

Problems and Countermeasures of Studying Abroad for Chinese Self-Sponsors in the 21st Century

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Abstract: over the Past 70 Years from the Founding of the People's Republic of China, Changes and Adjustments of Studying Abroad Have Always Been a Active Force Driving and Affecting the Evolution of Studying Abroad for Chinese Students. However, in the 21st Century, the Self-Sponsored Form Has Become the Mainstream of Contemporary Studying Abroad in Terms of Quantity and Quality. the Development of Self-Sponsored Studying Abroad is Influenced by Many Factors Such as Politics, Economy, Society and the International Environment. Based on the Author's Teaching and Practical Experience, This Work First Analyzed the Problems of Self-Sponsored Studying Abroad for Chinese Students, Including Problems Caused by Market Environment and Personal Cognition. Based on This, This Work Further Proposed the According Countermeasures from the Perspective of Consumers, Colleges and Universities, Educational Intermediary, and the Government.

1. Introduction

Since 1978, with the Continuous Development of China's Economy and the Continuous Improvement of People's Lives, the Scale of Studying Abroad Has Been Continuously Expanding, and the Total Number of Students Studying Abroad Has Grown Rapidly. More Than 110 Countries or Regions Have Become the Destination of Studying Abroad. According to the Statistics of Chinese Students Studying Abroad, in 2018, the Total Number of Students Studying Abroad in China Was 662,100. among Them, 30,200 People Were Sponsored by the Government, 35,600 People Were Sponsored by Working Places, and 596,300 People Were Sponsored by Themselves. in 2018, the Total Number of Returned Abroad Students Was 519,400, Including 25,300 People Sponsored by the Government, 26,500 People Sponsored by Their Working Places, and 463,600 People Sponsored by Themselves[1]. Obviously, Most Students Studying Abroad Are Self-Sponsored. the Scale of Studying Abroad Has Continued to Expand, and It Has Basically Formed a Policy Pattern of Studying Abroad That is Led by the Government-Sponsored Studying Abroad and Takes Self-Sponsored Studying Abroad as the Main Body[2]. the Self-Sponsored Studying Abroad in China is in an Epoch-Making Period of Prosperity and Development, But It Also Faces Some New Problems and Challenges.

2. Problems of China's Self-Sponsored Studying Abroad

2.1 Problems Caused by the Market Environment

First, Marketization and “Hot” Majors. Marketization Will Inevitably Benefit Those Majors with More Social Utilitarian Functions[3]. Constrained by Economic Needs, the Result of Marketization is That Higher Education Institutions Will Put Limited Investment in Majors with Quick Effect, Low Conversion Cost, Low Reinvestment and Large Labor Market, So That Some Courses Such as Economic Management Are Popular in the Market of Self-Sponsored Studying Abroad. These Courses Do Not Require the Construction of New Laboratories and the Purchase of Expensive Teaching Equipment, and New Courses Often Do Not Require Much Extra Labor and Financial Resources to Ensure the Smooth Enrollment. Some Courses Are Characterized by a Relatively Low Entry Barrier and a Larger Enrollment Group with a Wide Range of Employment. the

Self-Sponsored Studying Abroad after Marketization May Fundamentally Change the Purpose of Colleges and Universities, and the High Tuition Fees Paid by International Students Mean That Colleges and Universities Will Make Every Effort to Meet Individual Needs. the Hazard of Marketization is That the Government Will Lose the Ultimate Control over the Balance of Higher Education Development for Both the Exporting and Receiving Countries of International Students. Both the Prosperity of Self-Sponsored Studying Abroad in Some Areas and the Cold Reception in Other Areas Will Contribute to a Series of Chain Reactions Including the Structural Imbalance of the Job Market.

Second, Marketization and the Quality of Studying Abroad Education. under the Marketization Model, Monitoring the Quality and Outcome of Education Will Become Increasingly Difficult. the Competitive Market Environment Will Gradually Concentrate Those Excellent Academic Staff in Colleges and Universities with Higher Reputation and Higher Income, While Mass-Based Institutions Are Unable to Attract Better Teachers. in Contrast, They Have to Reduce Costs as Much as Possible, Hire Teachers with Lower Qualifications, and Provide Relatively Low-Cost Education Service for the Market to Ensure Normal Operations and a Certain Degree of Profit. That is to Say, Marketization Will Make the Colleges and Universities That Provide Products for Studying Abroad Differentiate, and the Gap between Elite Schools and Mass-Based Schools Will Continue to Increase. for Elite Schools, Marketization Operation May Just Be the Way to Maximize Their Own Advantages Because of Their Good Internal Capital Circulation Mechanism [4]. However, Ordinary Consumers Often Do Not Have Enough Discerning Ability When Choosing the Products for Studying Abroad Since They Cannot Inspect the Qualifications of Overseas Institutions. as a Result, the Information Asymmetry is Often Used by Unconscionable Intermediary Companies and Overseas Institutions, Thus Causing Consumers to Suffer the Time and Economic Loss.

Third, marketization and educational intermediary behavior. The strong demand for self-sponsored studying abroad has stimulated more capital to participate in the self-sponsored studying abroad market. The educational intermediary industry came into being, further promoting the phenomenon of self-sponsored studying abroad in China. However, in line with the principles of all other capitals, the purpose of educational intermediaries is also to pursue the maximization of profits, which means that some intermediaries lacking self-discipline are likely to connect with overseas institutions, conceal and avoid risk factors, and use information asymmetry to take illegal interests. Driven by the interests, the self-sponsored studying abroad market has also experienced various problems including fraud and rights protection like other markets, but there are still not many effective ways to manage it[5]. When consumers encounter problems in these markets, they are difficult to protect their rights due to their weak positions. Relying solely on market mechanisms may not competitively remove inferior education products from the market, but transfer competitive pressures to educational institutions that strive to retain educational value.

2.2 Problems Caused by Individual Cognition

First, information deviation. The information deviation cannot be completely avoided to a certain extent. This is because the process of social economy is always a dynamic process with continuous development. The demand for labor in society is also changing. Therefore, it is almost impossible for individuals to grasp the dynamics of changes in all aspects of the society or fully grasp the future development of the industry and employment trends. Information asymmetry is common in the self-sponsored studying abroad market, whether it is for specific studying abroad education products or for the entire self-sponsored studying abroad market[6]. No matter the information comes from the school or the intermediary, individuals are always seeking the final consumption choice in the limited information.

Second, demand deviation. In terms of main social trends, the experience of studying abroad is becoming or has become the necessary condition related to personal career development, including employment, promotion and treatment. An educational background of studying abroad does not necessarily mean better ability, but it represents a relatively better competitive position in the labor

market. Whether in public opinion or in actual situation, there is a view that abroad diploma is superior to domestic diploma, and prestigious diploma is superior to general diploma. However, this universal paradox seriously interferes with the objectivity of consumers in evaluating products for studying abroad [7].

Third, risk perception bias. The manifestation of risk perception bias mainly includes high expectation of the result of self-sponsored studying abroad consumption, over-optimistic estimation of one's own life or learning ability, and neglect of psychological risk. Although consumers generally recognize that economic risks exist as the main risk of studying abroad, they are still too optimistic about the results of self-sponsored studying abroad. There is a big gap between the income expectation and the actual situation after studying abroad. The economic risk and functional risk of studying abroad are often much bigger than consumers think. Overconfidence in one's own ability can also cause a bias in risk perception [8]. Consumers often have some misunderstandings about self-sponsored studying abroad, for example, they may think that they can study abroad as long as they pay, they have little academic pressure, and they can graduate as long as they take classes. However, the actual situation is due to the differences between Chinese and foreign education. International students not only face the challenge of foreign teaching methods, but also have to adjust their own learning methods to adapt to the educational environment that focuses on innovative thinking and independent learning[9].

3. Countermeasures and Recommendations

3.1 Recommendations for Consumers

Consumers need to understand the pros and cons of various information channels and extract useful information from them. Although relatives and friends, teachers are trustworthy, the information provided by them is subjective and one-sided; the Internet can provide massive and free information, but it needs better identification and interpretation ability; traditional media has certain credibility, but it is general and not specific.

Consumers should use both universal and targeted information as the primary basis for decision-making and should not rely too much on typical cases or statistics. Typical cases are not universal, and the success of others is not enough to be a reproducible model. Data can provide consumers with an overview of the products, but it often lacks pertinence. For consumers, decision-making still depends on individual circumstances, and excessive reliance on data can be misled by data.

3.2 Recommendations for Institutions and Educational Intermediaries

The promotion of overseas colleges and universities should be more targeted, and the type of information with high credibility should be selected as the propaganda theme. Given the preferences of potential consumers in terms of information types, typical examples, street advertisement, or promotional color pages are clearly not good enough to achieve good publicity. Therefore, the promotion strategy should include several levels: First, institutions should cooperate with official mainstream media to increase media exposure and social awareness; Second, publicity should be in the form of special lectures or reports into the institutions to narrow the distance between information and potential consumers; Third, specific information and data should be provided to increase the overall credibility.

Overseas colleges and universities should reduce their utilitarianism in publicity and promotion, but show more humanistic care, and express the positive, free and independent role of studying abroad in the sense of personal growth and development[10]. They should pay attention to the growth of spiritual level of foreign students and emphasize the function of enriching life experience, broadening personal vision and improving humanistic quality.

Overseas colleges and universities should strengthen the teaching management and service of international students instead of pursuing short-term interests, so as to control the teaching process and quality and achieve the long-term economic effects of educational products.

3.3 Recommendations for the Government

The government departments should speed up legislation to clarify the code of conduct and legal responsibilities that intermediary service agencies need to undertake. Government departments should strengthen network supervision, timely eliminate false, invalid and inappropriate information, and stop issuing the telecommunications license of agencies that do not have the qualification or have expired qualification certificate[11]. The Internet has eliminated the distance between consumers and education products, so that consumers can learn about the market information in a timely and convenient way. However, the government has an unshirkable responsibility to reduce the risk of self-sponsored studying abroad, especially for the functional risks of overseas education products. The government can promote the standardization of the overseas education product market through certification and evaluation, thus protecting the consumers from false or misinformation, avoiding low-quality products which can harm consumers' rights and preventing the emergence of the diploma factory.

4. Summary and Expectation

This work regarded the issue of studying abroad as a general concept, representing overseas education service product in comparison with domestic education. However, in the actual self-sponsored studying abroad behavior, the education products of studying abroad are different from countries, cities, schools, majors, and courses. Individual consumption behavior for different education products will also vary in demand, motivation, involvement, risk perception and assessment. Therefore, further studies are needed to follow up and verify the applicability of the conclusion and empirical analysis of the self-sponsored studying abroad behavior characteristics in this work.

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