chinese students struggle to find employment is that the British curriculum and teaching program are completely different from the Chinese education system. In addition to specialized and specific disciplines such as mathematics, physics, and chemistry, other, more abstract disciplines also vary greatly. This will result in returning students losing employment opportunities due to educational and cultural differences between China and the UK [10]. In response to this problem, Chinese and British universities can increase the opportunities for Sino-foreign cooperation in running schools, so that some disciplines with large differences between China and foreign countries can carry out learning exchanges, universities can cooperate with a number of Chinese and foreign enterprises to provide some internship opportunities for students in this major in corresponding positions, and finally enterprises can also be directly hired based on merit. This allows students to understand which positions their subject knowledge can cope with, and also to accurately position themselves to increase future employment opportunities. At the same time, for cooperative businesses, they can not only increase visibility through the opportunity to work with schools, but also have the right to prioritize talent without wasting time and cost onboarding these employees. Regardless of the employment options of Chinese students, the decisions they make should be appropriate for their development and carefully considered, which will help them better achieve their personal expectations and goals.

At the same time, a controversial topic is raised at the end of the article, some remarks say that half of British education is supported by Chinese students, so will the arrival and leave of Chinese students have an impact on the British education industry?

References

- [1] Bell, D. N., & Blanchflower, D. G. (2020). US and UK labour markets before and during the Covid-19 crash. *National Institute Economic Review*, 252, R52-R69.
- [2] Bevelander, P. (2020). Integrating refugees into labor markets. *iza World of Labor*.
- [3] Fana, M., Torrejón Pérez, S., & Fernández-Macías, E. (2020). Employment impact of Covid-19 crisis: from short term effects to long terms prospects. *Journal of Industrial and Business Economics*, 47, 391-410.
- [4] Lu, Y., Wu, J., Peng, J., & Lu, L. (2020). The perceived impact of the covid-19 epidemic: evidence from a sample of 4807 smes in sichuan province, china. *Environmental Hazards*, 19.4, 323-340.

- [5] Xiao, C., & Li, Y. (2020). Analysis on the Influence of the Epidemic on the Education in China. IEEE. 2020 International Conference on Big Data and Informatization Education (ICBDIE).
- [6] Li, Q.Y. (2019). Examining the Extent to which Talent Housing Policy Acts as a Catalyst for Innovation Development in China. Diss. Columbia University.
- [7] Fischer, K. (2019). How international education's golden age lost its sheen. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 5(7), 56-70.
- [8] Li, T., Sun, N., & Wu, Z. (2022). What are the changes in the employment situation of Chinese college graduates in the context of the 2021 epidemic: an empirical study based on national survey data in 2021 and 2020. *Journal of East China Normal University (Educational Sciences)*, 40(2), 100.
- [9] Croucher, G., & Locke, W. (2020). A post-coronavirus pandemic world: some possible trends and their implications for Australian higher education. Melbourne Centre for the Study of Higher Education: The University of Melbourne.
- [10] Yu, Y., & Moskal, M. (2018). Missing intercultural engagements in the university experiences of Chinese international students in the UK. *Compare*, 1-18.