

Challenges Affecting Academic Adjustment and Hoisting Dissatisfactions Over University Rules and Officials: A Case Study on International Students Struggle in China

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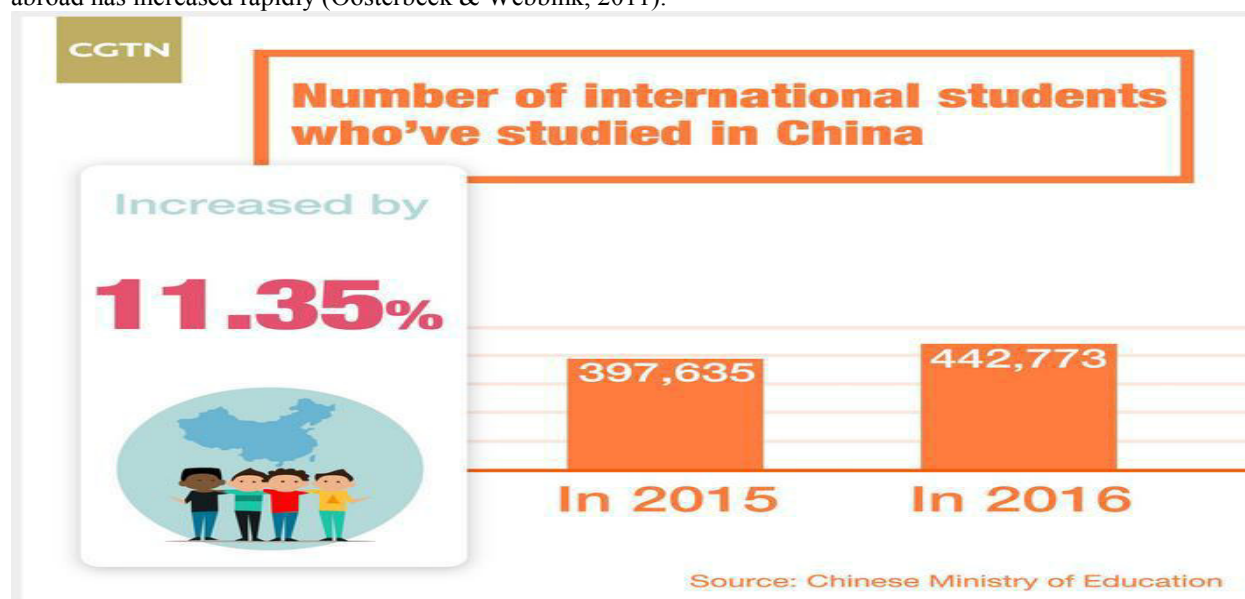
Abstract

This study provides research findings on the International students struggle in different universities in China by using qualitative method which was conducted between June 2017 to July 2017 among 30 International students who are studying in China. International students are from various regions and studying in the dissimilar universities in China. The purpose of the study is to investigate the kinds of challenges they are facing regarding academic adjustment and universities rules & officials. International students were interviewed segmenting 2 parts and the answers from interviewees are recorded. Different interviewees have expressed their problems differently and some of the circumstances are roughly same. This study recommends that as Chinese universities are giving so many favorable opportunities to the overseas students to study, it is also a big responsibility of every university in China to take further steps to prevent academic adjustment challenges and take account into university rules and officials.

Keywords: Academic Adjustment Challenges, University Rules and Officials, International students, China.

1. Introduction

To a great extent, overseas students are increasing in China by hitting 440,000 in 2016, with an increase by 35 percent compared with that in 2012. China has become the world's third most popular destination where international students choose to study abroad after the US and UK (Ministry of Education of China, 2017). A total of 442,773 international students studied in China's educational institutions in 2016, with an increase of 11.35 percent from the 2015 total of 397,635. Among the international students in China, 60 percent were from Asia, 18 percent from Europe and 11 percent from Africa. The top five source countries were South Korea (15.93% of total), the US (5.38%), Thailand (5.20%), India (4.23%) and Pakistan (4.21%). According to statistics released by the MOE, the major distribution of international students studied in China diversified a lot in 2016. Compared more than half of international students choosing Chinese language in 2012, the ratio has declined to 38.2 percent in 2016. And the top three chosen by international students in 2016 were western medicine, engineering and business (Ministry of education of China 2017). China attracts a much larger proportion of non-award students than other popular international study destinations. In recent years, studying abroad has increased rapidly (Oosterbeek & Webbink, 2011).



Despite huge popularity, there are many grumbles against university rules, office staffs and academic curriculum in China. International students are not very much elated with the management and academic quality of their present university, therefore they have put across their dissatisfactions towards Chinese university rules

& officials and challenges impacting their academic performances. This is immeasurably typical that they face difficult circumstances, as they prefer to study abroad for their higher education improvement. Furthermore, they are confronted with difficult situations, like classroom environment, university management, regulations, academic differences, teaching methods, university authority imposition on study module, interference while taking own step to build up ideas regarding academic curriculum.

The universities in China yet now have not enough attraction for International students because they have not good plans for foreign students and under the complex international situation and tremendous pressure of competition (Rong, 2005). One academic difficulty is the lack of resource reference experience which helps in developing students' academic achievement (Haung, 2006, McClure, 2005). To remove the cultural barrier that is the major hindrance to understand the academic culture of a country, the interaction faculty and other fellows are necessary for language practice and better understanding (Baohua, 2008). The issues of greatest concern to international students' are the challenges of higher education and getting used to new ways of learning and thinking, as international students come from different countries with different backgrounds (Bektaş, 2008; Directgov, 2011; C. Lin, 2010). This is an immense responsibility of the university team to have a great concern to limit the restrictions and overview international students adjustment challenges to solve it as much as they can. By not considering the needs and adjustments of international students, students feeling unfulfilled, disappointed and even exploited (Sherry, Thomas & Chui, 2010). To provide superior education to the present and future international students, members and the management team should frame a clear strategy by understanding and making familiarity with the international students' needs and considering second thought over international student's potential challenges which they may confront during their course studies.

1.1 Literature Review:

International students often face an array of challenges in the process of adapting to new teaching and learning systems. In the Australian context, this process has been termed 'academic shock', as students may initially struggle to adjust to an environment which differs significantly from their prior educational experiences (Savic, 2008). (Yan and Berliner, 2009) stated that international students as the academic stressors. Academic difficulty categories among international students refer to the academic system, lecturers and methodology of teaching (Al-Zubaidi&Rechards, 2009). A major concern for international students who study abroad is the language barrier (Roets L 2013, Sawir E 2005, Sawir 2012, Yeh CJ 2003). Language skills has been consistently identified as a major barrier to academic adjustment (Guilfoyle, 2006; Lu, Le, & Fan, 2012; Sawir, 2005; Son & Park, 2014; Yu, 2009).

An additional challenge highlighted by international students, in their new study environments, is that the learning style is often quite different from the style that they are used to in their home countries (Chung M, Ingleby R, 2011). The presence of international students in the classroom has the potential to change both the content and the process of education. These changes may be perceived as positive or negative. For example, educational settings that boast of students from diverse national and cultural backgrounds have intrinsic assets for widening an intellectual perspective and internationalizing the content of teaching material (Colleen Ward 2001).

An exploration of academic difficulties indicated adjustment to teaching style as a major difficulty (Edgeworth & Eiseman, 2007; Townsend & Poh, 2008). The adverse impact on the quality of the lack of formal preparation of academic staff for their role as teachers, the poor academic qualifications of many academic staffs are the major challenges in highest education (Harman, Hayden and Nghi 2010). Researchers have reported that students often have trouble understanding professors' expectations and grading style (Zhou, Freg & Bang, 2011). The teacher-centred approach is a traditional teaching and learning process where knowledge is transmitted to students by a 'spoon-feeding' method. This can result in students being too dependent on teachers to provide all the information for them (Wong 2004). International students are very likely to misunderstand students and professors in the host country and to be misunderstood themselves (Mellon, 2013).

A growing body of literature has illuminated barriers to international students in developing strong student-supervisor relationships (Due et al., 2015; Lu et al., 2012; Son & Park, 2014; Soong, Thi Tran, & Hoa Hiep, 2015; Wang & Li, 2011; Warner & Miller, 2015). International graduate students conflict with faculty supervisors indicated that throughout the student quitting, careful discussion and student changing to a new supervisor the conflict was resolved (Adrian, Tischler and Kimberly, et .al 2007). Many of the students arrived with superficial knowledge about their courses and the university and consequently faced frustration (Khawaja & Dempsey, 2008).

Many international students struggle more with academic writing and the volume of reading assigned. Needed to help international students to prioritize readings and refer students to campus resources for more help (Marian kisch 2014). New strategies need to be developed to address actual difficulties that hinder students' success in education. There is a crucial need for helping students to improve language proficiency. When students are not confident about their language ability they are not able to actively contribute in classroom

discussions. Misinterpreting this behavior as being passive is not helpful. Like any other student, international students bring valuable knowledge and skills. It's time we began to see what we can learn from their pedagogic cultures (Thushari Welikala 2015). The academic activities must not be limited to classroom activities only. It must cover everything that can develop and instill good values, attitude, character and strong personality. It also should take into account the learning environment which includes good infrastructure and support service (Ali Reza Jalali, Md. Aminul Islam, Ku Halim Ku Ariffin 2001).

Bista (2011) expressed concerns about academics, personal, administrative and other areas that they may not have felt comfortable expressing in person. Universities need to change their perceptions about how students learn and why they are here. Students today whether home or international have access to multiple ways of learning. Once international students are enrolled, efforts must be made to ensure that they are well received and assimilated quickly into college life to improve retention and ensure adequate classroom performance. The needs of international students must be addressed because failure to recognize or plan without this student population in mind may lead to diminished funding for colleges and program failures in certain academic disciplines (Hegarty, 2014). International student services offices are needed much more especially to help students navigate the new rules and regulations (Wang, 2007). Administrative staff related more closely to students as customers than to academics as customers (Waugh 2001). Researchers stated that students are discriminated most alarmingly by academic staff (Guilfoyle & Harryba 2011), (Novera 2004).

Since international students come from different countries, they will face different problems (Bektaş, 2008; Directgov, 2011; Lee & Rice, 2007; C. Lin, 2010; Sovic, 2009). For most of the international students, college rules and regulations are unclear at first. New international students need to know important information when they arrive (Krishna Bista 2011). Students who get limited contact time with university staff are less likely to enjoy the student experience and those who don't work hard enough don't have a good time either. Average students spent more time studying independently than they did with teaching staff, leaving some feeling unsatisfied with their experience of university (Claire Shaw 2015). Students have difficulty in comprehending feedback on their work (Warner & Miller, 2015). Working directly with the international student office is a great way to handle challenging interactions with students (Marian kisch 2014). The importance of administrative support staff as a first point of contact for information about how to access resources to enable them to carry out their studies and the importance of university policies to enhance the learning and living experiences of students through institutional management (especially administrative and language support), building strong student communities that encourage frequent interaction among students of diverse backgrounds enable them to carry out their studies (Baohua Yu & Ewan Wright 2016). The regulations, which do not apply to students from Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan, are reportedly established to regulate university and college admission processes, cultivate and manage international students and provide them with "convenience" (Carl Samson 2017). Leveson (2004) identified a complex teacher-student relationship in higher education and in addition raised the idea that students are just one of many stakeholders and that they all may have different needs and expectations of the education system. The organization must have well defined processes to provide the resources and environment to satisfy each of the important stakeholders, where possible.

Administrators and faculty need to understand the differences and uniqueness of international students as a population that is entirely different from domestic students. An understanding of the differences that characterize this student population should be reflected in the ways professors and administrators relate to and work with international students (Emmanuel E. Akanwa 2015). The international office of the university and that at the School of Management, in coordination with various international students' societies, should organize more welcoming socio-cultural events at the beginning of new academic years to encourage all international students actively participate in cross-cultural adjustment. In addition, increasing tutor-student face-to-face communication in less formal environments will help them release various stresses and improve their confidence to carry on their studies (Gang li, Wei Chen, Jing-Lin Duanmu 2010). International students are an essential part of the higher education system. As such, higher education institution leaders must be committed to meeting their needs and expectations, especially given the rising competition in the international education market. The challenge of meeting international students' academic adjustment and must attract policy and strategic attention (Emmanuel E. Akanwa 2015).

2.1 Methods of the study:

2.1.1 Respondents

International students who come from different countries are selected to take this interview. Thirty International students are chosen for the data collection; 2 Syrian, 1 Malagasy, 3 Russian, 2 Bangladeshi, 1 Lao, 1 Congolese, 2 Pakistani, 2 Tajik, 2 Vietnamese, 1 Comorian, 2 Srilankan, 1 Cuban, 2 Thai, 3 South Korean, 3 Indian and 2 Indonesian international students. At present, they are studying dissimilar subjects, such as Geology, MBA, Sports Braining, Sports Psychology, Tourism Management, Applied Economics, Sports Biomechanics, Economic of Population Natural Resources & Environment, Mineral Resource Prospecting and Exploration,

Geological Engineering and Environmental Science and Engineering at different universities in China. Their ages are between 20 to 40. They have been living in China between 1 to 6 years and most of them are residing in their own university campus. Majority is receiving scholarships from the Chinese Government and few of them are self-paying students and all of them are doing Masters or PhD.

2.1.2 Data collection method

This paper used qualitative technique and interviews were taken individually. Discussions were audio recorded, it took almost 2 months to get the whole data from the selected interviewee. For the reliability and validity requirement, this interview was employed face to face. International students were given a few minutes to plan their speech before the interview. Some of them were not good at English, that's why they were instructed to give their answers in their country language. The interviews were segmented into two parts, one part consists of academic adjustment questionnaire and another part belongs to university rules imposition and university office curriculum questionnaire, those who have academic adjustment difficulties they are belong to 1st part and those who are struggling with university rules and office behavior, they are based on the 2nd part.

2.1.3 Results

Most of students have found language difficulties when it comes on academic adjustment.

Interviewee 1

I am not satisfied with the way I am taught in the class, because, it's a mess of scheduled classes, students whose major are in Chinese taught, have to attend classes with Chinese students, it's too difficult to understand the class lectures if someone has done only 1 year Chinese class before. Chinese is concerned as a toughest language in this world, so it's not easy for me indeed.

Interviewee 2

I have attended 6 major courses and 4 elementary courses, I am not very much satisfied with these courses, because, it does not make any sense with the required education which I am asked to do. On the other hand, I am too shy to ask questions to the teacher, because my Chinese speaking is not good at all. I fear others will laugh at me if I say something in Chinese.

Interviewee 3

The challenges I am facing are colossal, there are lack of collaborations of the academic system which are also affecting my studies. Economics and MBA are the different subjects, but university team has put all together in one class. This is very disappointing. I am an MBA student, I just have little idea regarding Economics, how come it's decided to add up and make me confused about my course, feeling like I don't have any knowledge into the whole field.

Interviewee 4

Although, I am satisfied with the Chinese language class activity, but, I am not contented with the major class activity. Without understanding what is taught in the class, I have to go there only for my credits and required attendance percentage, as if my only aim/goal is to fulfill my credits and scores. But I am not gaining any new knowledge which can help me in my career development.

Interviewee 5

Despite taking 1 year Chinese class, I don't understand major classes which are taught in Chinese, 1 year is not enough to understand Chinese language clearly if it comes on major subject courses. I don't know what I am learning and what I am being taught in the class. I don't have any scheme what is going on. Everything is messing me up and I am becoming aggravated day by day.

Interviewee 6

When I attended Chinese classes, sometimes I misunderstood class teachers and their lectures, because I didn't get them clearly. They spoke very fast, not easier for me to follow the instructions and lay them down. Moreover, university library facility is not well either. There are not accessible English books, documents and librarians can't even speak in English.

Interviewee 7

I did one year Chinese language class, but it's still hard to listen and answer in Chinese, one year Chinese course is not a sufficient amount to handle whole study. Besides it, the library services are not provided with available English books and English documentaries for English-speaking students, as a result, I am facing difficulties to access database systems for my further study and research.

Interviewee 8

I faced and still facing lots of problems, such as insufficient teacher's feedback, very poor library facilities for English-speaking students, and very poor academic structure for masters and PhD students. I am trying hard to come out from this issue & accept the academic differences, but it's my bad. I am failing every time to rise up.

Interviewee 9

First of all I am not good at Chinese language, I can't catch up class lectures, teaching methods, because my courses are taught in Chinese. I feel helpless, when I am told to speak or write in Chinese. Secondly, My English is also not good. All books are written in Chinese which translated into English in the corner. I grew up learning

Russian language. It's too hard for me to deal with Chinese and English at a time.

Interviewee 10

In my country, we all speak in French and our official language is also French. But here in China, we have to use Chinese and English which is not that easy for us at the time of communication and course study. When teacher teaches something, I have to ask my classmates about our lesson and what she is teaching, because I can't get her point correctly.

Interviewee 11

I don't think of with the academic arrangement I can develop my skill and improve my learning area. I am not saying that teaching is bad, all the teachers are really good in their own way, but the problem is what the university has arranged for us to study or learn is not oriented apparently. Starting from the class to library section all are jumbled and the services are always ambiguous.

Interviewee 12

My major challenge was to find out a supervisor to work with. The teachers who take classes, don't check my papers, their whole concern lies on my class attendance and the amount of bibliography I use in my papers. The way I was accustomed to is not same here, here are different procedures to have scores. Without any future development how can every position depends on scores!

Interviewee 13

I don't understand Chinese Grammar, it's very strange to study because it's not like English and it's different. I am not good at listening too. I don't know what I am taught in the class, I can't catch it appropriately. Sometimes, I find myself disturbed and annoyed with the whole academic matter from which I can't escape or there is no one who can rescue me as I have to handle all alone.

Interviewee 14

Chinese language is very difficult to study, all of my courses are Chinese taught. I tried to switch to the English taught class, but the class is full and don't have a single place for me to replace. I can't help but to study Chinese for my required courses and credits. I will not have new knowledge and don't have a chance to implement myself because I can't comprehend in class.

Interviewee 15

I am struggling with Chinese Learning which is the main requirement in my course study, there is a lack of explanation during my class hour. I faced lots of trouble while seeking of a supervisor. I am not pleased with the library services, they have not provided accessible English documents which can help me in my studies.

International students who have participated in this interview, expressed their dissatisfaction over university rules and university office curriculum.

Interviewee 16

University office staffs are not that much cooperative, they always show busy activity and some crazy environment and ignore others as much as they can. How many credits I have to gain, how can I know about the credits, if I want to change my major in English I have to wait 5/6 months or follow office staffs everywhere for a permit, that is very inconvenient.

Interviewee 17

International office is imposing rules to the international students, which we must have to follow starting from courses with accommodation and every time they change their regulations and come up with the new strategy every year which is very stressful to define.

Interviewee 18

When I came here in this university, I struggled to understand their execution and behavior, sometimes they seem ok and sometimes they seem very rude to us. I am trying my best, but somehow university environment is not supporting me.

Interviewee 19

International school and other department officials have a huge communication gap as a result, we have to struggle to find out exact direction. They are confused by themselves and they make us confuse too.

Interviewee 20

There are no specific rules for international student, no staff member can define it that we belong to the international education school or graduate school. It's more confusing. I talked with several staff members of the university to solve this problem, but it doesn't seem that they want to have any further thoughts and discussions regarding this matter.

Interviewee 21

When I needed support from the university team, somehow they reluctant to support me as they are doing their own job, in return, they say that they have enough things to do besides it and I have to solve my problem by myself. Because of their lower level communication skill and knowledge, they don't able to guide me.

Interviewee 22

As I am studying in a new university, university office members and staffs don't know how to support

international students with research publications and other related research activities. I have searched by myself with the help of a few international students who have favorable experiences in this field.

Interviewee 23

Our University office maintenance and staffs are not well organized; they are confused with each other's work which one who is going to handle who is going to take care of international students with significant matters, they don't even know it clearly. Sometimes I don't want to go to the office just because of it. I don't know what they are going to tell me based on the rejection or acceptance which depends on their daily mood and workloads.

Interviewee 24

I as an international student feel that international students and the university have lack of communication as a result both segments can't understand each other. Without communication, no one can build up a good relationship. Most of time, misunderstanding emerges from both sides and it is not that easy to escape from fire.

Interviewee 25

Usually the University office is very incompetent and doesn't do their work with synchronization. Mostly, they are not very organized because of lazy and ignored nature. I don't like to ask them for help, but if I need any help or support from them, very first I have to have much more patience to cope up their annoying behavior. Sometimes they are too offensive to tolerate.

Interviewee 26

I don't like my university rules, it seems very irrelevant to me. We are asked to be used to by the department as we are in China, but they don't mention that they would support us whenever we need them. They want us to do according to their demand neglecting our own perspective.

Interviewee 27

I don't understand and can't speak in Chinese and my university officials who are handling international students can't even able to speak in English. This is a very serious part that I can't communicate and make them understand that what I exactly want to say and what is my problem. It's a very tough situation for me and may be for us.

Interviewee 28

My University rules are restricted, I can't even go outside of the city without personnel permission. I am not a kid that I should tell them every detail in which I am going through. University team seems very discourteous to me. They don't want to listen to me, just doing their own business even though we are one of the main sources of university income and development.

Interviewee 29

Studying abroad is not a cup of tea that I can sip anytime. I have to face and still facing spontaneous obstacles at my university. University has imposed lots of regulations and time to time interfering in my study. What I need to do, which courses I need to take, I can't plan by myself rather than depending on them to settle all of it.

Interviewee 30

University staffs are very crazy, if I ask for any help they look at me like I am an Alien who have come from another planet to destroy them. Isn't it their responsibility to give appropriate and available services to us! It is really a strange issue. Without their support, I am getting troubled situations every time and to cope up from this issue is very much difficult, if they don't care about foreign students.

3.1 Conclusion

This study analyzes the academic adjustment challenges which are undergone by International students and their mental dissatisfactions over Chinese university rules and officials. It is ascertained that Language is the foremost obstruction encountered by International students on the subject of academic adjustments and there is also a lack of communication gap between supervisor-student, teacher-student and overseas students are not catered enough support & services by University officials and team. Although, university authorities, staffs, members all are devoting themselves to complete their valuable project accurately, but they can't overlook present situations of the international students who are the main priority for them to deal with.

They should give more support and more time to understand those students' needs and values properly. It is recommended that University authority should require 2 years of Chinese language courses to have more basic Chinese language acquisition, should provide the same role for international students, which is provided for Chinese students and also needed to make available laboratory works, accessible English books and considerable English materials. A few interviewees suggested that University office and international students should have opportunity of proper communication so that arising trouble can be mitigated. University office should have to have more patience, more polite during dealing with the students, and moreover, they should organize their management system comprehensibly, they just need to do their own job smoothly.

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