

**WHY DO CHINESE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS
ATTEND THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA: PUSH AND PULL FACTORS**

by

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Abstract

Globalization is regarded as the context and facilitating force for the increasingly enhanced internationalization of higher education around the world. As a response to globalization, the internationalization of higher education takes places in various forms and practices in different countries. In contemporary era, international student mobility is by far the main form of cross-border education in the world. In existing relevant literature, the push and pull model is employed by many researchers as the theoretical framework to investigate the motives of international students, the host countries and higher education institutions.

There are approximately three million international students studying outside of their home countries (IEE, 2010). China has become the largest source country of international students among these three-million international students. Most of the study-abroad Chinese students from mainland China went to pursue overseas higher education after 1999 when the Chinese government began to enforce the university expansion policy in mainland China. However, few researchers gave attention to this unprecedented out-going heat among Chinese students in the past decade.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the factors inspiring a large number of Chinese students to study abroad after the 1999 reform in the Chinese higher education sector. The push and pull model was employed as the theoretical framework in this study. A semi-structure one-on-one interview was used as the research method to collect inquired information. Nine Chinese international students who are currently studying at the University of British Columbia were recruited as the research participants. The research results show that there are both shared and individual motives inspiring these nine students to decide on undertaking overseas higher education based on their personal academic, economic and social background.

Preface

This dissertation is an original intellectual product of Qiu Qiong Jiang. The research was approved by the Research Ethics Board Certificate number H11-01334.

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This study is dedicated to the Chinese international students studying at the University of British Columbia.

Chapter 1 Background and Purpose

Introduction

Institution of International Education (IIE) reports that approximately three million international students are studying outside of their countries of origin (IIE, 2010). According to the statistics of Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2004), China, India, Japan and Korea are the four top sending countries of international students. As the most visible form of cross-border education, international student academic mobility is thought of as an unavoidable result of globalization in current relevant literature (Knight, 2003). Globalization is perceived as the background and facilitating force for the internationalization of higher education around the world. Altbach and Knight (2007) claim that the international activities of universities have been greatly enhanced and expanded in “volume, scope and complexity” in the past two decades. Due to a variety of impetus, higher education institutions have been pushed by the globalized “economic, political and societal forces” to engage in more international involvement (Altbach and Knight, 2007, p.291).

However, although globalization and internationalization are understood in existing literature as two closely related terms, they should not be understood as the same thing (Altbach, 2007). Internationalization literally means the inter-national relationship across borders between nations or individual institutions located in different national systems. Although the

interconnection between two single nations is enhanced, each nation continues to function as a “bounded economic, social and cultural system” (Van der Wende, 2010, p.541). Globalization encourages the free flow of knowledge, people and industrial products amongst different nations and emphasizes an increasing interdependence between different economics and societies (Van der Wende, 2007, p.5).

Scott (1998) states that although not each university is internationalized, the process of globalization has significant impact on the development of higher learning institutions across the globe (Scott, 1998, as cited in Van der Wende, 2010, p.541).

Even though globalization is the unalterable environment for higher education systems and institutions, Van der Wende (2010) argues that globalization is not a united phenomenon, instead different nations have different responses and agendas to the transformation brought about by globalization. As a response to globalization, the internationalization of higher education also takes place in various forms and practices in different countries because internationalization is still strategized and controlled by different nations’ governments (Van der Wende, 2010, p.541). Altbach and Knight (2007) contend that there are various stimuli for both nations and academic institutions to conduct specific “practices and policies” in order to cope with globalization (p.291).

Current literature mentions that because higher education has been regarded as a private good, not a public good in contemporary era, it has been regarded as an imported or exported commodity that is encouraged to be freely traded in a globalized education market. As per the provisions in the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) under the World Trade Organization (WTO), education is referred as a trade in service. This reflects the trend of internationalization of higher education (OECD, 2004; Knight, 1999).)

Since higher education is being traded as a commodity in a globalized market, an integrated international education market has been shaped for students and international education providers. The major receiving countries of international students, mostly in the developed OECD countries, have been making great efforts into strengthening their competitiveness in the global international education market for increasing their enrollments of international students.

The internationalization of higher education is believed by many scholars to be driven by both financial and non-financial motivations (Altbach and Knight, 2007; Haigh, 2008; Van de Wende, 2010). In the perspective of economic factors, making profits from international students' study costs and other expenditure in their host countries is the key motive for the internationalization of the for-profit higher education sector. As to the non-financial benefits, traditional non-profit higher learning institutions aim to enhance their "research and knowledge

capacity and mutual cultural understanding” by the way of granting study access to talented overseas students (Altbach and Knight, 2007, p.292; Haigh, 2008, p.427). However, Van de Wende (2010) claims that despite differed focuses and priorities across different types of institutions and nations, the economic rationales have become a more dominant factor for the internationalization of higher education in the past decade (p.541). His observation and conclusions were supported by Heigh, Altbach and Knight in their relevant writings (Altbach and Knight, 2007; Heigh, 2008)

Although globalization facilitates free flow of knowledge, products and human capital amongst different countries, Altbach and Knight (2007) state that globalization intends to concentrate more “wealth, knowledge and power” in those already developed Northern countries, and international student mobility also favors these well-developed countries (p.292). Therefore, the direction of international student flow still appears to follow a pattern—from South to North or from less developed countries to more advanced countries, especially the scientifically and technologically developed OECD countries (Altbach,1998, 2004 and Altbach and Knight, 2007).

International student migration is examined as a complex phenomenon in existing literature since an individual student’ s decision on pursuing overseas higher education is affected by various factors (Altbach, 1998; Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002). Researchers looked at the global flow of international students from the perspective of students’ characteristics, internal

motivations and expectations and external push and pull forces for them (Altbach, 1998; Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002; Chen, 2007; and Bodycott, 2009).

Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) define push factors as the forces that operate within the source country and initiate a student's decision to undertake international study. On the contrary, pull factors work within the host country and make that country more attractive to international students compared with other countries (p.82). Altbach (1999) states that push and pull factors cover economic, political, ideological and educational aspects that affect students' decisions of studying abroad and final study destinations. This pull and push model has been adopted by many researchers and scholars as the theoretical framework for understanding international student mobility.

In accordance with different researchers' analysis, international students are inspired by both shared and differentiated determinants based on their economic, societal and cultural backgrounds when choosing to undertake overseas higher education (Altbach, 1998, 2004; Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002). Moreover, even for the members belonging to the same group of international students, individual students respond differently to external influential factors based on the student's own characteristics and background (Bodycott, 2009).

Chinese Students' Academic Migration

Out of three million international students around the world, China has become the largest source country (IIE, 2010). Different researchers claim that the unmet demand of higher education in mainland China is a crucial factor motivating many Chinese students to seek access to overseas higher education. However, they fail to throw light on the fact that the gross enrollment rate of Chinese higher education institutions has been tremendously increased due to the university expansion policy that has been implemented in mainland China by the Chinese government since 1999.

It is stated by different Chinese and Western scholars that the higher education system in mainland China has made “a great leap forward” since 1999 (Bai, 2006, p.3; Wen, 2004; Li and Xing, 2010, p.4; Li and Xing, 2010, p.4). The sizes of public higher education institutions have been dramatically expanded to meet the huge demand for higher education in mainland China. There were 1022 tertiary-level institutions in mainland China in 1998. Until, there are over 2500 public higher education institutions that include regular and adult post-secondary institutions until April, 2012 (ScienceNet Website, 2012). In 2005, the number of new college students was over five million that is 4.7 times of that in 1998 (Li and Xing, 2010, p.7).

In addition, the private higher education sector including the foreign-Sino co-sponsored programs, franchised programs and branch campuses of overseas post-secondary institutions

have grown rapidly to recruit more students in tertiary level education in mainland China in the past two decades. There were over 1,700 private post-secondary institutions that account for 10% of the total post-secondary enrollments in 2006 (Zeng and Weng, 2007, p.1).

Although it is still comparatively competitive for China's high school students to secure a seat in domestic higher learning institutions, they have obtained much more access to achieve a post-secondary education in their home land. The official statistics show that the gross recruitment rate of high school graduates has doubled from 10.5% in 1999 to 24.2% in 2009 (Ministry of Education of China, 2010). Using Trow's definition of mass higher education, many researchers believe that the scale of higher education in mainland China has transformed from an elite education to mass higher education since the enrollment rate has been more than 20% of the age group (Trow, 1972). Based on the fact that there were over 20 million in-college students in 2006, it is believed that China has developed the largest higher education system in the world (Bai, 2006; Li and Xing, 2010).

The university expansion policy was enforced to largely broaden access to higher education for Chinese high school graduates, but the equality and social justice in opportunities to higher education for Chinese students have been questioned by various researchers (Bai, 2006; Jacob, 2006; Li and Xing, 2010; Yao et.al., 2010; Ding and Liang, 2012). Ding and Liang (2012) claim that when considering the type and quality of higher education that are accessible for

students belonging to different social-economic classes, geographic locations, ethnic groups and gender group, “qualitative disparity is a more profound index for measuring the equitable nature of China’s education system” (p.26). As a result of reform and transformation of China’s higher education system since the late 1980s, there are distinct quality disparities among different higher education institutions within a stratified higher education system (Li and Xing, 2010; Yao et.al., 2010; Ding and Liang, 2012).

The Chinese central government launched 985 Project (this title refers to the year and month in which it was announced) and 211 Project (this name refers to 100 research-intensive universities in the 21 century) in public institutions with the goal of establishing ten to twelve world-class universities and 100 research-intensive national universities in the 21 century.

Therefore, 985 and 211 universities are established as the elite or key universities in China and given much more funding from the central government (Bai, 2006, p.139; Yao et.al, 2010.p.839).

These universities are on the top level of the national higher education system. The other regular four-year universities are under the administration and financial support of either the provincial or municipal governments. These universities are looked upon as middle-level institutions. At the bottom level are the two or three year technical and vocational colleges. Despite the rapid development in the past two decades, private tertiary institutions are still at the low end in China’s higher education sector.

Different Chinese and Western scholars argue that the students who are raised in rich families in urban areas and reside in the more developed Eastern part of China have more choices of higher education available to them after the implementation of the university expansion policy. Since 1997, each college student is required to pay tuition fees to attend higher education institutions. The expenditure of each college student per year is around 10,000 RMB in 2008. The net per capita incomes in urban and rural areas were 9,422 RMB and 2,936 RMB respectively. It costs 4.2 and 13.6 years of net income for an average urban and rural individual respectively to support a student's 4-year higher education (Yuan, 2008; as cited in Li and Xing, 2010, p.5).

Thus, this increased the possibility for students whose families have more social and economic capital to study in the universities (Jacob, 2006; Wang, 2009; Bai, 2006; Li and Xing, 2010; Yao et.al., 2010; Ding and Liang, 2012). However, this reduced the possibility for students from the lower social class and rural areas in less developed Central and Western regions to have access to higher education. Therefore, the effect of the university expansion policy on the opportunities available to students coming from different regions and social groups has become a rising topic of study for concerned researchers and scholars.

On the other hand, despite the huge expansion of the Chinese higher education sector, the last decade saw an unprecedented demand for overseas higher education among Chinese students

in mainland China (Ministry of Education of China, 2010). The number of Chinese international students accounts for almost 50% of the total number of international students around the world (Altbach and Bassett, 2004, p.30). The statistics from the Ministry of Education (MOE) in China shows that 1.62 million Chinese students in mainland China went to study in more than 100 foreign countries and regions from 1978 to 2009. However, approximately 1.32 million students undertook overseas higher education between 1999 and 2009. This is the period of time after the university expansion policy was implemented by the Chinese government in mainland China (MOE, 2010). Among the study-abroad students, over 90% are self-financed students.

Furthermore, it is claimed by the Ministry of Education that this outgoing heat among Chinese students in mainland China will be a persistent phenomenon in the following years due to the Chinese government's policies to support Chinese nationals to study broad (MOE, 2010).

The purpose of this study and research questions

In exploring the factors motivating many Chinese students in mainland China to obtain overseas higher education, many researchers employed the push and pull theory to find out the stimulating factors for their choices. Although a variety of motivations and anticipation of Chinese students are presented in the following review of literature, I found that few researchers gave more attention to the correlation between the dramatically increased number of study-abroad Chinese students after 1999 and the effect of the university expansion policy on their

choices of higher education. In this study, I aimed to find that how the Chinese government's relevant policies and other factors affected their choices and how the push and pull model can explain different factors that influenced them to study abroad in the last decade. Therefore, my study was to find out facts to answer the following three research questions:

1) What are the major motivating factors for mainland Chinese students to undertake overseas higher education?

2) What role did the Chinese government's policies on overseas study play in Chinese students' decisions to go to study at the University of British Columbia (UBC).

3) How well the push and pull theory can be adopted to explain the going-abroad heat among Chinese students studying at the University of British Columbia?

Significance of This Study

I believe there are different issues involved in the rapid rise in the number of Chinese students studying abroad in the past decade. But, first of all I decided to conduct a study that focuses on finding how the study-abroad Chinese students reason their decisions of pursuing overseas higher education. I aim to present this study's results to interested policy makers, academe and professionals in the higher education sector in both China and the main receiving countries of Chinese international students so as to expand current knowledge and understanding

of motivation and expectation of Chinese students in relation to their overseas higher education experience.

Structure of This Thesis

In order to explore the stimulating factors for the study-abroad Chinese students coming from mainland China, this thesis constitutes five chapters. The current chapter provides a broad background for understanding internationalization of higher education, international student mobility and the Chinese students' study-abroad activities in the past decade. Chapter 2 is organized into two sections. In the first section, it presents how related arguments and findings explain the worldwide international student mobility and how the push and pull model was employed as the theoretical framework in relevant literature to find out the motivating factors for the worldwide internationalization of higher education. In the second section, it focuses on showing previous exploration and research results concerning about the increasing academic migration of Chinese students into developed Western countries. It introduces the motivational factors and expectations of study-abroad Chinese students, the facilitating policies and strategies from the Chinese government and emerged concerns and issues resulting from the study-abroad heat among Chinese students in current literature. Also, this chapter reviews existing related literature that helped develop and refine research questions in this study.

Chapter 3 presents the reasons why the researcher decided on choosing semi-structured one-on-one interview as her research method and snowball sampling as the sampling method for recruiting research participants at the University of British Columbia in this study. Then, the detailed procedure of data collection and data interpretation approaches is stated. At the end of this chapter, the research ethical concerns and conduct in this study are presented. Chapter 4 examines the research findings: the shared and different factors that stimulated nine research participants to choose to study abroad by employing Kvale's suggested analysis and interpretation approaches of interview data for qualitative researchers (Kvale, 1996).

In the last chapter Discussion and Conclusion, nine research participants' academic and family backgrounds and social economic status are discussed in detail so as to help readers of this thesis understand how individual students made their decisions on seeking an overseas higher education. In the section Conclusion, the key research findings are reviewed again. The limitation of this study is mentioned as a self-reflection of this study by the researcher in this section as well. At the end of this thesis, the researcher presents her future research interests that are brought about by this study.

Chapter 2 Review of Related Literature

Introduction

The review of related literature in this study is an examination of and reflection on the arguments and research findings in these writings. Internationalization of higher education, international students, Chinese international students, university expansion policy in China and higher education system and reforms of China are used as the main key words to search for relevant research papers and published books in several academic research databases on the library website of the University of British Columbia. The websites of the Ministry of Education of China and its affiliated government departments were referred to obtain the official statistics, government policies, regulations and other documents relating to Chinese students' overseas higher education.

By doing research on both online and written literature exploring internationalization of higher education and international student mobility, I realized that the largely increased Chinese students' academic migration to their desired overseas countries in the past decade should not be examined as an individual phenomenon. Instead, this phenomenon should be explored in a larger background and context that results in worldwide international student academic migration. Therefore, this literature review is divided into two sections: the first section writes about current issues of internationalization of higher education and the motives for international students to

conduct overseas academic migration; the second section concentrates on analyzing the factors that inspire Chinese students in mainland China to seek overseas higher education.

I found that the push and pull model is widely used in previous studies as their theoretical framework for analyzing the factors stimulating worldwide international student mobility and the study-abroad heat among Chinese students in mainland China as well. Therefore, the push and pull model is also employed as the theoretical framework in this study.

The Internationalization of Higher Education

Cross-border education.

As the arguments in previous literature, globalization is regarded as a facilitating force for bringing about the worldwide internationalization of higher education. Knight (1999) argues that globalization is the free flow of knowledge, information, technology, people, values and ideas across geographically based borders. Van der Wende (2010) believes that in the globalized world, different nations become more interconnected and interdependent (p.541).

Internationalization of higher education is one of the ways that a nation responds to the impact of globalization (Knight, 1999).

There is not an all-encompassing definition of the internalization in the higher education sector in relevant literature. According to Knight, the internationalization of higher education is the process of integrating both an international and intercultural dimension into the teaching,

research and service functions of higher learning institutions (Knight 1999, p.16). Making a conclusion of existing points of view in current literature, Yang (2002) claims that the internationalization of higher education refers to specific internationalized activities or programs conducted by the worldwide higher education institutions in relevant literature (p.72). These internationalized activities can be categorized into academic and extra-curricular activities that include student, scholar and faculty exchange and flow, cross-border technical assistance and quality assurance systems, education of international students, intercultural communication and training and so forth.

When explaining the characteristics of the internationalization of higher education institutions, Knight (1999) contends that one dimension of internationalization is purely domestic, which refers to help students develop international and intercultural awareness and skills without leaving their home countries, which is defined as “international at home” (Knight, 2003a). Cross-border education is the other dimension of internationalization, which is defined as “situation where the teacher, student, program, institution/provider or course materials cross national jurisdictional borders”. Cross-border education takes three different forms based on “who’ and “what” cross the border (Knight, 2003b, as cited in OECD, 2004, p.19):

People mobility: A person who goes abroad for educational purposes

Program mobility: an educational program that crosses borders

Institution mobility: an institution or providers who go or invest abroad for educational purposes

Cross-border education delivery through these three forms can be conducted by different activities and arrangements based on “who” provides the cross-border education and “who” attends this type of education experiences:

Table 1 Types of Cross-border Education Activities

Type	Main Forms	Examples	Size
1. People			
Students/trainees	*Student mobility	-full study abroad for a foreign degree of qualification -part of academic partnership for home degree or joint degree -exchange programmes	*Probably the largest share of cross-border education
Professors/trainers	Academic/trainer mobility	-for professional development -as part of an academic partnership -employment in a foreign university -to teach in a branch institution abroad	An old tradition in the education sector, which should grow given the emphasis on mobility of professionals and the internationalization of education more generally
2. Programs			
Educational programs	Academic partnerships E-learning	-joint course or program with a foreign institution -E-learning programs -Selling/franchising a course to a foreign institution	Academic partnerships represent the largest share of these activities E-learning and franchising are small but rapidly growing activities
3. Institutions/providers			
	Foreign campuses Foreign investments	-opening of a foreign campus -buying (part of) a foreign educational institution -creation of an educational provider abroad	A trend increasing very quickly from a modest starting point

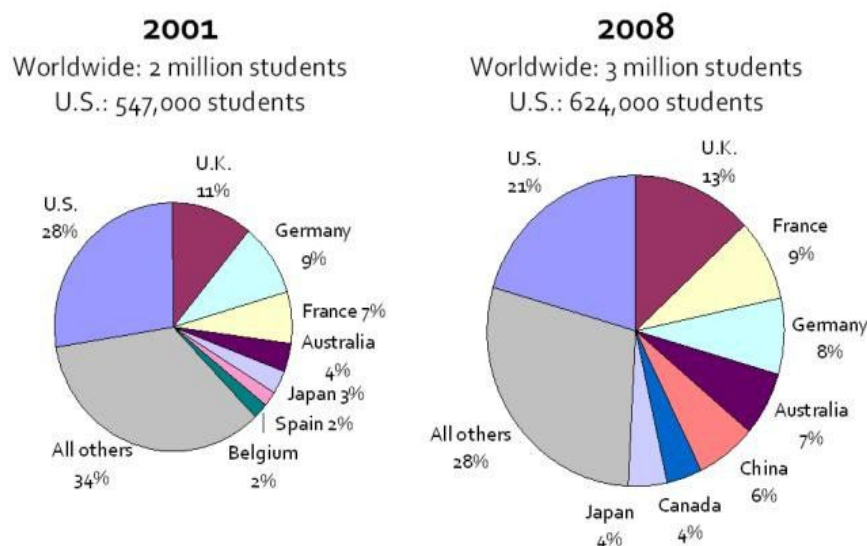
Source: Adopted from OECD (2004). Cross-border education: an overview. *Internationalization and Trade in Higher Education: Opportunities and Challenges* (p.20). Paris: OECD.

Although aforementioned three types of cross-border education have increased during the last decade, international student mobility as one form of people mobility is by far the main cross-border education activity (OECD, 2004, p.1, 20-21).

According to the statistics of OECD (2004), international student migration into OECD countries doubled over the past twenty years. There were approximately two million students studying outside their origin countries in 2003 and 93% of international students studied in OECD countries (Van der Wende, 2010, p.542). This number was increased to three million in 2008. Altbach estimates that the total number of foreign students would reach over seven million by 2025 (Altbach, 2004, p.19).

The statistics of the Institute of International Education (IIE) shows that the top five receiving countries of international students were the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, France and Australia in 2001. These five countries maintained their positions as the top five host countries of international students in 2008 except France exceeded Germany to become the third biggest receiving country (IIE, 2001, 2008). Asia is the major sending region of international students. Japan, South Korea, China and India are the four major Asian source countries of international students in the past decade (OECD, 2004, p.11-12). Unsurprisingly, most of study-abroad Asian students studied in well-advanced OECD countries (OECD, 2004). (see Figure 1)

Figure 1 Study Destinations for International Students at the Post- Secondary (Tertiary) Level



Source: Adopted from Institution of International Education.(2010). *Atlas of international student mobility: country profile*. Retrieved from <http://www.atlas.iienetwork.org/?p=48027>

Motives for international students and host countries and institutions.

Altbach (1998) points out that the majority of international students come from the developing and newly industrializing countries and study in advanced industrialized nations (1998, p.147; 2004, p.20). Among all international students, over 50% of them come from China and South Korea (IIE, 2008). The phenomenon of the growing international student flow in the past decade has been explored by the academe both in sending and receiving countries.

Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) argue that an individual student's decision-making process of pursuing overseas study usually goes through three stages: deciding to study abroad, choosing a study destination/a host country and finally selecting an institution (p.83). Chen (2007)

presents that some international students don't follow the selection model of Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) in some situations: they may select a host institution before starting to choose a host country (p.760). However, a student's final decision on where to pursue overseas higher education is definitely affected by his or her own characteristics, significant others and other external pull (host countries) and push (home countries) factors (Chen, 2007, p.760). Thus, a student responds differently to various influential factors in his or her decision procedure (Li and Bray, 2007, p.794).

A variety of push factors in the original countries of international students are discussed in existing literature: there are unmet demands for higher education due to the limited spaces in domestic higher education institutions. Therefore, many bright students found it easier to study in good-quality foreign institutions compared with the more competitive entrance requirements in their home countries; there is a lack of in-demand specializations or programs in domestic higher learning institutions, especially at the master's or doctoral levels which are internationally competitive; foreign higher education credential also enhances a student's competitiveness in the job market, which further has positive effects on his or her future social and economic status; students have strong desires for experiencing foreign cultures, life styles and social environment. Domestic social and political situations are also among the main factors influencing some

students to study abroad: discriminatory admission policies for ethnic students and the unfavorable political circumstances and so forth (Altbach, 2004, p.21).

Impacted by the economic globalization, the trade of goods, services and information appears more important than ever (Tremblay, 2005, p.11). Correspondently, student mobility is one of the four modes of international supplies in education services in the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) under the World Trade Organization (WTO) (OECD, 2004, p.35)(see Table 2). The Center for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI) found that the economic rationale and international competition have taken on greater importance among a mix of rationales for the governments and higher education institutions of the host countries to support cross-border education in the past decade (OECD, 2004, p.223).

Table 2 Attribution of the Main Modes of International Supply of Education Services

Mode	Explanation	Education Examples	Correspondence With Types Of Cross-border Education Means
1. cross-border supply	The services crosses the border (does not require the physical movement of the consumer of the provider)	distance education online education commercial franchising of a course	programme mobility
2. *consumption abroad	Consumer moves to the country of the supplier	students who go to another country to study	people (student) mobility
3. commercial presence	The service provider establishes facilities in another country to provide the service	local university or satellite campuses Branch campus, including joint venture with local institutions	institution mobility
4. presence of natural persons	Person travelling to another country on a temporary basis to provide the service	professors, teachers, researchers working temporarily abroad	people (academic) mobility

Source: The “Mode” and “Explanation” columns are based on the GATS classifications. Adopted from Center for Educational Research and Innovation (2004). Cross-border education: an overview. *Internationalization and Trade in Higher Education: Opportunities and Challenges* (p.35). Paris: OECD.

The rationales of the receiving countries

Jiang (2008) argues that because of the increased commercialization and commoditization of knowledge in today’s globalized economy, profit-making has become both the major motive and the target that leads to the expanded trade of higher education around the world (p. 348). International student flow has been regarded as a “big business” or an “industry” for the receiving countries, because international student migration brings about substantial economic benefits to the host countries (Altbach, 1998). The study costs of international students expand the financial sources for the host countries to support their national higher education systems. Moreover, international students and their dependents also contribute to the domestic economy. The OECD countries generated a US\$ 30 billion income from 1.6 million international student migrations in 2001(OECD, 2004). Association of International Educators (NAFSA) estimates that international students and their dependents contributed approximately US\$ 117.9 billion to the United States’ economy during the 2008-2009 academic year (NAFSA, 2010).

From the perspective of human resources, another important beneficial effect of student migration to the host countries is that international student flow may develop into a potential flow of qualified workers. Most OECD countries are facing an aging population and a low birth

rate, so they need more highly-educated migrants to work in sectors where there is a shortage of a skilled workforce (Tremblay, 2005). Therefore, skilled migration is another feature of the internationalization of higher education.

In some top receiving countries of international students, such as France, Australia and Canada, internationalized policies have been combined with immigration regulations for foreign graduates and academics (Van der Wende, 2010, p.541). These countries relaxed their immigration policies to allow qualified foreigners including their former international students to stay and work there by giving them temporary or permanent residence permits.

From the late 1990s though, economic growth and growing concerns about aging populations in most OECD countries resulted in a worldwide competition for highly skilled workers (especially in the science, technology, and health care sectors) that has somewhat changed the overall picture. Immigration authorities have had to adapt to the changing environment by amending their legislation to facilitate the entry of skilled workers and in some cases, to offer foreign students easier access to work and /or residence permits upon graduation (Tremblay, 2005, p.206).

The favorable immigration policies for former international students in these host countries are attractive to some international students who choose their study destinations as “the first-step of a long-term deliberate strategy for subsequent migration into these countries” (Tremblay, 2005, p.205).

The rationales of the host higher education institution

The competition among higher learning institutions in a worldwide scope has become tougher and contains a strong international dimension, which requires higher education institutions to intensify their internationalization initiatives (OECD, 2004). Given the economic benefits for higher education institutions in the host countries of international students, recruitment of foreign students is looked at by the institutions as an effective means for generating new revenue to relieve the financial stress caused by the declining funds from the governments (Tremblay, 2005).

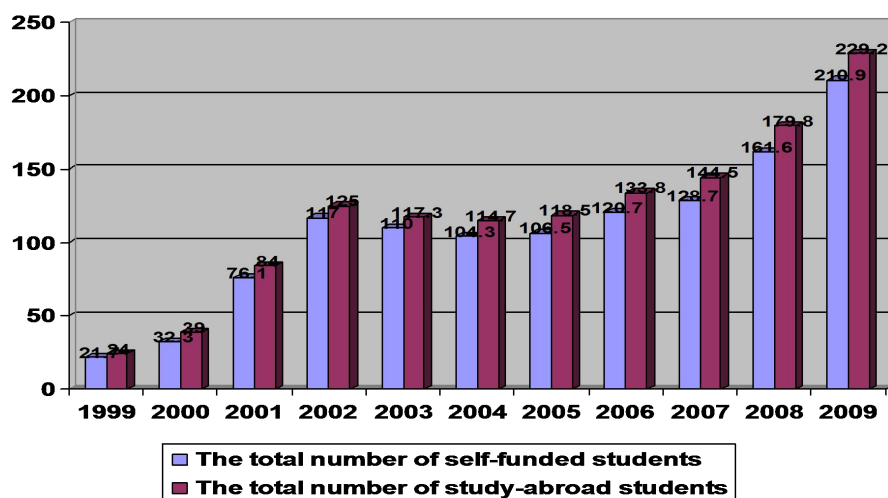
Although internationalization of higher education is driven by economic benefits, universities are still the central producers and carriers of new knowledge for their served societies (Altbach, 1998). There are academic and cultural rationales for higher education institutions to recruit international students. An increased intellectual and cultural exchange with international students is expected to play a positive role in institution-building. These experiences help the institutions improve their teaching, research and management abilities (Jiang, 2008, p.380). Moreover, the native students studying with classmates from diversified cultures may enhance their abilities to adjust to other cultures that in turn will have a positive effect on their productivity and future career development in this increasingly globalized world (Tremblay, 2005, p.222).

Factors behind the Study-Abroad Heat among Chinese Students in Mainland China

Push and pull factors for Chinese students.

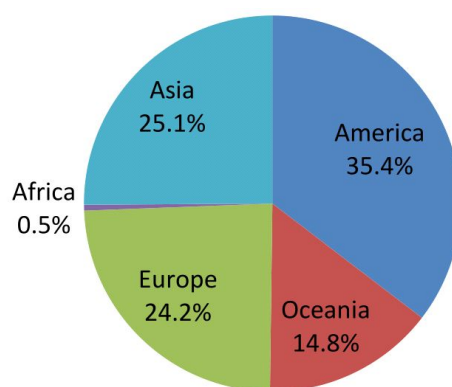
If student mobility is the most significant mode of cross-border education, the out-going heat among Chinese students in mainland China is without doubt a quite noticeable phenomenon in international student mobility around the world. Over one million Chinese students in mainland China went to study abroad between 1999 and 2009. Most of them studied abroad at their own expense (MOE, 2009) (see Figure 2). The total number of study-abroad Chinese students consistently increased in the past decade except that there was a slight decrease in the numbers of study-abroad students between 2003 and 2005. Chinese international students went to study in over 100 countries and regions since 1978 when the reform and opening up policy was adopted by the Chinese Communist Party (see Figure 3). A majority of them chose to study in several major receiving countries of international students: the United States, Australia, the Great Britain, Japan, Canada, Korea (Chinese Students Study-Abroad Forum, 2010). The statistics ranking the distribution of Chinese overseas students around the world shows that America, Australia, the Great Britain, Korea, Japan, Canada are currently the top six host countries of Chinese students (MOE, 2010).

Figure 2 The Totals of Study-abroad Students vs. the Totals of Self-funded Students (1999-2009)
Unit: 1,000



Source: statistics was adopted from the website of The Ministry of Education. *Ren min jiao yu, dian ji zhong guo* [People's education, the base of China]. Retrieved October 9, 2009, from <http://www.moe.gov.cn.edoas/website18/82/info125511167346182>; Yu, Jihai. (2010, March). *Xue shen kua go jie liu doing xian zhuan* [The current situation of students' cross-border mobility]. In Wang, Gong (Chair), *Chinese Students Study-Abroad Forum 2010*. Forum conducted at the meeting of the Ministry of Education, Beijing, China. Retrieved Nov.2, 2010, from <http://edu.sin a.com.cn/l/2010-03-12/2020186216.shtml>. The author added the date of 2009 to the original figure for 1999 to 2008 from the Ministry of Education.

Figure 3 Distribution of Study-Abroad Chinese Students (2009)



Source: Adopted from The Ministry of Education. (2009, Oct.10). *Ren min jiao yu, dian ji zhong guo* [People's education, the base of China]. Retrieved October 11, 2009, from <http://www.moe.gov.cn/edoas/website18/82/info125511167346182.htm>

In order to explore the main factors motivating Chinese students to pursue overseas higher education, the push and pull model is also used in existing literature as the methodological framework. Students and parents, host countries and academic institutions are considered as three groups of stakeholders in the increasing international student migration (Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002; Altbach, 1998, 2004, Chen, 2007 and Li and Bray, 2007). Based on previous research, the main pull factors for Chinese students going abroad for higher education are the following: expanded and strengthened marketing and recruitment practices in the international education market, perceived better quality of overseas higher education, immigration possibilities after graduation, availability of scholarships for study, and favorable environmental factors such as desirable study environment, comfortable climate, a safe and multicultural social context and so on.

In order to explore the significant stimulating push factors for Chinese students undertaking overseas higher education, how the Chinese students obtain access to higher education in domestic higher education system should be examined.

In the context of a fast developing market economy, there is a higher demand for post-secondary education among ordinary Chinese people (Jacob, 2006). If not considering the stratification in the higher education sector in mainland China, the students as a whole have many more chances to access higher education because of the implementation of the university

expansion policy since 1999. However, the university expansion policy does not diminish but broaden inequality in access to higher education for students with different academic and social economic backgrounds in current China (Bai, 2006; Wang 2009, Fleisher, Li and Li, 2010; Shi and Xing, 2010).

According to existing relevant research, the reasons behind this widening gap in access to higher education among different student populations are believed to be closely related to diversified factors: the uneven distribution of higher education resources in different regions, parents' social and economic status, the rapidly increasing mandatory tuition fees since 1997 and the quality disparities in pre-university education in urban and rural areas (Zhang and Liu, 2006; Jacob, 2006; Wang, 2009; Yao et.al., 2010;).

Jacob (2006) contends that after the re-categorization of all provinces and cities in mainland China, three primary economic regions were formed since 1980s: the Eastern Coastal Region, the Central Developing Region, and the Western Under-developed Region (p.152) (see Figure 4).

Yao et.al (2010) contend that due to the unbalanced economic and social development, the key universities including 985 and 211 universities are more concentrated in the East of China, big cities and two municipalities (Beijing and Shanghai). Therefore, the students living in the Eastern region benefit more from the increased availabilities of higher education resulting from the university expansion policy, but those residing in Central and students living in the Eastern

region benefit more from the increased availabilities of higher education resulting from the university expansion policy, but those residing in Central and Western regions are still marginalized populations concerning access to higher education (Jacob, 2006; Wang, 2009).

Figure 4 Economic Regions of China Established in 1980s

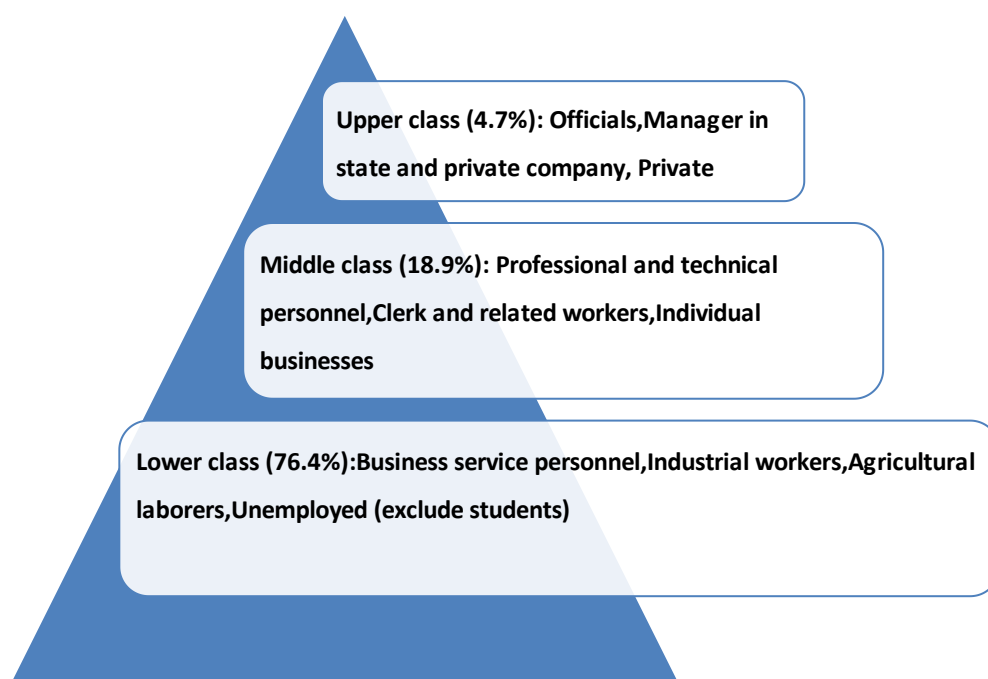


Source: Adopted from Jacob, W. James (2006). Social justice in Chinese higher education: regional issues of equity and access. *Review of Education*, 52, pp.149-159.

Although there is not an official recognition of a hierarchical social class structure existing in current China, Wang (2009) claims that based on the occupational categorization and the social, economic and cultural capital owned by people in different occupations, the Chinese sociologists divided Chinese population into upper, middle and lower class and estimated the proportion of each class in the total population (p.12) (see Figure 5). Li (2008) used the model of

East Asia Middle Class Project which is widely adopted for counting the population of middle class in newly industrializing countries in the East Asian region. She claims that one third of the urban population in China in 2006 could be categorized into the middle class population (p.5). Thus, previous researchers contend that besides the regional disparity in higher education resource distribution, the social class and urban/rural origin are other decisive factors influencing a student's access to higher education.

Figure 5 The Social Class Structure in Current Chinese Society



Source: Adopted from Wang, Weiye (2006). Social class differences in access to higher education. Retrieved from the website of Teachers College of Columbia University, <http://edlab.tc.columbia.edu/index.php?q=node/3474>.

They argue that the students from well-being families in urban areas have gained much more access to higher education than those from poor families both in urban and rural areas. The

reasons are related to students' parents' social class and economic abilities. Due to their advantageous social class and high income in Chinese society, these parents have sufficient financial abilities to pay for their children's different choices of higher education. Therefore, these students have less financial constraints and more freedom in their choices of higher education (Chen, 2006; Bai, 2006; Sanchez, Fornerino and Zhang, 2006; Sun, 2008 and Bodycott, 2009).

It is claimed by some researchers that there is a relationship between the family plan and the differences in access to higher education among Chinese students in mainland China. The cohort of university-aged students at the beginning of 21st century mainly consists of students who are the only child in their families as a result of the one-child policy in China. Therefore, it is more possible for their families to concentrate their savings on paying for these students' higher education (Li and Bray, 2007, p.796). Also, because the higher education degrees are still believed to be the ladder for a young person to enter into the mainstream classes and groups in the future, their parents are willing to invest in their higher education (Zhang and Liu, 2006, p.89).

Public higher learning institutions used to be fully funded by different ministries and different levels of government in China. Because the co-funding model was adopted by the central government in 1997, students and their parents now need to pay for their higher education.

However, the continuing raised tuition fees surpass the annual income of some poor families both in urban and rural areas. Thus, the higher education expenditure becomes a huge obstacle for students from impoverished families. As a result, some prospective poor students are deprived of their higher education opportunities despite the broadened access to higher education brought about by the university expansion policy (Bai, 2006; Yao et.al., 2010).

Other researchers state that the factors taking root in Chinese culture heritage should not be underestimated when we consider Chinese students' longing for higher education achievements. Schuetze (2008) states, "education has traditionally held a high cultural value in China" (p.19). Furthermore, the Confucian philosophy of education and learning still has a far-reaching influence on current Chinese society. Confucius teaches that learning is the most effective means for a person's self-cultivation and self-development in a lifelong journey (Li, 2003, p.146). Confucian Master Mengzi said, "Keep learning as long as you live" represents the same essential meaning shared by the 100 internationally famous sayings that have strong influence on Chinese young people's lives (Zhang, 2008, p.553). From this cultural lens, parents, especially those with more educational accomplishments, have higher expectations for their children's education attainments (Zhang and Liu, 2006).

Despite the above-mentioned factors resulting in disparities in access to higher education for students with different backgrounds and characteristics, Zhang and Liu (2006) point out that

there is systematic and structural inequality in access to higher education, and this “systematic and structural inequality” should be traced back to the inequality in pre-university education accessed by different student groups. Schuetze (2008) states that large quality discrepancies exist both between urban and rural schools and between key and regular public schools in China’s compulsory education subsector. The key urban schools in more affluent regions gain more financial resources to be equipped with better teachers and facilities. Also, the education quality in these schools is much better than that in non-key schools that are usually under-resourced due to less public funding allocation from the government. The quality of compulsory education will have further influence on the quality of a student’s higher education.

On the other hand, because of the limited quotas to study in those key primary and secondary schools, some students have chosen to study in good-quality but more expensive private (minban in Chinese) or foreign-Sino co-sponsored schools or programs. This alternative choice is also regarded by the students’ parents as a means to avoid difficult college entrance examination in the future. The students will still have opportunities to go to study in good-quality overseas higher learning institutions (Schuetze, 2008).

On the other hand, due to the large number of university students graduating after 1999, the unemployment of university graduates becomes a deep concern both for the Chinese society and the government. Employment prospects of university graduates are closely related to the

quality of their higher education. Therefore, the Chinese students look at the quality of a higher learning institution as the “basis of their choice of higher education” (Ding and Liang, 2012, p.30).

Mainland Chinese students need to write the highly competitive entrance examination to secure a seat in different types of higher learning institutions. In some situations, a bright student may not perform well in the entrance examination and fail to be enrolled in a good-quality university (Jacob, 2006). In other situations, some students may not be able to obtain enough scores to attend higher education. Because of these reasons, these students may seek other ways around the obstacles (p.796). Therefore, studying abroad becomes a second choice for some Chinese students to undertake higher education (Ming, 2001, p.36).

The role of international education agents in increasing Chinese student enrollment

When exploring the effects of different push and pull factors on Chinese students’ study-abroad activities, the role of international education agents who work as a “person, company or organization” between the host institutions and Chinese students should not be ignored (Zhang and Hagedorn, 2010). Zhang and Hagedorn (2010) point out that although using an education agent to increase international student enrollment has been a well-established practice in different parts of the world for a long time, this enrollment strategy has been growing rapidly in Asian countries in the past years (p.7). As one of the top source countries of international

students in the world, it has become common practice for students in China to use education agents' services to assist their applications to overseas institutions (p.15).

The educational agents can provide students a variety of services: preparation of visa application materials and/or training for face to face interviews; preparation of college application materials; advice on choosing a right study destination and institution; contact with all necessary personnel at targeted institutions (Zhang and Hagedorn, 2010). According to the statistics of the Ministry of Education of China, there are over 400 registered international education service companies in China (MOE, 2012). Until 2010, The American International Recruitment Council had certified 24 overseas agencies to help recruit more international students to study in the United States. The reason is that the United States is facing serious international student enrollment challenges from other major host countries including Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand and Canada (Inside Higher Ed website, 2012).

Zhang and Hagedorn (2010) claim that professional and responsible agents can give students valuable assistance in choosing the most fitting country, university and program based on students' preferences and backgrounds. However, within the agent-student relationship, students are vulnerable to unethical practices of some agents, so how the students' interests can be protected during the whole recruitment process is still an existing problem in international student recruitment market (p15-16).

The Chinese government's policies on foreign study.

In order to obtain highly needed scientific and technological talent pool for building a knowledge-based economy in the 21 century, the Chinese government has been reforming and developing domestic higher learning institutions so as to cultivate more highly-educated human resources. On the other hand, it has also implemented supporting policies on Chinese students' study-abroad activities as a supplementary way to obtain more needed talents (Simon and Cao, 2009).

Based on the changing political, economic, ideological and educational context, China changed its basic policies on foreign study from time to time (Altbach, 1998, p.169). Since China implemented the policy of reform and openness in 1978, the Chinese government has been adopting encouraging and supportive policies on Chinese students' foreign studies (Altbach, 1998, p.169). In current relevant literature, the Chinese government's policies on foreign study are thought to be a significant push factor facilitating the mainland students to pursue cross-border higher education.

Simon and Cao (2009) state that China in the early 21st century is significantly different from the China in the late 1970s and even the 1990s. China is now more confident about becoming a true economic and technological power not only at a regional but at a global level (p. 30). They also argue that China's booming economic development in the past several decades

heavily depended on “natural resources, fossil fuel, exports based on cheaper labor and extensive capital investment” (p.29). However, innovation and talent have become the two primary drivers for China to obtain sustainable economic development in the knowledge-based economy of the 21st century. Therefore, the Chinese government has adopted various strategies to generate a greatly enhanced talent pool, which is composed of high-quality scientists, engineers and other professionals. The Chinese government expects these people to make substantial advancements in the scientific and technological sectors of China.

Gribble (2008) claims that the sending countries of international students may strive to retain more students at their domestic tertiary education institutions, or allow or even encourage students to pursue post-secondary education abroad and then promote the returning back to their home countries by giving returnees preferable policies and treatment (p.28). In China, both the university expansion policy and policies for encouraging students to pursue overseas higher education were adopted by the Chinese government as necessary development strategies to gain needed talent in the past several decades (Simon and Cao, 2009, p.29-30).

Mohrman (2008) reports that the Chinese government is expanding higher education dramatically not only to develop human capital but to meet the demands of families who desperately want their children to have a university education (p.31). As a result, the total gross enrollment of the public higher education institutions has been in a most rapid increase since

1999 when the university expansion policy was implemented by the Chinese central government (see Table 3). There were over 21 million students studying in regular/public higher education institutions in 2009, which is an increase of 6 million students compared with the number in 2005(MOE, 2010). From this perspective, China has attained great achievements in broadening domestic students' access to higher education by expanding and strengthening domestic tertiary education.

Table 3 Enrollments of Students in Regular HEIs and Adult HEIS (1999 to 2008, China)

Year	Total Enrollments (Unit: 10, 000)	Regular Public HEIs	Adult HEIs	Gross Enrollment Ratio
1999	275.45	159.68	115.77	10.5%
2000	376.76	220.61	156.15	n/a
2001	464.21	268.28	195.93	n/a
2002	542.82	320.50	222.32	n/a
2003	n/a	382.17	n/a	17%
2004	668.50	447.34	221.16	19%
2005	697.49	504.46	193.03	21%
2006	730.49	546.05	184.44	22%
2007	757.03	565.92	191.11	23%
2008	810.22	607.66	202.56	23.3%
2009	840.97	639.49	201.48	24.2%

Source: The statistics was adopted from the website of Ministry of Education of China. (2010). Jiao yu fa zhang tong ji gong bao (1999-2009) [*Educational Development Statistics Announcement*] (1999-2009). Retrieved Oct. 16, 2010 from the website of the MOE, http://www.moe.gov.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/moe_335/index.html. The author designed and made this table.

While the enrollment of higher education institutions in mainland China has increased substantially due to the university expansion policy, the average gross recruitment rate was still approximately 20% in the past decade. As an alternative for obtaining necessary human resources, a large number of mainland Chinese students were encouraged by the government to

seek foreign higher education (Simon and Cao, 2009, p.30). However, previous researchers argue that the Chinese government's policies on foreign study have been consistently based on a principal objective: policies on sending students to study abroad must serve the changing national needs, i.e. the priorities of its economic and social development in different times. Following this established goal, the Chinese government promulgated and insisted on a guideline for students' study-abroad activities: "support students to study abroad; encourage them to come back after graduation but returning is not mandatory (Zhou, 2009, p.42).

In terms of the policies on foreign study and the recruitment organizations/agents facilitating mainland Chinese students to undertake overseas higher education, the Chinese government has transformed from being a complete and direct state-control to formulate policies and regulations to manage study-abroad activities and issues (Beijing University School of Education and Zhongshan University Institute of Higher Education, 2005, p.59). Thus, it is worthy of a brief review of some major policies from the Chinese government so as to know how these policies play a role in Chinese students' study-abroad activities.

1) The Chinese Service Center for Scholarly Exchange (CSCSE) was set up in 1989 under the direct administration of the MOE for "offering a full range of services for international scholarly exchanges including both Chinese students and scholars going abroad, returning from

abroad and international students and scholars coming to study in China” (CSCSE website, 2010).

2) The China Scholarship Council (CSC) was established in 1996. It is a nongovernmental corporate entity but is directly administered by the MOE. Its purpose is to give financial assistance to Chinese nationals wishing to study abroad and to foreign nationals wishing to study in China in accordance with state laws, relevant principles and policies.

Its mission is to “develop the educational, scientific and technological, cultural exchanges, and economic and trade cooperation between China and other countries, to strengthen the friendship and understanding between Chinese people and the people of all other countries, and to promote world peace and the socialist modernization drive in China (CSC website, 2010)”.

3) In 1999, the MOE issued “Regulations on the Management of Intermediary Services for Privately-Funded Foreign Education” for better protecting the legal rights and interests of students who want to seek education abroad at their own costs. There are 402 registered intermediary services companies in the list released by the MOE until September, 2010.

4) In November, 2002, the Chinese government removed a restriction that requires in-school college students to serve their countries for at least five years after graduation before they can study abroad.

5) In 2002, the MOE established a new Department “Department of International Cooperation and Exchange” to supervise foreign education activities. The Foreign Education Guardian Network (JSJ) under the supervision of this new Department is an information source from the government for self-funded students to find recognized foreign higher education institutions and Sino-foreign cosponsored programs (JSJ Website, 2010).

6) In October, 2003, The “Chinese Government Award for Outstanding Self-Financed Students Abroad Program” was established by the MOE and is under the direct administration of the China Scholarship Council. This program is a year-based program to give financial assistance to self-funded doctoral students who are Chinese citizens and have studied in foreign higher education institutions for at least one year. Successful applicants will be awarded with US\$5,000 annually.

7) In 2003, the MOE released a list of colleges and universities in 21 countries on its official website. Until September 2010, the MOE had listed the recognized post-secondary institutions in 33 countries. This list aims to work as a reliable information source for directing students to study in good-quality foreign institutions (JSJ website, 2010).

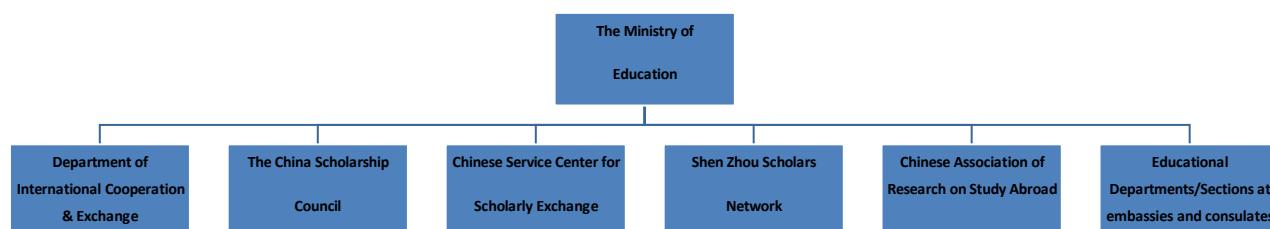
8) In April 2004, the MOE and the State Administration of Industry and Commerce issued a model contract “Contract for Hiring Intermediary Agent Services for Self- Funded

Foreign Education”(MOE, 2010). The MOE intends to prevent dishonest overseas study service agencies from cheating students and parents with unfair and illegal service contracts.

9) The Central Government set up the Recruitment Program of Global Experts in 2008 with the aim of spending five to ten years recruiting top-level overseas scholars, scientists, engineers and management professionals. They are encouraged to return to work in the cutting-edge scientific, technological, financial and commercial management arena in the state-owned enterprises and banks and hi-tech development zones in different regions (Recruitment Program of Global Expert website, 2010).

Besides the above supporting policies, regulations, programs and service organizations, the Chinese government established new government departments, non-governmental service agents and centers affiliated with the MOE, specialized research and scholar organizations and study-abroad training bases to serve both study-abroad students and returnees (see Figure 6).

Figure 6 The Departments /Organizations under the Ministry of Education
for Work Related to Study-Abroad Activities



Source: Note. Shen Zhou means China in English. The original table structure was adopted from the Ministry of Education (2005). Principal documents issued by the Ministry of Education and relevant Departments concerning

study-abroad work. *Chinese Education and Society*, 38(3), pp.63-65. The author changed the names of the Department and the organizations according to their official names on their websites.

Bodycott (2009) found that knowledge and information of the host institutions and countries are also one of the common factors that affect international students' final decisions of study destinations. For mainland Chinese students and their parents, they may rely on the MOE website and other websites under the MOE's administration for obtaining trustworthy information about foreign higher education institutions and the countries where they are located. Moreover, the MOE approves and organizes the International Education Exhibition in Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou every year since 2000 (Education Expo China Website, 2010). 540 foreign education institutions and providers from 33 countries took part in the 2009 Education Expo China in Beijing. This education exhibition has become the "barometer" of foreign study in the Chinese international education market (Education Expo China website, 2010).

Although the Chinese government has been supporting mainland Chinese students to seek overseas higher education since the late 1970s, Zweig and Rosen (2003) claim that the Chinese government has been decreasing the financial support to study-abroad personnel since the middle of 1980s. As a result, more study-abroad students are expected to obtain financial support from foreign institutions or at own expenditure. On the other hand, there are few policies offering financial support to privately-funded students except the self-financed doctoral students.

They may meet the selection criteria to gain a moderate amount of subsidy from the government (MOE, 2010).

Therefore, in accordance with these policies, the Chinese government has provided the students who intend to choose overseas higher education more convenience and freedom.

However, it seems that the Chinese government has only been maintaining a preferable policy environment for students' study-abroad activities rather than directly investing on their overseas studies. Moreover, it cannot be found in these policies that there is preferential support for targeted student population, such as students from under-developed regions, ethnic minorities or gender group.

From brain drain to brain circulation in China.

Tremblay (2005) argues that the effect of international student mobility on sending countries varies because it depends on the individual country's economic and social development levels. The brain drain is understood as a major and permanent loss to the skilled migrants' country of origin as it has an "injurious effect on the national development of the mother country". Thus, there may be a possible brain drain in comparatively underdeveloped countries when many overseas students from these nations would not come back to their home countries after graduation (Tremblay, 2005, p.520). Thus, the brain drain is an issue in some sending countries when they send more students out than getting them back.

Although there is a significant outgoing heat among Chinese students in mainland China, the statistics from the MOE of China shows that only one third of study-abroad students returned to China from 1978 to 2009 (MOE, 2010). Therefore, given this comparatively low returning rate, it seems that China has experienced a “brain drain” of highly-educated human resources since China lost over one million overseas talents in the past three decades.

Trow (1972) suggests that the elite system of higher education enrolls 15% of the age group (18-21 years old) in higher education institutions; the mass higher education means the enrollment rate ranges from 15% to 50% of the age group (p.61-64). Yao et. al (2010) contends that since the average gross enrollment rate of the public higher learning institutions in the past decade was approximately 20%, China’s higher education system has transformed from an elite system to mass higher education. On the other hand, the statistics of MOE of China shows that six million Chinese students were enrolled in both the regular and adult higher education institutions each year in the past decade (see Table 4). Therefore, it may be reasonable to think that China might not have suffered from a severe brain drain since increasingly expanding domestic higher education institutions have turned out a large number of highly-educated young people for supporting its economic and social development.

Welch and Zhang (2008) believe that governments of the sending countries have instituted sustained efforts to reverse the tide of brain drain (p.521). Gribble (2008) argues that

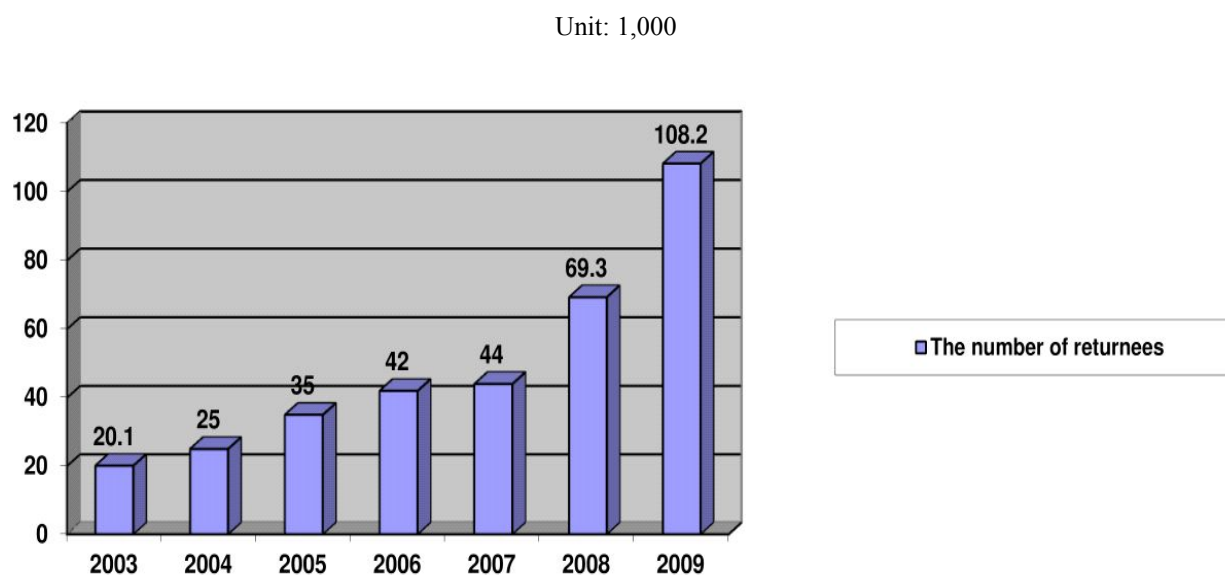
“engaging with the Diaspora is widely regarded as the most effective way for skilled migrants to actively contribute to the economic and social development of their home countries” (p.33). In China’s context, Chen et.al (2003) claim that the Chinese government no longer only persuades overseas intellectuals to return to China. Instead, it gives them more freedom to choose different ways of making contributions to China’s economic and social development (Chen et.al, 2003, p.26).

This changed policy orientation was firstly reflected on the document “A Number of Opinions on Encouraging Personnel Studying Abroad to Serve Their Country by Various Means and Methods”, which was issued jointly by several Ministries taking charge of human resources, education, science, technology and public security in 2001 (Chen et.al, 2003, p.25). The “Opinions” defines the main ways that Chinese overseas talent can serve China’s construction of modernization:

(1) holding a concurrent post in China; (2) conducting cooperative research with a Chinese organization; (3) doing research abroad on commission by China; (4) coming to China to start up endeavors; (5) training talent for China; (6) providing intermediary services to China on economic, science/technology and cultural projects (Chen et.al., 2003,p.25).

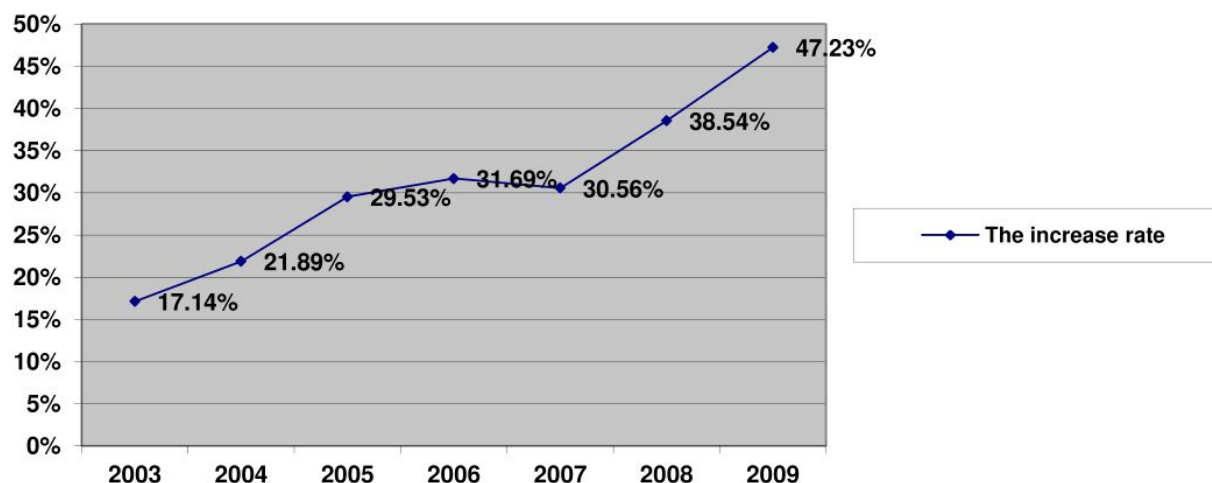
For attracting more overseas talent to return to China, the Chinese government gives returnees favorable treatment and continues to set up a variety of targeted assistance programs to support their reflux. As a rewarding outcome of the Chinese government's endeavor, China is gaining more and more overseas talent to return to their home countries. As shown in Figure 7, China saw a new tide of returnees in 2003 when the number of returnees was over 20,000 for the first time since 1978 (MOE, 2004). The total of returnees was almost 50% of the numbers of study-abroad students in 2009 (as shown in Figure 8). For the first time, over 100,000 returnees came back to China in 2009, which is the largest reverse flow of study-abroad students in the past three decades (see Figure 7).

Figure 7 The totals of Returnees of Chinese Overseas Students (2003-2009)



Source: statistics for each year was adopted from the website of the Ministry of Education.

Figure 8 The Numbers of Returnees Percentage (2004-2009)



Source: statistics of returnees for each year was adopted from the website of the Ministry of Education of China.

Gao (2003) noticed that although the “going-abroad” heat has never slowed down among mainland Chinese students since the early 1990s, the sign of “return-to- China” heat that resulted from the “China opportunity theory” has emerged among Chinese overseas elite in the past decade (p.86-87). Although the returning of overseas students used to be thought as an individual patriotic action, the returnees’ motivations for coming back to China has changed to be a rational reflux (Chan et. al, 2003, p.26).

Researchers argue that China needs more overseas elite who are familiar with international standards and rules to help deepen China’s economic and political reform after China became a member country of WTO (Chen et.al, 2003, p.24). Thus, returnees thought that they have sufficient opportunities to have academic and professional development in China.

Although more than one million Chinese students had still been studying in foreign countries until the end of 2008, Han and Zweig (2010) found that more and more returnees are joining the political, economic and academic elite in China. Morhman (2009) states that some of them have made significant contribution to their home country:

5.8% of provincial leaders have overseas experiences, as do 13.6% of government ministers. By 2008, China has two ministers with overseas PhDs, and approximately 100 officials at the vice-governor level who have spent at least one year studying or researching overseas. More than half of all Chinese university presidents and vice presidents have studied abroad; 81% of the scientists at the Chinese Academy of Sciences have overseas experiences; two-thirds of the 3,000 faculty members at Beijing University have studied abroad for more than one year”(p.40)

Previous researchers believe that one crucial factor for retaining returnees in China is that there must be no going back on China's economic and political reform, because only a country with full faith and enough courage for self-transformation is worthy of a long-term trust and contribution on the part of returnees. The other decisive factor is that the rights and interests of returnees should be protected by the government. Although China has not suffered from a severe brain drain because of the large outflow of students, the Chinese government should put as much effort to keep returned talent in China as its endeavor for attracting them to come back.

Furthermore, the reverse flow of “Chinese intellectual Diaspora” represents a recent development in the orientation of transnational flow of skilled individuals. This orientation

shows that it is not appropriate to simply regard the outflow of highly skilled personnel as the brain drain; instead, brain circulation is a more appropriate term for representing this phenomenon of the global mobility of transnational talent (Tremblay, 2005; Welch and Zhang, 2008, p.521).

Conclusion

Keeping in mind the aim of finding the main push and pull factors motivating Chinese students to pursue overseas higher education, I learnt about a variety of motives shown in the above reviewed literature. However, I noticed that few researchers in my referred literature have discussed about whether there is any relationship between the availabilities of domestic higher education for Chinese students after the enforcement of the university expansion policy and the most significant going-abroad heat among Chinese students after the implementation of this policy.

The past decade witnessed the most tremendous reform and transformation in China's higher education system. I wanted to investigate the push and pull factors that actually influenced so many Chinese students to choose overseas higher education during this unprecedented period of time.

Chapter Three Methodology

Introduction

I adopted semi-structure one-on-one interview as my research method in this study. I did interviews with nine Chinese international students on the Point Grey Campus of the University of British Columbia (UBC). Each interview lasted about 45 to 90 minutes. I aimed to find out what factors motivated my research subjects to choose to pursue overseas higher education and how these factors influenced their decision-making process based on their various characteristics and backgrounds. Also, I intended to know if they were familiar with or they have benefited from the Chinese government's policies on their foreign study. With regard to the push and pull model which has been used as the theoretical framework in this study, I wanted to explore how this model explains my interviewees' motivations and anticipation to seek overseas higher education. The following presents the rationales of my research design, data collection method and data analysis approaches in this study.

Research Design

Theoretical framework of research design.

Creswell (1994) suggests that researchers understand different assumptions of a quantitative and qualitative research paradigm before deciding on choosing which research

tradition to guide a study design (Creswell, 1994, p.4-6). In his words, a methodology for doing a study emerges from distinct understanding of reality, the relationship between the researcher and the researched, the researcher's values and the rhetoric of the study (p.7). A quantitative study aims to use a deductive form of reasoning to test a hypothesis or theories based on existing "concepts, variables or hypotheses" in order to develop a generalization to predict and understand some phenomenon. However, a qualitative study intends to use an inductive logic to develop "patterns or theories" for explaining a "context-bound" phenomenon based on context-bound information of informants (p.7).

Gay, Mills and Airasian (2008) state that underlying the quantitative research paradigm, researchers believe that the truth of the world is independent and objective so can be understood by scientific research examination. Quantitative researchers have little personal interaction with research participants because they often collect numerical data by using paper-and-pencil or other non-interactive instruments. However, qualitative researchers argue that all meanings are situated in a particular perspective or context, and none of the different perspectives or contexts are more valid than another. Based on this assumption, qualitative researchers gain insights into a particular phenomenon in the world by collecting narrative or visual data by conducting extensive interaction with research participants.

With regard to how educational researchers select an appropriate research paradigm for their studies, Gay, Mills and Airasian (2008) contend that personal experiences, authoritative sources and inductive reasoning or deductive reasoning constitute the components of a scientific method for conducting a research: defining a research problem, formulating a hypothesis, collecting data, analyzing data and stating conclusions that confirm or disconfirm the hypothesis. Educational research is “the formal, systematic application of the scientific method to the study of educational problems” and it shares the same goal as other scientific studies (Gay, Mills and Airasian, 2009, p.6). And all educational inquires share a similar study process: data selection, data analysis and interpretation and draw conclusions (p.6).

Selection of a research paradigm.

Creswell (1994) maintains that four factors may influence a researcher’s final decision on a research paradigm. Firstly, the researcher’s worldview may favor the assumptions of a quantitative or qualitative research paradigm. The researcher’s previous research training or experience makes him or her feel comfortable with a research tradition. The nature of the research problem is considered as another important factor. The quantitative problem statements present that the purpose of the study is either to find relationship or to make a comparison between known variables. A qualitative research problem needs to be explored by the researcher

because there is little or incomplete information on it, therefore, the problem statements differ considerably from the quantitative problem statements. Finally, the selected research paradigm must make its audience “understand or at least support a viable, legitimate methodology” (p.8-10).

Creswell (1994) also points out that research questions, hypothesis or objectives of a study is another necessary “signpost” to carry out a research methodology. As the “specific restatement and clarification of the research problem”, research questions, hypothesis or objectives reflect the assumptions of a selected research paradigm too (p.69). Quantitative researchers present research questions, hypothesis or objectives as either “a comparison between two or more groups in terms of a dependent variable or as a relationship of two or more independent and dependent variables. They may also write “descriptive questions to describe responses to the independent or dependent variables” (p.73). However, qualitative researchers usually write research questions rather than hypothesis or objectives for their studies. The research questions may contain a grand question and several sub-questions. The researchers like to use “discover, explain, explore or describe” to state their research questions in order to show readers the qualitative characteristics of their studies (p.64-74).

Before I decided to choose a qualitative research paradigm to be my research methodology, I considered the nature of my study. My study intended to explore and understand an educational phenomenon—a large number of Chinese students chose to pursue foreign higher education in the past decade. My study purpose is to discover what factors motivated them to make this decision. Although there are plenty of researchers who employed the pull and push model to examine international student mobility, there are not enough research findings in existing literature that focus on explaining what factors brought about an upsurge of Chinese students' academic migration from mainland China after 1999 when the Chinese government began to implement the university expansion policy in the domestic higher education sector.

Verifying the arguments concerning the motivations and expectations of Chinese international students in relevant literature is not my research goal. In my study, I aimed to know about Chinese international students' past experiences in deciding to undertake overseas higher learning. Therefore, I believed that a qualitative research paradigm was more appropriate for doing my study.

Data Collection

Research interviewing as the data collection method.

Creswell (1994) presents that there are four types of qualitative data collection sources and techniques: observations, interviews, documents/records and audiovisual materials (p.150-151). Gay, Mills and Airasian (2009) claim qualitative researchers collect inquired data from observing, interviewing, administering questionnaires and examining records (p.366). Obviously, interviewing is regarded as a commonly used qualitative research method.

Kvale (1996) presents that qualitative interviewing uses conversation as a research method and categorizes conversation into three different forms: in everyday life, in literature and in the professions (Kvale, 1996, p.5). A research interview is based on the everyday conversation but acts as one form of professional conversation with its purpose, structure, methodological awareness of question forms and a critical attention to responses (p.20). In Kvale's (1996) words, understanding nature of knowledge moves from "positivist perspectives to a postmodern social construction of reality, hermeneutical interpretations of the meanings of texts, phenomenological descriptions of consciousness and the dialectical situating of human activities in social and historical contexts". These reasons can explain why research interviewing has been increasingly adopted as a research method in social science (p.10-11).

Adopting research interviewing as a research method has its advantages (Creswell, 1994; Gay, Mills and Airasian, 2009). Research methodologists believe that interview permits researchers to obtain important information that they cannot get from observation alone, such as the research participants' past experiences. Interviewers can explore and probe participants' responses to gather in-depth data about their experiences and feelings. Furthermore, it is possible for the researcher to control the questioning procedure so as to get most needed information from informants (Creswell, 1994, p.150; Gay, Mills and Airasian, 2008, p.370).

Semi-structured interview as the selected research method.

Kvale (1996) argues that qualitative research interview is technically semi-structured: it is neither an open conversation nor a highly structured questionnaire. He points out that a research interview is conducted according to an interview guide that focuses on certain themes and may include suggested questions and then the interview is usually transcribed into written texts with the tape recording that are the materials for subsequent interpretation of meanings (p.27). Gay, Mills and Airasian (2009) state that a semi-structured interview combines both structured and unstructured interview approaches. They suggest that the researcher should try to include both open and closed questions in the interview because closed questions allow for brief responses while open questions lead to detailed responses and elaboration on questions from the

interviewers. Some information may not be anticipated by the interviewers (Gay, Mills and Airasian, 2008, p.371).

Because my study is a qualitative research on examining the outward academic migration phenomenon of Chinese students from mainland China, I employed one-on-one and face to face interviews with my research participants as my data collection method. According to Kvale's suggestions on developing effective interview questions, I prepared both open and closed research questions in my interview guide (Kvale, 1996, p.27).

I noticed that methodologists also have different critique about the limitations of research interviewing. The medium of research interviewing is language, but not all people have equal articulate and perceptive abilities. As a result, the research subjects' insufficient linguistic abilities may result in inaccurate responses. On the other hand, the interviewer's inefficient questioning and probing abilities may lead to their failure to probe in-depth data from the informants (Gay, Mills and Airasian, 2008, p.370-371).

Pilot study with research participants.

In order to increase my interview quality, I did pilot interviews with three Chinese international students at UBC. What I was most concerned about was my interviewees' English speaking skills because I worried that as Mandarin speakers, their oral English abilities might

hinder them from effectively expressing some of their deep thoughts and complicated feelings during the interview. Considering this, I decided to allow my research participants to choose to answer my interview questions in English or Mandarin. As another very productive result of my pilot study, a self-reflection on three pilot interviews helped me improve my skills in acting as a better listener but managing to probe richer information from my interviewees with the guidance of my thesis supervisor Dr. Rubenson.

Originally, I designed fifteen questions in my interview guide. However, after doing a closer examination of these interview questions, I realized that it was not necessary for my interviewees to answer two closely related questions separately. Instead, when responding to an inclusive question, they got enough space to tell me more relevant information. Therefore, in accordance with the suggestions of my thesis supervisor and committee member Dr. Mazawi, I condensed my original fifteen questions into eight broad questions that better focus on collecting narrative data from my research subjects to answer my three research questions (see Appendix 1).

Reasons for selecting UBC as the research site.

According to the statistics from the Canadian government, 25% of international students studying in Canada came from China in 2009. Ontario, British Columbia and Quebec are the top three most popular study destinations for Chinese international students across Canada (CIC

website, 2010). Since 2009, mainland China has been the top source country of international students in British Columbia (LearnLive BC Website, 2012). Among Canadian universities, the University of British Columbia (UBC) has the second largest share of Chinese international students (UBC Facts and Figures, 2010/2011). From the 2009 academic year, Chinese international students became the largest group of international students at UBC and most of them are undergraduate students (UBC Facts and Figures, 2010/ 2011).

Based on above facts and statistics, I believed that UBC is an ideal research site for me to do a study about Chinese international students' higher education. Besides that, as a Chinese graduate student at UBC, it was more convenient for me to recruit research participants to attend my study. The reason why I chose undergraduate Chinese students as my research subjects was because they had a more recent experience in choosing to pursue overseas higher education after graduation from high school in mainland China.

Sampling method: snowball sampling.

Qualitative sampling is the process of selecting a small number of individuals for a study in such a way that the individuals chosen will be good informants for collecting data to understand a given phenomenon, because the purpose of a qualitative research is not to generalize into a context or population (Gay, Mills and Airasian, 2009, p.135). The most important sampling tenet of qualitative research is to select participants who are “thoughtful,

informative, articulate and experienced with the research topic and setting” so as to best help researchers understand the phenomenon under study. A large number of research subjects do not necessarily mean that the study and its results will be more reliable or useful (p.135-136).

In my study, I planned to recruit eight to twelve Chinese international students at UBC to participate in my research. My recruitment criteria for finding potential research participants were as follows: she or he finished senior high school in mainland China and is studying as an international undergraduate at UBC for the time being. There are different qualitative sampling methods. Snowball sampling is defined as selecting a few people who fit the researcher’s needs and then use those as the initial participants to identify potential participants until the researcher has reached sufficient number of research participants. I adopted snowball sampling as my sampling approach.

As a member of the Chinese student community coming from mainland China, I recruited four familiar Chinese international students to work as the third party to help me find prospective research subjects. Based on the policies on conducting a third party recruitment and snowball sampling regulated by the Behavioral Research Ethics Board (BREB) at UBC, I emailed these four students the Letter of Initial Contact and got their agreement to work as the third party in my study (see Appendix 2 and 3).

After getting the permissions from prospective research participants through the intermediate contact of the third party, I emailed them a Consent Form which was signed by them as an agreement of attending my research. In this Consent Form, I introduced my study and included necessary information about this study regulated by the BREB so that my potential research participants would be able to make an informed decision (see Appendix 4). Complying with my selection criteria, I recruited fourteen Chinese international undergraduates as my research participants. Among these thirteen research subjects, two of them didn't attend my interviews as they had agreed in the Consent form; three of them took part in my pilot study; nine students formally took part in my interviews.

Before I began interviewing my research subjects, I got their permissions to record their interviews with a voice recorder by signing the Consent Form as well. I also reconfirmed his or her permission before starting to record the interview.

Characteristics of research participants.

My nine research participants were between the ages of 20 to 22 years. There were seven female and two male students. These nine students are currently studying in different faculties of UBC. Three students are studying in different programs at the Sauder School of Business. Five students are enrolled in various programs in the Faculty of Arts. One student is a bio-chemistry student in the Faculty of Science. All these nine students started to study at UBC after 2009 as

either a first-year freshman or a transferred third-year senior. They came from five provinces in mainland China: Zhejiang, Shangdong, Henan, Guanxi and Jiangsu and two municipalities: Shanghai and Beijing (see Table 4). All of them are Han nationality which is the main nationality group in current mainland China.

Table 4 Personal Background of Nine Interviewees

Student	Gender	Home Province/Municipality	Major and Academic Year at UBC	Faculty at UBC	Ethnic Group
S1	Female	Shangdong	Commerce and Economics / the third-Year	The Sauder School of Business	Han
S2	Female	Shanghai	Economics/third-year	Faculty of Arts	Han
S3	Female	Beijing	Economic/third-year	Faculty of Arts	Han
S4	Female	Jiangsu	Finance/third-year	The Sauder School of Business	Han
S5	Female	Henan	Not claimed a major/second-year	The Sauder School of Business	Han
S6	Male	Guanxi	Bio-Chemistry and Chemistry/second-year	Faculty of Science	Han
S7	Female	Henan	Theatre Design and Production/third-year	Faculty of Arts	Han
S8	Beijing	Beijing	Psychology/third-year	Faculty of Arts	Han
S9	Male	Zhejiang	Linguistics/fourth-year	Faculty of Arts	Han

Among these nine participants, five students transferred from other Canadian post-secondary institutions to begin their third-year learning at UBC. The other four students were recruited by UBC as a high school graduate. Most of them had studied in an ESL program in an English training organization in mainland China or other post-secondary institutions in Canada before they wrote Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or International English Language Test Service (IELTS) in order to meet UBC's English language proficiency requirements for international students. In order to successfully come to study in Canada, these

nine students have used different types of services of international education agents to assist them through the whole preparation and application procedure of student visa and overseas post-secondary institutions.

Data Analysis

Kvale (1996) claims that learning about some approaches to interview analysis helps researchers make the time-consuming analysis process more organized and productive (p.187). He argues that the interviewer conducts data analysis on the sites of interviews and after finishing transcribing interviews. In his words, the interviewer may conduct the “on-the-spot” confirmation and disconfirmation of what the interviewees describe. After that, the interviewer may analyze and interpret the transcribed interviews in three steps: organizing the complex interview materials by transcriptions or computer analysis programs, classifying the essential and non-essential materials and finally developing the meanings of the interviews.

Kvale (1996) suggests five approaches for researchers in the “developing meanings” step. I will adopt the following four approaches to conduct the data analysis process in my study: condensation of meaning, categorization of meaning, structuring of meaning through narratives and interpretation of meaning (p.188-204):

Meaning condensation: reducing large interview texts into briefer and more succinct formulations

Meaning Categorization: coding interview materials into categories including reducing long statements into simple categories and thus structuring a large text into a few tables and figures.

Narrative structuring: focusing on working out the structures and plots of the stories told by the interviewees or creating a coherent story out of the many happenings reported by the interviewees.

Meaning interpretation: conducting in-depth interpretations of the statements and recontextualizing the statements of interviewees within broader frames of reference.

In my data analysis procedure, firstly, whenever I was unclear about my interviewees' responses, I did the on-the-spot checking and confirming to completely understand what they meant. I adopted Kvale's three steps and four approaches to analyze my research findings. As the first step of the data analysis procedure, I transcribed verbatim nine interviews and emailed these transcriptions back to my research subjects to check their accuracy. After that, I classified my interviewees' narration into essential and non-essential information based on what information is necessary or superfluous for answering my three research questions.

During the following in-depth analysis and interpretation process, I firstly condensed my interviewees' narrated motivations and anticipation for pursuing overseas higher education into shorter statements, and then categorized these shortened statements into minor or major and individual or common factors. Gay, Mills and Airasian (2009) advise researchers to use figures

and tables to add clarity to research findings (p.513). Using the push and pull model as my theoretical framework, I further categorized the major or minor and shared or personal motivating factors into push or pull factors in tables or figures. Doing this categorization helped me find out how well the push and pull model theory explains the study-abroad activities of my research participants.

I applied Kvale's narrative structuring approach to organize interviewees' experiences in knowing and utilizing relevant Chinese government policies on foreign study. After completing organizing and writing well-structured stories of my interviewees, I concluded how well they were informed of the Chinese government's policies on overseas education during their decision-making procedures and if they had relied on relative policies to benefit their going-abroad activities. Therefore, I obtained information to answer my third research question exploring what role did the Chinese government's policies on foreign study play in my interviewees' decisions on studying abroad.

Kvale (1996) also suggests that researchers conduct a "re-interview" step by giving their research subjects an opportunity to comment on the interviewer's interpretation when he or she has finished the analysis and interpretation of the interviews (p.190). Taking Kvale's advice, I asked my research participants to review my data analysis and interpretation as a "re-interview" so as to improve the trustworthiness of my research findings (Kvale, 1996, p.190).

Trustworthiness of Research Results

Qualitative researchers use trustworthiness as the term to describe the validity and reliability of their studies to distinguish themselves from the traditional quantitative research paradigm. Research methodologists have written about different strategies that can be used to improve the trustworthiness of the qualitative research. Drawing comments from Merriam (1988), Miles and Huberman (1984), Creswell (1994) frames trustworthiness into internal validity and external validity.

Regarding the internal validity, researchers discuss the plans to triangulate or find “convergence among sources of information, different investigators or different methods of data collection”. Researchers also use member checks as another strategy. They take the categories or themes back to the informants to check accuracy of their conclusions. Trying to involve research participants in all phases of the study is also a method for researchers to improve the trustworthiness. For example, the research participants may help collect data and review the findings.

In terms of improving external validity, discussing the limited generalizability of the findings is a useful method for researchers. The researchers should also write about the limited replication of the study so as to improve the reliability of the study. If a researcher keeps detailed

records of the research context and the data collection procedure, the readers will be able to decide whether this study can be replicated in other situations (p.159).

Taking into consideration realistic strategies for improving the trustworthiness of my study during a limited period of time, I employed member checks as the means to improve the internal validity of my study results: emailed each research subject his or her interview transcript to confirm its accuracy in order to make sure that my later data analysis and interpretation would be based on true information. I also emailed my research participants the first draft to ask for their feedback on it so that I involved them as the reviewers of my study.

In order to improve the external validity of my research outcomes, I pointed out the limited generalizability of my study findings in the chapter Discussion and Conclusion in this thesis so that the readers of my thesis will have objective suppositions about the generalizability of my study findings. I presented sufficient details of my study procedure in the chapter Methodology so other interested researchers will be able to judge if it is possible for them to replicate my study in other contexts.

Research Ethical Considerations:

Confidentiality of the research participants is a very important concern for me so I coded each research participant to be anonymous and used alphanumeric S1, S2 and so on to identify all information about each research subject in order to keep their identifications strictly

confidential. The interview transcripts are kept in a locked filing cabinet and also stored in a password-protected computer folder. Only my supervisory committee members Dr. Rubenson, Dr. Mazawi and Dr. Walter and I have access to all stored data. The signed consent forms are stored separately from other data in a locked file cabinet to protect my research participants' identities. According to the regulations of the BREB at UBC, all data records will be kept in a safe manner for five years.

Chapter 4

Results

Introduction

This Chapter presents research results from the interviews of nine Chinese international students at UBC. This study adopted Kvale's four data analysis methods to find different motivations and expectations of the nine research participants seeking overseas higher education (Kvale, 1996, p.188-204). The researcher condensed and organized the lengthy verbatim interview transcripts to obtain inquired information to answer her three research questions. After that, the researcher categorized the main or minor and the shared or individual motives that influenced these nine students' decision to study abroad. Based on the theoretical framework of this study, the researcher categorized the variety of motivating factors into pull or push factors.

Motivation and Influential Factors for Making a Study-Abroad Decision

Various motivations for studying abroad

Although my interviewees shared some common motives that drove them to decide to pursue higher education in Canada, they did have different reasons and incentives that brought about their determination to do their undergraduate learning abroad. In the perspective of their different personal characteristics and family backgrounds before coming to Canada, I found that it is better to categorize them into three groups of students. Considering the confidentiality of my interviewees' personal information, all information about them is anonymous. Based on my

interview order, the alpha-numeric S1 to S9 were used to identify my research findings about each student.

S3 and S7 were categorized as the first group of students. These two students acquired their senior high school education in a local-foreign jointly sponsored program. They decided to undertake their undergraduate study abroad before attending senior high school. Thus, their motivations are articulated separately from the other seven students (see Table 5):

Table 5 Shared and Personal Motives of Two Students

Shared Motives	Not studied in a regular senior high school so was not competitive in attending the national entrance examination
	Few opportunities to get in the key universities if not studied in a key senior higher school
	Parents' support and sufficient financial abilities for going-abroad study
	Self strong desires for experiencing the life and study in an advanced Western country
	Perceived better quality of higher education in a developed Western country compared with that of China
	A brighter future after graduating from a well-known overseas university
	Easily accessible information about foreign higher education institutions and their located countries from the co-sponsored high school program
Personal/Other Motives	Assistance of international education service agencies
	Not satisfied with the educational system and teaching/learning methods
	A spring-board for realizing the desires for travelling around the world
	Expected more opportunities for future profession and life in an less-populated overseas country

The motivations of the other six students S2, S4, S5, S6, S8 and S9, were put into another group because all of them had finished a regular senior high school education and wrote the

national entrance examination before they decided to apply or transfer to study in a Canadian university (see Table 6):

Table 6 Shared and Personal Motives of Six Students

Shared Motives	Failed to be enrolled in the most desired university because of a deficient total score of the national entrance examination
	Much harder to get a good job if not graduating from a well-known university in China and having useful social network /relationship
	Parents' support and good economic situation
	Family relatives or friends' recommendation and support who are living in their desired overseas countries
	Perceived lower quality of higher education in China
	Strong self-determination to experience the outside world: different cultures and societal environment
	Perceived more opportunities to obtain a satisfactory job if graduating from a famous university in a developed Western country
	Affordable overseas study costs
	Relaxed policies on international student's study visa in a host country
	Assistance of study-abroad service agencies
Personal / Other Motives	Not enjoyed learning or life in the university in China
	Couldn't transfer to more favorable university because of the lack of the transferring system in the higher education system in China
	Work permit for international students
	Possibility to immigrate into the host country
	Impressive visiting experience of UBC and Vancouver
	Desiring to learn and improve English or other foreign languages in a English-speaking country
	Having friends/townsmen who were studying in their desired host countries
	Getting enough English language test score for applying for an inclined overseas post-secondary institution
	Getting face to face orientation and other first-hand information about desired higher learning institutions and their located countries by attending the China International Education Exhibition Tour (CIEET)

S1 is the student whose experience before deciding to study in Canada is different from the above eight students because she is the only student who did a normal senior high school

education but didn't write the entrance examination as most of her peers did in China. I believe her incentives are worth presenting individually (see Table 7).

Table 7 One Student's Motives

Individual Motives	Feeling not fit in the educational system: teaching methods and learning environment in senior high school
	Strong self-determination to study abroad so as to avoid taking the national entrance examination
	Desiring to experience a different study environment in a different country
	Family members' support and reliable financial capability
	Seeking a better future after graduating from a well-known overseas university
	Loving learning English since a young child
	Affordable overseas study costs in a host country
	Having a cousin who was studying in a Canadian college and provided her information about learning in Canada
	Work permit for international students
	Assistance of overseas study intermediary service agents

Common motivations of the nine interviewed students.

Although they finished different types of senior higher school education, after comparing their motivational factors, I found that they have the following common intentions and anticipations that drove them to undertake higher education abroad:

(1) First of all, the once-in-a-lifetime national entrance examination is still an overwhelming obstacle that hindered them from obtaining a desired higher education in mainland China.

Most of them did not perform as well as expected in the entrance examination. Therefore, they didn't meet the admission requirements of their most desirable universities. Two students (S5 and S6) said that although they were looked at by their teachers as outstanding students in their classes in a key middle school in their cities, they still didn't manage to get a competitive score for applying for their intended universities outside of their residing provinces: Henan Province and Guanxi Province.

They thought that because both Henan and Guanxi are two comparatively under-developed areas in China (refer to the economic regions of China on p.31), two factors affected their choices of higher education in a passive way: firstly, there is an allocation of admission quotas that is biased to a great extent towards local students residing in the cities where most key universities are located, thus marginalizing non-local students. The other negative factor is that because of the unbalanced distribution of higher education resources across the whole nation, there are few high-quality universities located in Henan and Guanxi because most of 985 and 211 universities are located in Eastern regions and other big cities. As a result, their opportunities of studying in a better university were reduced largely due to above reasons.

Even for the three students (S1, S3 and S7) who didn't write the national entrance examination, they didn't believe that if they had written it, they could have obtained required score for being able to learn in an ideal institution. S1 came from a developed Eastern province-

Shangdong, but she didn't think her academic performance in senior high school was good enough for her to get a satisfactory result in the entrance examination. Thus, she didn't have courage to attend the entrance examination. S3 and S7 didn't attend a regular senior high school, so it was almost impossible for them to obtain a required score to attend their intended higher education institutions in mainland China.

However, these students didn't want to give up hope for pursuing high-quality higher education despite all discouraging factors, so they decided to seek a second chance in the popular host countries of international students. To a certain extent, studying abroad was regarded by them as the only reachable choice under their dismaying situation.

S5:

"It is very hard to for senior high school graduates in Henan Province to go to study in a top university in Beijing. My first choice was to study in Beijing University but my total score in the national entrance examination lacks eight marks to meet the required total score for applying to Beijing University. Then, I had to study in China Agricultural University. It is still a good university in China, but I didn't feel satisfied with this result because I knew in my heart I still wanted to study in one of the top university like Beijing University, so I decided to find if there are opportunities for me to do my undergraduate study in an foreign university..."

S6:

"I didn't get an ideal total mark in the entrance examination so had to study in

Guanxi University. The university enrollment rate is not so high in Guanxi Province since it is a remote and less developed province in China. My classmates in my senior high school thought I was lucky to get a seat in the best university in our province, but I felt so disappointed and unlucky. I had believe I would get enough total score to study in one of first-class universities outside of Guanxi Province because I was a good student in my senior high school. In Guanxi, we were not allowed to re-take the national entrance examination so going abroad was the only choice for me to change my destiny.”

(2)All students had a strong self-determination to go to study abroad, which was the most influential internal motive for them to choose to pursue foreign higher education. Six students were disappointed with their performance in the entrance examination but they believed that their learning potential deserved better quality higher education. Thus, they began to look for possible opportunities outside of their home country before other people came up with opinions or suggestions for them.

S3 and S7 decided to choose a different route to obtain more opportunities to achieve high-quality university education long before their graduation from senior high school. The reason behind their decision to complete a senior high school education in a local-foreign co-sponsored program was that they hadn't performed well in the united entrance examination for senior high school in their cities. Thus, both their parents and they believed that they would be in an inferior position compared with the students who were studying in the key senior high schools. There are

large disparities in teaching quality, learning environment and other educational resources in different levels of senior high schools in their living regions.

Therefore, their parents and they thought that attending a Sino-Canada jointly sponsored senior high school program would be a rewarding strategy to help them avoid their perceived disadvantages in accessing tertiary education in the future. On the other hand, as a senior high school graduate from a Sino-foreign co-sponsored program, they would be exempt from writing the entrance examination for higher education. However, they would have academic qualifications to apply for an overseas post-secondary institution. These two students also commented that their parents gave them the freedom to choose which kind of senior high school they wanted to attend and supported their choice. Thus, it was mostly their decision to pursue an alternative senior high school education.

To conclude, these two students already chose to undertake an overseas undergraduate education even before they attended senior high school. Their self-determination is the first step in their long-term preparation for their study-abroad plan.

S3:

“I didn’t get good scores in the united entrance examination of senior high school in Beijing, so I couldn’t go to study in a key senior high school in my district. But, I thought compared with those students studying in a key school, I would also in an disadvantageous situation when I were to attend the entrance examination for applying to a good university. My

parents felt that although a Sino-Foreign co-sponsored senior high school program is much more expensive than regular senior high school education, the investment should be a very rewarding investment because it will increase my chances of getting in a good overseas university in the future.”

S1 who didn't write the entrance examination after graduating from a normal high school, decided to undertake overseas higher education mainly because of her disappointment with the learning atmosphere in her senior high school. She said that a student's academic performance was regarded by everyone at her senior high school as almost the only criterion for judging his or her success. She found that the most valuable achievement of a student was all related to his or her test scores. She thought herself as a disobedient or even rebellious student to these commonly accepted views. She said that she was in confusion about the purpose of her study and life during the whole three-year learning in her senior high school.

As an imaginable outcome of her perceived rebelliousness under the teaching and learning environment in her school, she was thought of as a poor student in her academics. As a direct consequence of her undesirable academic performance, she decided not to attend the entrance examination. Instead, she began to look for possibilities to undertake higher education outside the Chinese higher education system. She wanted to give herself other opportunities to realize her higher academic goals.

S1:

“I felt so much pressure from my study in my senior high school. I was studying in a key senior high school in my city but I found it was so hard for me to get used to the competition for a better score and stressful study environment in that school. All my teachers told us to only focus on study other than other things, but what the purpose of our learning is? I don't want to be a bookworm because I need to have my own aspirations for learning knowledge and planning for my future life. Unfortunately, I found most of my classmates were just studying for getting a high score in the coming entrance examination...”

(3)Parents' social and economic background was another main decisive factor for choosing to study abroad.

It is impressive for me to find out that my interviewees' families were willing to respect their children's determination to study abroad as long as they thought that it would be a beneficial decision for their children' higher education achievements. Most of their parents were objective and had an open mind towards their children's decisions. They spent a long time discussing their thinking and planning in order to find out feasible ways to realize their study-abroad dreams.

As discussed in above texts, financial constrains may be an outstanding obstacle in gaining access to higher education for different groups of populations in a stratified Chinese society. Compared with the domestic costs of higher education, the expenditure of overseas higher

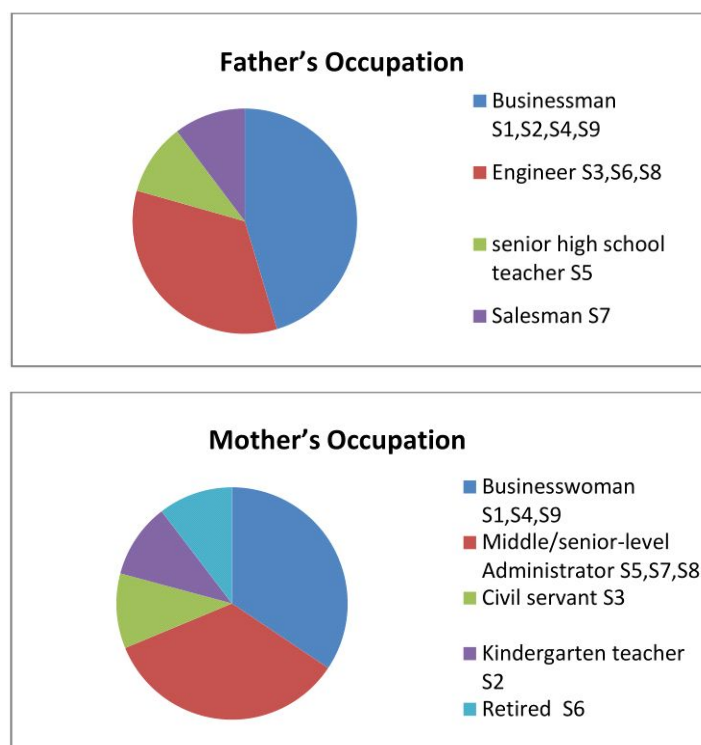
education in an advanced OECD country was a much higher investment for my research participants' families. However, the financial expenses were not a constraining factor for these students.

Since not all families in mainland China can afford their children's overseas studies, my interviewees' parents estimated whether or not they had sufficient financial capabilities to make such an educational investment. But, they felt confident in supporting their children's four-year overseas learning in a developed Western country. I found these students' parents' confidence was closely related with their social and economic backgrounds in China.

After being asked about their family's social class, all of my research participants without any hesitation replied to me, "I think my family belongs to the middle class in China." Three of them told me that they thought their families could be categorized into the upper middle class (see Figure 9). Thus, if referring to the classification of social classes in current China (Wang, 2009, p.11), these nine students obviously were belonging to upper or middle class population groups. Their families' social and economic class explains why they have more freedom in their choices of higher education.

Figure 9

Nine Interviewees' Parents' Occupations



My interviewees said that their parents believed that investing in their higher education is the most valuable investment in their future adult life. Because they, except one female student, are the only child in their families, they could exclusively use their family's incomes and savings to pursue better higher education. On the other hand, their academic success is also regarded by society as their parents' success in raising a child. A young person's educational achievements are still highly valued by ordinary Chinese people.

Although it seems that the economic factor did not arouse the parents' concerns too much based on their professions and incomes, these students' parents worried about whether they could get the admission offer from their preferred overseas universities and the study visa to go to the

host countries. Most importantly, they were not sure how they would live independently in a culturally and socially different country since they have grown up in a very comfortable living environment as the only child in the family.

To be more specific, their parents worried about whether their children have developed the maturity and necessary life skills to begin an independent life in an unfamiliar Western society.

They considered about whether the host country could provide international students a safe living and learning environment. Several students' mothers struggled emotionally at the thought of separating from their daughter or son for a long time if they would go to study abroad.

However, after managing to overcome their worries and concerns, these students' parents endeavored to seek useful assistance from different sources to help their children successfully go to study in their desired overseas universities.

It was not surprising to find that having work permits for international students in host countries was not considered by my interviewees to be a very important motivating factor. But, because of the high tuition and living costs in a developed Western country, having legal rights to work as an international student in that country was regarded as a needed financial "backup" in case the students' families were unable to pay for their overseas education in the event of an unexpected situation. Moreover, an off-campus work permit was thought of by these students as

a means to not only reduce their families' financial burden but provide them a valuable opportunity to experience Western society outside the university campus.

(4) All students believed that obtaining a higher education degree from a famous overseas university would be quite beneficial to their post-university life.

Although their middle-class parents may have a useful social network to help them get a decent job after graduating from a university, they wanted to endeavor to enhance their own competitiveness in the job market. Therefore, obtaining a higher education degree from an elite overseas university, such as UBC was believed by them as the most useful means to increase their advantages in their future job-searching process.

It seems that my research participants thought that the type and quality of higher education would affect their future life very differently. First, they were concerned about the quality of higher education in China. Three students who had studied at different universities in China felt disappointed with the learning circumstances and the regulated curricula in their universities: they had to study mandatory political courses that they didn't have any interest in; some of their instructors were still instilling knowledge into students instead of inspiring them to be a self-motivated university student; they wanted to experience more effective teaching methods but most of the time some of their instructors only relied on textbooks to teach students; they found many of their peers were learning only for a degree not for their true interests in an academic

field. Under such academic circumstances, they felt confused with the goal of their higher education.

However, there is not a transferrable system in current higher education sector in mainland China. Therefore, searching for a better university or program in an affordable Western country was almost the only possible choice for them to change their situation.

S8:

I really wanted to study in Beijing Language and Culture University but I lacked six marks to meet the admission requirements of Beijing Language and Culture University. Then, I went to study in Beijing Technology and Business University, but that was originally my second choice. Later, I found the most competitive programs of this university are all about technology and commerce but I was enrolled in the “English Language” program. Also, I didn't expect there is too much politics in our learning environment, such as the competition among my peers for joining the Communist Party, so I decided not to continue my study there. Going abroad seems to be the only choice for me at that time.

Moreover, their status as a student of a non-key university made them worry about their future job-seeking prospects. The reality in China is that the job-seeking process has become more and more difficult even for the graduates of the elite universities. The main reason is the dramatically increased number of senior high school graduates being enrolled in both public and private higher education institutions due to the university expansion policy. Another outstanding

factor that may influence the graduates' future employment is the family network or social status of their parents in current Chinese society. The university graduates whose families don't have an influential social network may have fewer opportunities to obtain a good job, and this situation is even true for the graduates of the best universities.

S2:

"I feel that it is hard for a university graduate to get a good job because they can't get help from a useful social network or their families have the relationship with influential persons in the society. Because there is such a large number of newly-graduated university students each year in China, I heard that getting a good job is becoming more and more difficult for the students who only have a degree but don't have other useful assistance."

The other two students who graduated from a Sino-Canada co-sponsored senior high school program heard from different sources about the passive learning situation amongst many Chinese university students. This gave them more confidence in their decision to study abroad. The only student who didn't write the entrance examination in China but finished regular senior high school education had the same concerns as the above two students. They said the following mentality is common among many Chinese university students: for a Chinese student, it is almost the end of diligent learning after passing the entrance examination. University is a place

that is more for pleasure, relaxation and romance but not a place for working as hard as in high school.

S6:

“I preferred to learn in a university where the knowledge is delivered to students instead of being instilled into students. I don’t like to be taught by my teachers how to think about problems because I need more freedom to have my own thoughts and develop my own ways to learn about different knowledge. I don’t want to be a passive recipient of knowledge.”

S4:

My learning experience made my desires for studying abroad became stronger because I found many familiar senior students in my university were wasting their study time and waiting for their graduation. I felt they couldn’t learn much useful knowledge but I didn’t want to be like them. At that time, I was thinking about why I need to learn in a university and how I could live for four years like that ...”

In order to obtain useful information about overseas higher education institutions, my interviewees and their parents spent a large amount of time searching for universities and academic programs on the Internet, such as the websites of Times Higher Education World University Rankings, the Maclean’s Annual University Rankings and the targeted institutions. They wanted to know about different universities’ history, worldwide rankings, programs and tuition fees, the number of international students and so on.

They went to attend the China International Education Exhibition Tour (CIEET) to communicate in person with representatives of different overseas post-secondary institutions. They discussed with their relatives or family friends who had been studying or living in their desired host countries so as to know more real-life information about these countries and higher education institutions in these countries. They also seek assistance of professional international education agencies. They hired registered overseas education agents to help them make the best choice regarding the host country and study program according to their children's academic background and family's financial situation. To conclude, it was a time-consuming and complicated procedure to make a decision on the host country and institution.

During their consideration and comparison processes, the quality of a higher education institution is the most concerned aspect for the students and their families. The worldwide rankings of an institution in several popular university ranking websites were referenced as the most convenient and trustworthy information source. The rankings helped them make a judgment on the education quality of a targeted institution. Students expected to learn current practical knowledge and skills from a university with a well-recognized research and teaching quality in the world. So, they would actually enhance their competitiveness in obtaining a professional job after graduation.

Except the perceived benefits for their future professional development with their overseas higher education degrees, they were also motivated to choose a country where there are relaxed immigration policies for international students. Six out of nine interviewees felt that although they had not been very clear about whether they would go back to work in China or stay in their host country after their graduation from UBC, the possibility of obtaining the host country's citizenship or immigrant residency status would give them more convenience to travel between China and the host country in this globalized world.

To experience the Western culture and society is another important motivation for these students. Because their generation was born after 1990s, they have been growing up in an information-explosion era in China. They could access different forms of media to search for needed information and knowledge about the Western world. Besides that, they are living in the times when there is a continuing going-abroad trend among the college-age young people in mainland China. Therefore, it was not difficult for them to get information from their acquaintances, friends or relatives who have study-abroad experience. However, having real experience of other cultures seemed to be a more rewarding experience for them, because this would enhance their understanding of other cultures. They thought that their overseas study and living experience would be a very valuable asset in assisting them in becoming a young person with global vision and philosophy.

S9:

“My Uncle graduated from UBC ten years ago. Actually, he has lived in Vancouver for more than ten years until this year. He told me that people living in Canada have more freedom to follow their heart when need to make a choice in study or work. When I was considering which university I should apply for, he gave me lots of useful recommendations and information about different Canadian universities. Besides that, I got many interesting information about how people in Vancouver is living their life. I felt I would be able to experience a new life style in Vancouver and that was quite exciting for me. ”

Important voices in their decision-making process.

During my research participants’ decision-making procedures, they referred to the opinions, suggestions and recommendations from different information sources (see Table 8). I found that although all my interviewees have gone through a complicated procedure to reach their final decision, different voices have influenced their final choices of where to pursue undergraduate learning.

When being asked, “Whose opinions were important to you in your decision-making process?” All of them said that their self-determination is the most decisive opinion for them. After these students’ self-determination, the decisions and suggestions of their parents is the second most influential information source for them.

Table 8 Types of Information Sources

Sources of Various Voices	Number of Respondents (N=9)
self-determination	9
Family members' opinions and decision	7
Family's friends' views/suggestion	2
Relatives' opinions/recommendations	5
Own friends' information/experience/suggestions	4
Study-abroad service agent's opinions/suggestions	9

S5:

“Father is father. His opinions were the most important opinions for me except my own strong desires to go abroad, because I knew he must have thought about my study-abroad decision in different perspectives and wanted to find out the best choice for me.”

S2:

I always most trust my parents' ideas because I found they always could make a wise choice for me at crucial moments in my life, such as where to attend junior high school, when was the best timing for me to write TOEFL and so on. I trust their opinions about my higher education too. I'm their only child so I know they are willing to do their best to help me have a brighter future.”

My interviewees thought that the voices of their family relatives and friends were a reliable information source too. So, they discussed their study-abroad plans with people who have studied or are currently living in their preferred host countries. As to these students' own friends who have study-abroad experience in different host countries of international students,

they informed them of Chinese students' learning and living situations in their host countries.

When these students decided to study in the same host countries, this information was especially useful for them.

International education agents' opinions and suggestions were also looked at by my interviewees as a dependable information source. Two students (S3 and S7) who finished the Sino-Canadian senior high school education used the intermediary service of their schools: the staff in their programs instructed them on how to apply for Canadian post-secondary institutions and how to prepare the application materials for obtaining the study permit to Canada. Among the other seven students, five of them hired overseas education agents to get the admission offers of overseas institutions. Only two of them applied to UBC by themselves. But, all students got their student visa to Canada with the assistance of overseas education service agents.

According to my interviewees' experience, the contracted international education agents usually made a list of the possible choices of host countries and institutions based on the student's personal preferences, academic and family financial background. Then, they gave the student a list of recommended higher learning institutions so that they could choose where they wanted to study. My interviewees said that because their agents were working as the recruitment representatives or consultants of some overseas institutions, they preferred to suggest that they apply for these institutions. Also, because their agents wanted to get their full commission, they

preferred to persuade them to apply for the institutions that are located in the countries that have more relaxed policies on giving international students study permits.

In the current international education market in China, only the registered intermediary service companies are permitted to provide Chinese citizens overseas education and visa application services. However, there were also overseas education agencies under illegal operation in my interviewees' cities. My research participants did not trust their qualifications and doubted their professional ethics. Also, they were aware that they could refer to the list of the certified international education agencies on the website of the Ministry of Education of China so as to avoid hiring unqualified agents.

Most students who have used the educational agencies' services were satisfied with their services. They thought that the professional knowledge and experience of these agents played a very important role in obtaining a student visa to Canada because they did not know how to prepare complete application materials. However, one student who used the services of a registered international education agency had a different experience. She was persuaded by her agent to apply for a private English training school located on the Point Grey Campus of UBC. Her agent told her this is a prerequisite for studying in the undergraduate program at UBC. After she arrived at that school, she was required to pay the whole-year tuition fees in advance. Then, she found that this school was not an affiliated school of UBC as it had been claimed by her

agent. Her study experience in this school was not useful at all for her application to study at UBC but she could not get her tuition fees back.

The Role of the Chinese Government's Policies

As discussed in the Review of Related Literature, the Chinese government implemented different policies on encouraging and supporting Chinese students to pursue overseas higher education in the past several decades. In my study, I wanted to explore how these policies had played a role in my interviewees' decision-making process and the realization of their study-abroad plans.

According to the answers of my interviewees, only two students told me that they had done some research on the Internet in hopes that there will be financial aid for self-funded study-abroad students from the Chinese government. However, they did not meet the government's criteria to obtain its subsidy as financial aid for privately-funded students is only available for doctoral students. They said that they were not disappointed with this result. Because the students in mainland China already need to pay for their higher education, they did not think that their overseas higher education would get financial assistance from the government.

The rest seven students were surprised to know there are policies on encouraging Chinese students to undertake self-financed foreign study. They, including the above two students presented that they didn't care if there are government policies facilitating their study-abroad

activities or not, because they and their families considered their study-abroad decision as a personal or a family's choice. Therefore, they thought that their study-abroad decisions did not have close relationship with the government.

They expressed that they were not so interested in knowing about government policies on Chinese students' overseas study. Even their contracted education agents didn't mention any policies from the government to them. Several of them said, "if there is no financial aid for us from the government, what is the meaning of encouraging us to study abroad with written policies?"

S2:

"Encouraging policies? Is there this kind of policy from the government? Why should I want to know about that? My parents and I didn't feel it is necessary to know about the policies since they have financial abilities to pay for my four-year study abroad."

S8:

"We didn't consider about the policies at all when I was preparing for studying abroad, because my study is self-funded. And, my agent also has never mentioned any policies to me. I just heard about these policies from you..."

Push and Pull Factors for Self-Funded Students

Major push and pull Factors.

Based on my interview results, I found push and pull factors have a combined influence on the students' and their families' decisions on undertaking an overseas higher education (see

Table 9). Different push and pull factors functioned as the more or less influential motives for different interviewees and their families.

Table 9 Push and Pull Factors for Students and Their Families

Push factors in the home country
Failed to study in an ideal university
Perceived lower quality of higher education in China
Self strong desire for a different higher education and culture experience
A middle-class family background
Other persons' supports and recommendations
Assistance of the study-abroad intermediary agents
Anticipated benefits for future life and profession
Intensive competition for university graduates to find a job in a highly-populated country
Pull factors from the host institution and country
A second chance to get in a worldwide well-known university
Attractive cultural and societal environment of a host country
Affordable study and living costs in a host country
A perceived more beneficial higher education and self-directive life in a host country
Relaxed government policies for international students: visa, work permit and immigration possibility
Familiar people's satisfactory study and life experience in a host country
Expected more opportunities to have a better future life in a less-populated country

Weight of push and pull factors.

In accordance with the decision-making procedures of my interviewees, the existing push factors were more crucial motivating factors for them.

Two students (S3 and S7) completed senior high school in a Sino-Canadian cosponsored program. They and their families chose to undertake overseas undergraduate education before beginning their senior high school learning. The reason for making such an early decision was that they didn't meet the admission requirements to study in a key senior high school in their cities. And then, they thought that the low teaching quality in the non-key schools would make it

hard for them to perform well in the entrance examination. Thus, they felt that it was wise to study in a Sino-foreign cosponsored senior high school program because they thought that it was the first step for them to undertake good-quality overseas higher education.

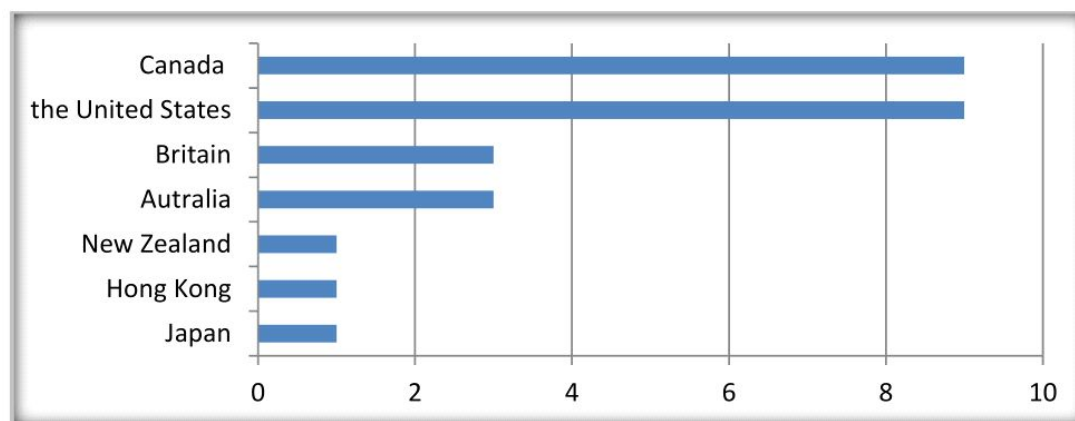
Another motivating factor for these two students is they have been learning English as a mandatory language course since the primary school. So, they believed that it would not be very difficult for them to study in a senior high school program with English as the instructive language. When it was time for them to consider where to attend a university, their English language proficiency was a powerful pull factor motivating them to choose English-speaking countries as their study destination. The other pull factors are as follows: the admission requirements and study environment in a targeted institution, study costs in the host countries, the social environment of the host countries and even the weather of their desired study destinations.

For the other seven students, their study and life situation before deciding to go abroad were the factors that inspired them to seek an overseas undergraduate learning.

Most of them only wanted to study in English-Speaking countries because they have been learning English since their primary school. When choosing where to pursue their undergraduate education, the United States and Canada were the top two choices of study destination. Britain, Australia and New Zealand were their second choices or back-up choices in case they couldn't

get the student visa to the United States or Canada. Among these three countries, Britain and Australia were more preferable than New Zealand. Only one student regarded Korea and Japan as her first choice and North America as the second choice. There was one student who considered either the University of Hong Kong or an elite institution in North America as her most preferred study destination (see Figure 10).

Figure 10 Desired Host Countries of Nine Students



Since my interviewees chose to go to study in Canada, the three most important pull factors that affected them to make such a decision are as follows: The comparatively lower tuition fees of international students, the stable and multicultural social environment and higher possibilities to get the study visa. Although Britain is still a popular study destination for Chinese students, the much higher tuition fees for international students prevented my interviewees from choosing to study there. All of my interviewees didn't consider going to other European countries because they did not want to have to learn another foreign language at such a mature age.

Australia and New Zealand were chosen by my interviewees as two back-up study destinations, because they and their families believed that it would be easier to get the visa to these two countries and the tuition fees in these two countries were also cheaper than that of Britain and the United States. Only one student had regarded Korea or Japan as her first choice of study destination because she preferred to live and study in a society with an Asian culture, but her family members suggested that she go to study to Canada. The reason behind suggesting this was that they believed that the quality of Canadian universities is more worthy of their financial investment in her higher education. Besides that, Canada is also one of her most favorite study destinations if considering her academic background and her family's financial abilities. So, she decided to follow her parent's advice to apply for Canadian universities.

One student had considered applying to both the University of Hong Kong (HKU) and UBC as her first choice of study destinations, but later she gave up her choice to study at HKU due to the following reasons: there is not a big difference between the worldwide rankings of HKU and UBC; HKU has very challenging admission requirements for Chinese students from mainland China; Hong Kong is infamous for crowded and very expensive living conditions. Her mother's friends who have lived in Vancouver for many years suggested that it is better for her to study at UBC and then she could have someone take care of her in a foreign country. After further consideration of the advantages and disadvantages of studying at HKU or UBC, her parents and

she decided to apply to UBC. Even if she had not succeeded in getting UBC's offer after her first-time application, other Canadian universities that are among the top 50 universities in the world would still be her most intended institutions.

S2:

"I found some students went to study in a unqualified overseas post-secondary school but when they came back to China, their foreign degrees didn't help them find a good job, so choosing a university with good reputation is really important for my future study."

S7:

"I only thought about applying for the Top100 universities. Since my parents would spend lots of money on my overseas study, what could be the meaning for us if I couldn't go to study in a well-known overseas university? You know, it is not difficult for me to study in a university in China."

In conclusion, my interviewees first chose their host countries and then made a selection of the different higher learning institutions in that country. I found that they all aimed to be recruited in one of the Top 50 or at least Top100 universities with reasonable study expenditure. Their motivation behind this preference is that the worldwide ranking of an overseas higher learning institution still plays a significant influential pull factor for these students.

Chapter 5 Discussion and Conclusion

The Effect of the Internationalization of Higher Education on Chinese Students' Choices of Higher Education

Knight (1999) states that the internationalization of higher education affects the worldwide higher education in two ways: the international and intercultural characteristics in domestic institutions and the cross-border education outside of a country's jurisdictional border. In China's case, the internationalization of higher education has influenced the reform and development of higher education in both ways: opening the domestic education market to overseas education service providers and developing international education in domestic institutions. They are two key components of China's fundamental opening and reform policy since the earlier 1980s (Zhang, 2009, p.28).

Since China joined WTO in 2001, China made the commitment to open its educational market to foreign educational providers under the framework of the GATS in order to make use of foreign education resources to promote her domestic education reform (Li, 2009, p.14).

According to the statistics of the Ministry of Education, China, more than 800 Sino-foreign cosponsored institutions and programs have been established in 28 provinces by the end of 2004 (Li, 2009,p.18). On the other hand, approximately 1.3 million Chinese students from mainland China undertook higher education abroad in the past decade (MOE, 2010); Driven by both

economic and non-economic rationales, the major receiving countries of international students consider China as one of the most prospective source countries over a long period of time, especially the advanced OECD countries. The reason is because the internationalization of higher education will be further strengthened and expanded in the worldwide higher education institutions in the 21 century (Bodycott, 2009, p351).

Therefore, since science and education have become the priorities in China's development schemes in the 21st century, different scholars agree that permitting overseas educational provision on China's soil and encouraging students to study abroad have beneficial effects on fostering more needed human resources for China (Li, 2009,p.)

Living under a worldwide scope of the internationalization of higher education, my research participants were motivated and facilitated by this powerful external environment. Moreover, due to the implementation of the university expansion policy in Chinese higher education system, they had more choices of undertaking higher education both in and out of China. Although the Sino-foreign cosponsored higher education institutions or programs are thought as the necessary supplement to meet the huge demand of higher education in mainland China, studying abroad seems more attractive to Chinese students. The relevant statistics show that the number of Chinese students attending Sino-foreign cosponsored higher education is

incomparable with the number of students going abroad to carry out higher education (Li, 2009, p.18).

Table 9 indicates the pull and push factors (see p.75-76) motivating my research participants to study abroad. Based on this table, I found that the quality of overseas higher education acts as the most powerful pull factor for my interviewees. Therefore, Canada was chosen by my research participants as their first choice for their host countries. It is because of her reputation of higher education and comparatively lower study costs compared with other preferred study destinations. All my interviewees endeavored to be enrolled in one of the Top 50 or at least a Top 100 university because their families' social and economic class in Chinese society motivated them to have higher expectations for their higher education attainments. Therefore, UBC that was thought by them as an elite university in Canada was chosen as their most ideal host institution.

Recently, Canada became the sixth largest receiving country of Chinese international students (MOE, 2010). Previous researchers state that the economic benefits are regarded as the major rationale motivating the host countries of international students to support international student mobility. Therefore, the host countries put great effort into supporting the internationalization of their tertiary level institutions. International students in Canada are estimated to contribute more than \$6.5 billion to the Canadian economy every year. The

Citizenship and Immigration Department of Canada (CIC, Canada) announced that China has been the top source country of international students for Canada since 2009 (CIC Website, 2010). Canadian government has been “stepping up more efforts to recruit more qualified Chinese students to study in Canada” (CIC Website, 2010).

My research participants followed the steps of the previous study-abroad students from China to choose North America, the Great Britain and Australia as their most preferred study destinations (see Figure 10, p.77). Without doubt, the Canadian government’s policies on international education facilitated the internationalization of Canadian higher education system. Thus, it is comparatively easier for Chinese students to get the study permit to come to study in Canada. The off-campus work permit and preferable immigration policies for former international students are two most influential pull factors from the Canadian government as well.

Canadian higher education institutions have been enhancing their international characteristics in their academic and research fields. The enhanced internationalization of the higher education institutions attracts more and more Chinese students to study on their campuses. The above pull strength provides my research participants with attainable choices of higher education instead of only having to compete with their peers in China in order to secure a seat in domestic post-secondary institutions.

Based on my interviewees' responses to their knowing about relevant government policies concerning Chinese students' overseas higher education, the interviewees did not think the Chinese government's relevant policies had direct influences on their overseas study. However, they took it for granted that they could have free choices of where to undertake higher education. Except their take-it-for-granted awareness of being permitted to study abroad by the government, other involved persons who had influences to a different extent on their decision-making process also had the same consciousness.

Seeking a Better Future through Overseas Higher Education

In order to foster more talent to achieve sustainable economic development, Chinese government adopted the university expansion policy to create more seats for senior high school graduates to achieve higher education. However, the competition for entering into key universities has been understood to be tougher by my research participants in current China. It is the reason why my three interviewees who had attended different universities in China reconsidered where to finish their undergraduate education. It is not because they didn't get in a university in China but because there were no other ways for them to seek more desirable university education within the current higher education system in mainland China.

If based on the fact that the Chinese higher learning institutions enrolled an average of 20% of senior high school graduates who wrote the entrance examination each year from 1999 to

2009, some scholars believe that higher education in China has transformed from elite education to mass education (refer to Table 3 and followed texts on p.30). But, although the value of a university degree has not been lowered in current Chinese society, the disparities in the quality of different types of higher education institutions became a concern for the interviewed students and their families.

Some researchers exploring the studying-abroad trend among the university-age Chinese students point out that some going-abroad Chinese students went to study abroad after they failed the national entrance examination. However, my research findings proved that it was also discouraging for the winners of the entrance examination when they found that the employment rate of newly-graduated university students remained at a low level. Approximately 30% of university graduates and advanced vocational school graduates managed to find a job in 2009 despite the continuing booming economy in mainland China (Liu, 2009, p.19). Furthermore, they heard from different information sources that the employment of university graduates has remained a constant headache for the Chinese government.

On the other hand, the employers in China are looking for hiring university graduates with required employability instead of only having a university degree. Because it is hard for them to assess the quality of a student's higher education, a stable reputation of a higher learning institution seems to be a reliable standard of judgment. Thus, keeping these beliefs in mind, the

employers place the students who graduate from non-key universities in a more disadvantageous situation in their job-seeking process.

Although some of my interviewees were the envy of their peers as one of the 20% of the winners in the entrance examination, they were concerned about their comparatively lower competitiveness in the future job-market due to a degree from regular universities in China. Besides that, as the members of a highly self-motivated generation, they developed a more critical point of view on their higher education quality. If they can't transfer to study in a more desirable university, they started to search for other possible ways to obtain a more rewarding higher education.

Although the personal characteristics of these nine students are different, a cross-border higher education is the most accessible means for them to change their discouraging situations. This choice was also the choice of many other Chinese students in their generation. This was helpful to understand the motivations of my interviewees who made efforts to apply for the top 50 universities in the OECD member countries. They aimed to get a degree with a worldwide well-recognized quality. Therefore, when they return to China, they may be in a more superior situation compared with the situation if they would graduate from non-key universities in China.

Thus, it is time for both policy-makers and other insiders in the Chinese higher education system to consider how the expanded higher learning system better serves the students' learning

needs and other expectations and how to make their higher education more productive for developing required employability for their future professional development. The expanded university campus does not necessarily provide students expected higher learning experience.

Educational Attainment is Not Only for Personal Achievements

Although the choice of undertaking overseas higher education functioned as the initial push factor for my research participants, the realization of their study-abroad plans was definitely not only the students' personal decision. The generation born after 1990 in China has often been described by the Chinese media as a more self-centered and less collective generation when being compared with their previous generations. Despite the fact that my interviewees firstly made a decision on doing overseas undergraduate education, they considered their parents' views and suggestions as other most reliable and trustable information sources. To a certain extent, they relied on their parents' life experience, knowledge and information to make a better choice of study destination. From this perspective, they kept a very close relationship with their parents instead of only believing their own thoughts and choices.

When being asked about their plans after UBC, most of them didn't only think about how their own life would be more promising in the future. They wanted to stay close to their families and take the responsibility of looking after their parents when they age. They consider this to be a factor which will influence their decisions on whether to return to China or remain in Canada.

Five of my interviewees stated that they intended to immigrate to Canada. However, if they were to be separated from their families for a long time, they would not apply for immigration residency status no matter how successful they would be in finding work or pursuing further studies in Canada after their graduation from UBC. Moreover, even if they successfully immigrate to Canada in the future, they would not stay in Canada if their parents would not like to live in a totally different cultural and social environment. Most of my interviewees believe that taking care of their parents when they need it, is the reciprocation to their parents' raising and generous investment in their educational achievements. In this respect, this group of young Chinese students was not only concerned about their personal preferences for their future lives but still maintains and respects the traditionally valued merits in current Chinese society: educational accomplishment, the filial piety to parents and a united family.

As of December, 2011, the Canadian government began to issue “the Parents and Grandparents Super Visa” of Canadian citizens and permanent residents, which grants the immigrants' parents and grandparents legal rights to visit Canada up to two years without the need to renew their visitor visa (CIC Website, 2011). Considering the importance of the family reunion for my interviewed Chinese students, I believe this new policy will further increase the attractiveness of Canada to Chinese international students.

Attractiveness of “China Opportunity Theory” for Study-Abroad Students

The value of an overseas higher education degree.

As written in Results, my interviewees anticipated a more promising future by obtaining high-quality overseas higher education. As an international student coming from China, returning to China is surely a part of their future life planning. Looking back to the statistics in Figure 8, there was a sharp increase in the returning rate of study-abroad Chinese students and due to the rapid rise in the number of returnees, many returnees didn't manage to find a suitable job. They claim that an overseas degree has not had the same value as before for Chinese employers (p.81). A new word was even coined by Chinese people to describe unemployed returnees' dilemma: 海待 (Hai Dai: returnees waiting for a job).

My interviewees are inspired by many famous returnees' accomplishments in political, economic and other areas in Chinese society to go to study abroad. However, they worried about when they go back to work in China, whether their overseas higher education will bring them expected employment opportunities. That is a shared concern for them.

Because in the current job-market in China it is difficult for returnees having an overseas degree from an unrecognized or unknown higher learning institution to have their higher education credentials accepted and valued by the employers in China. Also, the employers in mainland China have gained more experience in hiring a study-abroad student by identifying the

quality of their foreign degrees. The reason is because of the large reverse flow of study-abroad Chinese students in the job-market in recent years.

Due to the discrepancy between the number of job-seekers and work positions in China, the university graduate with an overseas degree may not be in an advantageous situation if his or her degree is not trusted or respected by the employers. But, my interviewees believed that a degree from a top 50 university, such as UBC, will make a big difference when they try to get employed in China after graduating from UBC. It also explains the reasons why the worldwide top 50 or top 100 universities have the strongest pull power for Chinese international students. The increasing number of Chinese international students from mainland China at UBC where my interviewees are currently studying is a good example in this aspect. According to the statistics from UBC, the Chinese international students have become the largest international student community since 2009 (UBC facts and figures, 2011).

The effect of the “China opportunity theory”.

Researchers claim that as one of the most powerful newly-industrialized country in the world, China has been increasing its attractiveness to the overseas talent pool including the study-abroad students. The returning tide of study-abroad students in China is believed by these researchers as the effects of the “China opportunity theory” on the returnees’ choices between remaining in the host country and returning to their mother country (Gao, 2003; Chen et.al, 2003;

Han and Zweig, 2010). The increasing number of study-abroad students in the past several years has proven the claimed effects of the “Chinese opportunity theory”. These researchers claim that this reverse flow of study-abroad students does not have a close relationship with the returnees’ patriotism; instead, it is a rational flow.

Three of my research participants expressed that they will return to work in China because they believed that China has a more dynamic economy and therefore, there will be more opportunities for them to use their knowledge and skills. They also felt more comfortable to live in a familiar cultural and societal environment. Six of them were thinking about finding a job in Canada after graduating from UBC and may also apply for immigration after obtaining a stable employment in Canada. Only one student planned to start a master’s level study at UBC because he thought that a master’s degree in his major will bring him better academic and career prospects in the future. However, in the long run, the above seven students aim to return to China as a more accomplished returnee, not only as a returned study-abroad student without any real work experience in Canada.

Also, in accordance with their beliefs, they did not think that there is a necessary relationship between patriotism and returning to China or remaining in Canada. They said if they choose to live in Canada after their graduation from UBC, they will be willing to make contributions to China’s economic and scientific development in different ways.

One of the important goals of their overseas higher education is to increase their competitiveness for obtaining better professional development in their future lives. But, they do not completely separate their future career achievements with their cultural and societal environmental preferences that obviously will affect their choices of being a returnee or a “skilled immigrant” into their host country (Trembley, 2005; Gribble, 2008).

Therefore, it is hard to say that the study-abroad Chinese students’ preference to live in the Chinese society has nothing to do with their patriotism. Patriotism has been a traditional value upheld by many generations of Chinese people. As a member of the young generation in the current Chinese society, patriotism makes them recognize their responsibilities and possible contributions to establish a more developed China in the 21 century. In conclusion, although it seems that the attractiveness of the “China opportunity theory” is regarded as the most influential factor that resulted in the returning tide of study-abroad Chinese students, their future choices of residing and work place are also influenced by other factors.

Searching for more Accessible Support for Privately-Funded Overseas Study

Based on the research findings, the supporting policies on overseas study from the Chinese government were not an important motivator for my interviewees’ decision on studying abroad. Their answers to the role of Chinese government’s policies in their decision-making process show that they were not much concerned about how the relative government policies work for

them. If there are any useful government policies for overseas studies, two of the students who tried to search for financial aid for self-funded students did not find any. Several of them have taken part in the International Education Exhibit that is organized by the Ministry of Education in China.

My interviewees believed that the investment in their overseas higher education was more related with a personal decision and a family's financial situation but not with the financial support from the government. I think that their mentality was mainly related to their family background (refer to Figure 9 on p.64-65). All of my interviewees claimed that they came from an upper or middle-class urban family. And, most of their parents were working in upper-level occupations so they could afford their expensive overseas study. That was the reason why they had a lack of interest in knowing about relevant government policies before coming to study to Canada. This also explained why the work permit for international students in Canada was not a very influential factor for their choosing to come to study in Canada.

However, there existed the widening inequality in access to higher education for students from different regions, social economic classes and ethnic groups after the implementation of the university expansion policy in current China. Thus, if these students were raised in a family belonging to a lower social and economic class or in an under-developed region in China, it would have been impossible for them to study in an overseas elite university. Therefore, it

showed that the advantageous groups in society had obtained necessary social and economic capital to reproduce their power in their next generation.

According to the Chinese government's policies on privately-financed overseas study of Chinese citizens, the Chinese government provides Chinese students a macro-level policy environment. Based on the research participants' awareness of the relevant policies from Chinese government, it seems that these policies were not perceived by them to have direct influence on their decision on studying abroad. However, their consciousness of having the freedom to choose to undertake domestic or overseas higher education shows that these policies had influenced their study-abroad plans and activities in an indirect way.

It is worth noticing that few policies aim to give more practical assistance to self-funded students. Only the outstanding doctoral student may meet the criteria to get moderate financial aid from the government. Therefore, for the students who want to undertake an overseas undergraduate education, the costs seem to be the responsibility of the student's family.

I think that the lack of the government's financial aid for study-abroad students corresponds to the situation in the higher education sector in mainland China. Since 1997, all students attending public universities are required to pay tuition fees because of the decentralization of financial aid in Chinese post-secondary institutions across the whole nation (Li and Xing, 2010). So, it was not surprising to find that my interviewees were expected to rely

on themselves and their families to pay for their overseas higher education. There are no financial resources for the poor but talented students in China to pursue overseas higher education under the current policies on Chinese students' study-abroad activities from the Chinese government.

However, the fact is that the self-funded study-abroad Chinese students constitute 90% of the total number of study-abroad students in the past decade. With regard to the “brain drain” to “brain circulation”, more than one million privately-funded Chinese students consist of the largest proportion of overseas talents. If it is necessary for China to gain more overseas talents to contribute to her innovation imperatives in different key development schemes in the new century, more accessible assistance for outstanding privately-funded study-abroad students should be put into consideration by the Chinese government.

Recommendations for the Chinese students intending to Study Abroad

Although my interviewees' study life in Canada was not always smooth and comfortable, all of them didn't regret their decision to study abroad. They were satisfied with their learning experience and teaching quality at UBC. UBC also provided them plentiful on-campus activities and events to broaden their views about the world. In addition to the learning outcomes, they felt that as a young person, it is very meaningful for them to become more open-minded and tolerant towards other cultures, values and ideologies.

Referring to their unsatisfied experiences at UBC, the students mentioned that it was difficult for them to mingle and make friends with local students due to different growing-up experience and cultural habits. As a result, most of their social life took place within the Chinese international student or Asian student communities. Based on their living experience in Canada, they believe that independent life skills, self-discipline and diligent study are the three most necessary skills for study-abroad students to reach their educational goals in Canada. Thus, they thought that it was not objective to recommend or not recommend other Chinese students to study abroad because they believed that a student's personal characteristics are the most important factors for deciding if it is right for him or her to live and study without parents or other people's guidance and assistance.

However, it can be concluded that it is never an easy road for Chinese students to become a successful study-abroad student. There are both sorrows and joys in their overseas study life. Some factors may result from their personal characteristics, and the others may be brought about by the learning and living environment for international students in the host country.

Conclusion

In this study, I aimed to find the motivations of a group of Chinese students choosing to study abroad and how the existing push factors in China and the pull factors in the host countries and higher education institutions influenced students and their families' decision on undertaking

overseas higher education. Because the research results were based on the interviews of a small number of participants, they may not contain sufficient information to explain the factors driving a large number of Chinese international students to go and study abroad.

I believe my research findings should be more appropriate for interested scholars, researchers, educational professionals or students to know how different factors inspired my interviewees to decide to study abroad after the enforcement of the university expansion policy in China. On the other hand, due to a limited period of time for doing this study, I did not recruit more male Chinese international students to attend this study. Thus, this study didn't reflect the motivations rooted in the gender group.

As an educational graduate student who has higher education experience both in China and Canada, my interests in the internationalization of higher education and its impact on Chinese students' choice of higher education will continue to be my future research focus. I want to explore what kinds of obstacles are faced by study-abroad Chinese students during their overseas learning experience and what are the sources behind these obstacles.

I am also interested in interviewing another group of study-abroad Chinese students in my future research: the students who chose to transfer from the Chinese post-secondary institutions to study in overseas higher learning institutions. I want to investigate deeper into

finding what factors inspired them to make such a decision and how they went through their decision process.

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Appendix 1

Interview Guide

During my interview procedures with eight to ten potential research participants, I will use the following eight broad questions as my interview guide for obtaining inquired information to answer my three research questions:

1. Could you tell me a bit of your background?
2. What made you go abroad to pursue higher education?
3. Whose opinions were important to your decision to go and study abroad?
4. What if any role did the Chinese government's policies on foreign study play in your decision?
5. How did you choose your study destination?
6. How are you financing your overseas studies?
7. What are your plans after you complete your studies at UBC? Why?
8. Would you recommend your friends or other people go abroad for their higher education studies? Why?

After the interview, I will ask my research participant whether he or she has any questions or concerns about my interview, and will inform them that I will email them the transcripts or notes of the interview to check its accuracy within the next week.

Appendix 2

Letter for the Third Party Recruitment

Dear Chinese International Students at UBC:

My name is Qiu Qiong Jiang, a M.A student studying in the Department of Educational Studies at UBC. As a requirement of my M.A program, I'm doing a study exploring the Chinese international students' motivations and anticipation to pursue overseas higher education. I'm doing this study under the supervision of Dr. Kjell Rubenson in the Department of Educational Studies, UBC. Because you're one of Chinese international students who are currently learning at UBC, I'm contacting you for asking you to help me recruit perspective research participants among the Chinese international students at UBC for my study. I'm looking for eight to ten Chinese international undergraduate students aged between 19 and 22 to participate in my study.

According to the Third Party Recruitment policies regulated by UBC, I need to ask you to obtain the permissions from your contacts who would like to participate in my study. If you agree to assist me doing my study, please distribute the following Introductory Letter for Perspective Research Subjects to your contacts so that they will obtain more information about my study.

If you have any questions or concerns about my study, please contact me. I would be delighted to have your reply within the next week.

Yours Sincerely
Dr. Kjell Rubenson
Qiu Qiong Jiang

Appendix 3

Introductory Letter for Perspective Research Subjects

Dear Chinese International Students:

My name is Qiu Qiong Jiang. I'm a Master's student in Adult Education in the Department of Educational Studies at UBC. As a part of requirements of my Master's program, I'm doing a study exploring the Chinese international students' motivations and anticipation to pursue overseas higher education. My research supervisor is Dr. Kjell Rubenson in the Department of Educational Studies, UBC. I'm writing to you to invite you to attend my study because I'm looking for ten to eight Chinese international students who are aged between 18 and 22 and currently studying at UBC as my research subjects. I aim to investigate what factors motivated you to choose to seek overseas higher education, how well you knew and took advantage of the Chinese government's policies on foreign study to facilitate your study-abroad plan before you went abroad, and how your decision on undertaking overseas higher education were influenced by the push forces in China and the pull forces from your desirable host countries and higher learning institutions.

If you agree to participate in my study, you will be asked to do a face-to-face and one-on-one interview with me on UBC Point Gray campus or other places at your convenience. The date and time will be negotiated with you. The individual interview will last about 40 to 50 minutes. After getting your permission, your interview will be audio-recorded for the following date analysis and interpretation. Please be assured that all information about your interview will be kept strictly confidential, and only my supervisory committee members and I will have access to these information in accordance with the Confidentiality policies regulated by UBC. You can terminate your participation in my study at any time. As a small thank-you gift, you will get a ten dollar Starbucks Card for your participation. You would not be required to return it to me if you were to withdraw from my study.

In order to recruit my research participants, I asked several familiar Chinese international students to be the Third Party to assist me distributing this letter to you. If you can participate in my study, I would be very grateful to obtain your agreement within the next week. After I get your permission, I will email you a consent form to be signed by you for confirming your

participation in my study. If you have any questions or concerns about my study, I can be reached at the above-mentioned email address or call number.

Yours truly

Dr. Kjell Rubenson

Qiu Qiong Jiang

Appendix 4

Chinese International Students at the University of British Columbia Consent Form for Research Subjects

Principle Investigator:

Dr. Kjell Rubenson, Professor, Department of Educational Studies, UBC.

Co-Investigator:

Qiu Qiong Jiang, M.A student, Department of Educational Studies, UBC.

Background:

Last decade saw an unprecedented demand for overseas higher education among mainland Chinese students (Ministry of Education of China, 2010). The statistics shows that 1.62 million Chinese students in mainland China went to study in more than 100 foreign countries and regions from 1978 to 2009, and approximately 1.32 million of the study-abroad students undertook overseas higher education between 1999 to 2009 (MOE, 2010). Among these students, over 90% are self-funded students. Till the end of 2008, one million mainland Chinese students were still studying in 100 different countries (The Sixth Press Conference of MOE, 2009). China has become the largest source country of international students among an approximately three million international students studying outside of their origin countries around the world (IEE, 2010).

Based on the prediction in relevant literature and the Ministry of Education of China (2009), there is still great space for international education providers to attract more Chinese students to study on their campuses, so it is meaningful to explore the factors influencing Chinese students on deciding to undertake foreign higher education.

Purpose:

Based on the going-abroad tide among mainland Chinese students, this study will explore what factors motivated students to pursue foreign higher education. You are one of Chinese international students at UBC and aged between 18 and 22, so you're being invited to take part in this research study.

Study procedure:

If you consent to participate in this research, you will take part in a face to face and one-on-one interview. The date and time will be negotiated with you. Your interview will last about 40 to 50 minutes on UBC Point Gray Campus or at other places at your convenience. You can choose to answer my interview question either in English or in Chinese. With your permission, the interview will be audio-taped so as to help us do later data analysis and interpretation in this study. If you only consent to be interviewed but don't want to have your interview audio-taped, your request will be accommodated. The transcript of your interview will be emailed to you for checking its accuracy.

Potential risk:

Since all my perspective interviewees are adults (18-22 years old), and are responsible for their statements and actions. There are not foreseen risks for them to attend my study.

Potential benefits:

Your participation in this study will help extend current understandings of Chinese international students' motivations and anticipation to seek foreign higher education.

Confidentiality:

Your identity will be kept strictly confidential. I will code you as Student 1 or Student 2. This coding number will be used for identifying all information about you in this study. Your interview transcript will be kept in a locked filing cabinet and the recorded data of your interview will be stored in the recorder, a password-protected computer file folder and flash disk. With regard to the access to all stored data, only my supervisory committee members: Dr. Rubenson, Dr. Mazawi and Dr. Walter and I will have access to your data. Your signed consent form will be stored separately from other data in a locked filing cabinet to protect your identity. According to the policies of UBC Behavioral Research Ethics Board, all data records will be kept in a safe manner for five years.

Remuneration/Compensation:

As a thank-you gift, you will be given a ten-dollar Starbucks card. However, your remuneration will not be dependent on your completion of this study. If you want to terminate your interview at any time before completing it, you will not be asked to give back your Starbucks gift card. During the interview, light refreshment and drinks will be provided.

Contact for information about the study:

If you have any concerns or questions about your interview and this consent form, please feel free to contact with Dr. Kjell Rubenson Qiu Qiong Jiang.

Contact for concerns about rights of research subjects:

If you have any concerns about your treatment or rights as a research subject, you may contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at 604 822 8598 or if long distance e-mail to RSIL@ors.ubc.ca or toll free 1-877-822-8598.

Consent:

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without needing to return your remuneration. Your data may be withdrawn at any time prior to the completion of the analysis.

Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.

You **consent** to participate in this study.

Subject signature

Date

You **consent** to have your face to face interview **audio-taped** by the researcher.

Subject signature

Date