

Centre for Global Higher Education working paper series

Inward international students in China and their contributions to global common goods

Lin Tian and Nian Cai Liu

Working paper no. 46
March 2019



Published by the Centre for Global Higher Education,
UCL Institute of Education, London WC1H 0AL

www.researchcghe.org

© the authors 2019

ISSN 2398-564X

The Centre for Global Higher Education (CGHE) is a research partnership of international universities, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, the Office for Students and Research England.

CGHE's research is focused on higher education and its future development and aims to inform and improve higher education policy and practice. CGHE's three research programmes integrate local, national and global perspectives, and its researchers are based in nine countries across five continents: Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia and North America.

Inward international students in China and their contributions to global common goods

Lin Tian and Nian Cai Liu

Contents

Abstract.....	1
Introduction	2
Internationalisation of higher education and inward international students	2
Definition of common goods and its context in higher education	3
Review of previous research	4
Definition and importance of international students in China	4
History and development of education for international students in China.....	5
Key national policies and strategies on international students in China.....	7
Benefits created by international students and their relevance to common goods	10
Research design	11
Participants	12
Data collection	12

Data analysis	13
Ethical consideration	14
Results and findings	14
Perspectives of participants from government/agencies (N = 4)	14
Perspectives of university leaders and academics (N = 14)	17
Perspectives of university international students (N = 9)	21
Discussion	23
Contributions of inward student mobility in China to (global) common goods	23
Sound development of policies and practices for international students studying in China	26
Conclusion	27
References	28
Appendix: Changes and development of international students studying in China (2000-2016)	32

Inward international students in China and their contributions to global common goods

Lin Tian and Nian Cai Liu

Lin Tian is a Research Associate on CGHE's global higher education engagement research programme.

Nian Cai Liu is a Co-Investigator on CGHE's global higher education engagement research programme.

Abstract

The education for international students in Chinese higher education institutions (HEIs) has undergone five major periods in the past decades (1950-2019), making China gradually shift its role from a traditionally dominant source country of international students to an important study-abroad destination for international students. Through the lens of (global) common goods, with semi-structured interviews, this study explores the perceptions of people who are directly involved in international education in China (including government officials, university leaders and academics, as well as international students with different cultural backgrounds) and analyses their relevance to national policies. It is hoped that this research will assist in creating a new angle to examine inward student mobility worldwide. The findings of this study indicate that inward student mobility contributes to global common goods in the aspects of cultural diversity, global talents, shared educational resources, etc., which makes international education in China itself a global common good. Key policies related to inward international students are generally supportive, and meanwhile compatible to these global common goods to a large extent. Though there are some problems and tensions among policies, practices and (global) common goods in inward student mobility, both the Chinese government and HEIs have already proposed relevant solutions to deal with these issues in a constructive way.

Introduction

Internationalisation of higher education and inward international students

Under the influence of globalisation since the beginning of the 21st century, internationalisation of higher education has become an unstoppable and irresistible trend. Higher education is often more internationally open than most organisations and sectors due to its immersion in knowledge, which is never limited to juridical boundaries (van der Wende, 2001; Marginson & van der Wende, 2007).

Internationalisation of higher education, considered as the process of integrating international, intercultural or global dimensions into the purposes and functions of higher education (Knight 1999; 2004), has been a grand goal of many universities all over the world since the turn of the 1980s and 1990s, albeit in different forms.

International students are an essential component of internationalisation of higher education, and about 5 million international students are pursuing higher education outside their countries' border in 2016 (OECD, 2018). They have the potential to bring significant academic and economic implications and the number of them is expected to grow continuously during the coming years (Li & Bray, 2007). However, perhaps as important as the rising numbers of international students is the fact that the traditionally dominant destination countries for international students (e.g., the USA, the UK, Australia, Germany and France) face growing competition from newly-industrialised countries like China, Singapore, Russian and Malaysia. These countries, which once sent large numbers of students abroad are gradually becoming recipients of international students (de Wit, Ferencz & Rumbley, 2013; Abdullah, Abd Aziz & Mohd Ibrahim, 2017). The primary motives for these countries' push on attracting inward international students could be generalised as: enhancing international influence, promoting international exchanges, accelerating the process of building leading universities and potentially, generating economic gains.

Though the economic benefit of inward international student flows is not a main focus for certain countries (e.g., China), it is the primary pursuit for many developed countries including the UK and Australia. Therefore, when imaging inward international students, the notions of "global education market" and "global student market" are often used, which underpin the commercial value of inward student mobility and ignore its function as cooperative and win-win (Marginson, 2016a). In fact, inward student mobility is not solely market-driven, it brings various academic and social benefits not only to the host country but to other countries, including the countries of student origin. In light of this, (global) common goods could be a more inclusive lens to understand inward student mobility, since this concept highlights collective endeavor, shared participation/engagement, diversity, inclusion and responsibility (UNESCO, 2015).

Definition of common goods and its context in higher education

The idea of “common goods” is of significance in describing (higher) education, as (higher) education requires active participation and collective endeavor in the process, which is compatible with the definition of common goods (UNESCO, 2015; Tian & Liu, 2018). Common goods can be defined as goods that are “characterised by a binding destination and necessary for the realisation of the fundamental rights of all people, irrespective of any public or private origin” (UNESCO, 2015, p.77). “The good realised in the mutual relationships in and through which human beings achieve their well-being” (Hollenbach, 2002, p.81), which is “inherent to the relationships that exist among the members of a society tied together in a collective endeavour” (UNESCO, 2015, p.78).

Deneulin and Townsend (2007) argue that a celebratory dinner, an orchestral, or a team sport can be thought as common goods. They then take the orchestra as an example to illustrate how a common good is produced and how its benefits can be enjoyed. The good itself, an orchestra, cannot exist without each musician playing their respective parts and performing collectively for the whole audience. In other words, the good exists in the shared action which generates it. Also, benefiting from such good is by participating in it, whether in the orchestra or audience. Hence, the shared action is both intrinsic (unless various musicians’ participation and performance, the orchestra cannot exist at all), and instrumental (it is necessary, efficient and convenient to perform as an orchestra) to the good itself; and its benefits (an orchestra; beautiful music; excellent performance) are generated from the course of that shared action. Such kind of goods are intrinsically common in their production and their benefits, reflecting the distinct characteristics of intrinsic value and shared participation (Deneulin & Townsend, 2007; UNESCO, 2015). However, common goods may have boundary and be confined to a given group/community, since it is often socially embedded. Their creation and production are processes of collective participation. People who participate in these processes can benefit from them and these participants form a community with common interest (Tian & Liu, 2018). In light of this, global common goods are related to all people worldwide with global relevance, which are beneficial to people worldwide, and perhaps fostering social inclusion, integration, tolerance, equality, and human rights at a global level (UNESCO, 2015; Tian & Liu, 2018).

Thus, higher education itself can be regarded as a (global) common good, because receiving higher education can be regarded as a specific activity, and educators, students and other stakeholders involved in the process could jointly reap the benefits through shared participation, and higher education as a common good is closely related to concepts such as equity, justice, solidarity and inclusion (Walker & Boni, 2013, Marginson, 2016b, Tian, 2018). Also, the idea of common goods in higher education is especially important in the process of globalisation and internationalisation, because it refuses to be closed and conservative, encouraging global universities and educators to collaborate jointly and participate actively (Tian, 2018).

The previous literature draws a picture on the general situation of the internationalisation of higher education, students studying abroad and international education provided for them, etc, but it does not give as much attention to inward international student mobility from a common goods lens, and the (global) common goods which are created and increased by it are rarely spelled out. Through semi-structured interviews, this study aims to explore the (global) common goods generated and augmented by inward student mobility in China as well as relevant policies, regulations and practices. This paper begins with the broad literature on international students studying in China, the history and development of international education in China as well as relevant policies and strategies. Then, it presents the research method, procedures and empirical data. The paper concludes by linking findings to the previous literature, to deepen and extend the understanding of this topic.

Review of previous research

Definition and importance of international students in China

In the process of internationalisation of higher education in China, inward student mobility plays a very active role, because it is a manifestation of the strength of higher education and a reflection of China's cultural influence. Therefore, attracting international students has become an important part of higher education policies in China (Wang, Dai & Liu, 2014).

In 2017, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Public Security jointly issued the Administrative Measures for the Enrolment and Cultivation of International Students by Schools, which clearly defined the inward international students (also known as international students studying in China) as "foreign nationals who register with foreign passports to receive academic degree education or non-degree education in HEIs in China". Education provided by Chinese HEIs for these students can be regarded as the international education in China. The practice (or the phenomenon) of these students moving from a country of origin to China for such international education in a limited time is the inward student mobility in China.

In the context of a fierce global battle for brains, China increasingly considers HEIs as powerful instruments for projecting soft power and expanding its spheres of influence (Riaño, Van Mol & Raghuram, 2018). Since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, China has accepted hundreds of thousands of international students, and has educated a group of people who understand and respect the Chinese culture, and at the same time expand China's international influence, helping to enhance its international image (Jiang, 2010b).

History and development of education for international students in China

The recruitment of and education for international students in China began in 1950 and went through a 69-year history, which falls into the following five periods (see Table 1). In these years, despite the ups and downs in the development of international education, China has made significant achievements.

Table 1

Five periods of international education in China (1950-present)

Periods	Changes and development
I: Initial practice (1950-1965)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Background: China conducted more international exchanges with socialist countries in the former Soviet Union and developing countries in Asia and Africa. As a duty to fulfill international aid, China actively accepted a large number of international students from third world countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America (Cheng & Huang, 2008).• Statistics: China accepted 7,259 international students from 70 countries, with an annual average increase of 263 students and an average annual growth rate of 20.18% (Li, 2000)
II: Twists and turns (1966-1977)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Background: In the 1970s, China's diplomatic efforts achieved gratifying results which created a desirable external environment for international education in China. However, the outbreak of the "Cultural Revolution" severely affected the development of international education in China, which was interrupted for 7 years (1966-1972). Also, the deterioration of the domestic economic environment and the uneasy political situation made the international education that just started in China faltered. Later in 1973, China's HEIs resumed the recruitment of international students (Cheng & Huang, 2008).• Statistics: From 1973 to 1977, China only accepted 2,066 students from 77 countries, and the average annual number of students admitted was 413, with an average yearly growth rate of only 2.09%, implying a rather slow growth (Li, 2000).

<p>III: Low-speed progress (1978-1989)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Background: Reform and opening-up (in 1978) brought promising signs to China's higher education, and the education for international students gained a new direction (Cheng & Huang, 2008). • Statistics: 120 HEIs in China received 14,273 international students from 124 countries, with an average annual growth of 12.07%. The number of students' source countries increased by 47 compared with the previous period, and the number of HEIs receiving international students increased by nearly two times. However, this size was still far behind the countries where international education was at a developed level (Yu, 2009; Jin, 2012).
<p>IV: Establishing a new system (1990-1998)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Background: The keynote of the development of higher education is "accelerating the reform and development" (Cheng & Huang, 2008). With the formation of a self-operation system under the guidance of the government, international education in China entered the first period of rapid development. • Statistics: 339 HEIs in China accepted 234,691 international students from 164 countries, with an increase of more than 15 times compared with the previous period and an average annual growth rate of 28.56% (Yu, 2009).
<p>V: Rapid development with well-designed policies (1999-present)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Background: China entered the stage of mass education in 1999; later in 2011, China's accession to the WTO accelerated the integration process with a global economy which significantly enhanced the internationalisation of higher education. • Statistics: From 1999 to 2016, China accepted 3,854,049 international students from 205 countries and regions, with an average annual growth rate of 15.4%.

It can be assumed that before the reform and opening-up, the recruitment of and education for international students in China mainly served as a diplomatic tool for international exchanges and assistance. The number of international students was

rather small and they mainly came from countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. After the reform and opening-up, policies for international students studying in China gradually moved from closed to open, and the decision to accept and educate international students in China shifted from government to HEIs. Meanwhile, more than a few HEIs began to recruit self-funded international students and the number of these students rose rapidly (Jin, 2012). Later in 1990s, several improvements were made in the international education system. For instance, in 1992, the HSK (Han Yu Shui Ping Kao Shi, which is a standard Chinese language proficiency test) was used as a standard test for evaluating the language ability of international students. In 1996, the Ministry of Education established the China Scholarship Council, which specialised in organising, funding and managing Chinese students studying abroad and international students studying in China. Then, China implemented the annual scholarship review system, and the single scholarship system was diversified. Currently, the number of international students in China increased markedly and their study in China was greatly supported by a course of policies. In 2016, the number of international students studying in China was 442,773, rose by about 10 times when compared with 44,711 in 1999. China has entered the 10 highest-ranked destination countries in the world of international education, with the majority of international students coming from South Korea, America and Thailand. Most students prefer to study Chinese language, Western medicine, Chinese literature, Economics, Engineering and Management¹. During this period, policies for international students studying in China are more comprehensive (e.g., Plan of Studying in China in 2010), and efforts related to promoting inward student mobility yield positive results (Cheng & Huang, 2008; Fang & Wu, 2016).

Key national policies and strategies on international students in China

A diverse range of policies related to international students in China were presented here, which were mainly proposed in the above-listed Period III-V after the reform and opening up in 1978 (see Table 2 and 3), in order for a better understanding of the national focus on inward international students in China.

Table 2

Key policy documents related to international students in Period III-IV (1978-1998)

Year	Policy documents	Key content
1979	<i>Proposed Regulations for International Student Studying in China</i>	Opening the channel for recruiting self-funded international students
	<i>A Report on the Working Conference of International Students</i>	Establishing a degree system for international students

¹ More information can be found in the Appendix.

1980	<i>Regulations of Academic Degrees of the People's Republic of China</i>	Degrees should be awarded to international students and scholars who reach the required academic level
	<i>A Notice on the Issue of Short-Term Chinese Language Classes for International Students</i>	Hosting short-term Chinese language classes to recruit international students
1983	<i>Provisions of the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China for Short-Term Learning Classes for International Students</i>	Shifting the right of recruiting short-term international students from government to HEIs
1985	<i>Administrative Measures for international Students</i>	Ill-disciplined students should be regulated by the HEIs themselves
	<i>Decisions on the Reform of the Education System</i>	HEIs can use self-raised funds to carry out international education and academic exchanges
1987	<i>A Notice on Strengthening and Improving the Management of International Students Studying in China</i>	Proposing measures for managing international students who break the rules
1989	<i>Regulations on Recruiting self-financed International Students</i>	Increasing the number of HEIs recruiting international students and the autonomy of institutions to carry out international education
1991	<i>Proposed Measures for the Degree-Granting for International Students in China</i>	Proposing the requirement on international students' Chinese language ability and putting forward the working guideline as "strict requirements and quality assurance"

Table 3
Key policy documents related to international students in Period V (1999-present)

Year	Policy documents	Key content
1999	<i>Interim Measures for the Management of International Students in Primary and Secondary Schools</i>	Constructing a better policy environment for international students studying in China's primary and secondary schools
2000	<i>Regulations on the Administration of International Students in HEIs</i>	Covering education and management of international

		students, symbolising the international education in China enters the legalisation stage
	<i>Notice on Implementing the Annual Evaluation System for China Government Scholarships</i>	Establishing a government scholarship evaluation system
	<i>Measures of Annual Review of Chinese Government Scholarship Status</i>	Improving the government scholarship evaluation system
2001	<i>A Notice on Reforming the Administrative Measures for International Students' Academic Certificates</i>	Improving the administrative measures for granting academic degrees/certificates to international students
2004	<i>2003-2007 Education Revitalisation Action Plan</i>	Aiming to enhance the overall development and quality of international education
2005	<i>Administrative Measures of Foreigners Participating in Performing Activities in China</i>	Proposing regulations on international students' participation in performances
2009	<i>A Notice on Regulating HEIs' Enrolment of International Students</i>	General regulations on international students in HEIs
2010	<i>The National Outline for Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development 2010-2020</i>	Further increasing the number of international students and improving the internationalisation level of higher education
	<i>Plan of Studying in China</i>	Aiming to host 500,000 international students in primary, secondary and tertiary education institutions by 2020
	<i>Rules for the Implementing of the Provisions on the Administration of Religious Activities of Foreigners in People's Republic of China</i>	International students enrolled in Chinese religious institutions must abide by relevant regulations and have been approved by national religious social organisations
2012	<i>Exit and Entry Administration Law of the People's Republic of China</i>	Requirements on international students' exit and entry
2013	<i>Regulations of the People's Republic of China on Administration of the Entry and Exit of Foreigners</i>	Supplementing the <i>Exit and Entry Administration Law of the People's Republic of China</i> (2012)
2016	<i>Several Opinions on Promoting the Opening-up Process of Education in the New Period</i>	Improving the quality of international education in China
2017	<i>Administrative Measures for the Enrolment and Cultivation of International Students by Schools</i>	Further revising and updating the <i>Administrative Measures for International Students</i> (1985) and

	<i>Regulations on the Administration of International Students in HEIs (2000)</i>
2018 <i>Quality Standards of Higher Education for International Students Studying in China</i>	The first quality assurance document for international education in China, serving as the important guideline for international education management

After comparing policy documents in different period in China, it is obvious that China increasingly emphasises the importance of inward international students and relevant policies and strategies become more comprehensive. Most importantly, in 2010, the National Outline for Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development 2010-2020 clearly stated China's commitment to strengthen international exchanges and cooperation, and improve the level of internationalisation of higher education in China. This policy also emphasised the expansion of mutual recognition of academic degrees and the further improvement of the quantity and quality of international students in China. In the same year, the Plan of Studying in China (2010) put forward a working policy of "expanding scale, optimising structure, improving management, and ensuring quality", aiming to promote the sustainable development of international education in China, and build an international brand of higher education in China. This plan also reflected China's prospective to become the largest destination country for study in Asia in 2020. In 2017 and 2018, both the Administrative Measures for the Enrolment and Cultivation of International Students by Schools and the Quality Standards of Higher Education for International Students Studying in China clarified the rules and regulations on education and management of inward international students, indicating the national entry baseline (for enrollment) that hinges on students' certificates, language ability and performance in entrance examination, etc.²

Benefits created by international students and their relevance to common goods

Some Chinese scholars propose international students play a positive role in many areas. Fang and Wu (2016) consider that international students studying in China improve the level of internationalisation of Chinese higher education. International students not only provide an "internationalisation at home" experience to Chinese students, but also raise the awareness of internationalisation of both faculty and students. Also, they assume that international students could not only increase the direct economic benefits, but also stimulate the growth of related service industries such as catering, transportation, and tourism. Similarly, Jiang (2010a) notes that international students studying in China have the potential to create economic benefits, though this has not received sufficient attention in China and it lacks

² HEIs could further specify their own requirements based on this national entry baseline.

reliable official statistics. Han (2014), Ma and Zhou (2018) agree that international education in China has cultivated a large number of professional talents and develop our cooperative relations with other countries. Moreover, in recent years, under the background of “Belt and Road” initiative, Chen and Wen (2018) suggest that international students play a central role in improving diplomatic relations and these students are human resources for Chinese enterprises overseas.

However, research touches little on common good(s) of inward student mobility and international education in China, though some Chinese scholars put forward that higher education contributes to (global) common goods in four aspects: research outputs; public services; cultural inheritance and innovation; talents (with global perspectives) (Tian & Liu, 2018). Mobility of these global talents and cultural exchanges are conducive to building “a community of shared future for mankind” (ren lei ming yun gong tong ti) (Yang, 2018).

In summary, the previous research (here speaking mainly about Chinese studies) has explored the history, development and benefits of international students studying in China. This prior research lays a foundation for the present project. However, most research on inward students in China is theory-based, with less emphasis on empirical investigation; though some relevant research is policy-based and data-based, both the policies and data are outdated and need to update; Also, there has been an absence of attempts to explore inward international students and relevant policies in China with a lens of common goods, which would generate both theoretical and practical contributions. Hence, in order to deeply understand the inward international students in China and (global) common goods, we have formulated the following research questions:

(1) How the key policies, strategies and regulations concerning inward international students relate to (global) common goods in China?

(2) What are the (global) common goods of inward student mobility in China?

Research design

According to Kehm and Teichler (2007), institutions, people, and knowledge are the core elements of internationalisation in higher education, and there is also a strong political undercurrent in the form of institutional strategies and national policies embedded in internationalisation activities. Accordingly, in order for having a better understanding of inward international students in China, which is key to higher education internationalisation, the research method for this project mainly involves semi-structured interviews (people-concerned), while at the same time focuses on policy documents related to international students mentioned by interviewees (policy-focused). Learning through policy texts from interviewees is a form of “lesson drawing”, which can be defined as the voluntary act of transfer by rational actors working in specific political contexts (Benson & Jordan, 2011).

Participants

This project adopted a purposive sampling to identify participants who were directly involved in inward student mobility. They were invited by the researchers through email. 27 Chinese people from government/agencies and universities participated in the research. They were divided into four groups according to their affiliated institutions and positions (see Table 4) to ensure coverage of all relevant groups of people who might have a good understanding of inward international students and common goods in China. The study chose two universities at two different levels in China: a top research university that is also a “Double World-Class”³ university in China, with a higher level of internationalisation (S University) and a local university with a lower level of internationalisation (Z University), with participants from different disciplines. Admittedly, these two cases cannot represent the whole China, but the investigation of perspectives from them can enable us to make a comparison of the internationalisation approaches between universities at two different levels.

Table 4
Population of this study (N = 27)

Groups	Number	Notes
(1) Participants from government and agencies	4	They come from government departments and agencies related to the research topic.
(2) University leaders	S University = 5 Z University = 5	Including (vice) president, directors (related to the research topic), deans (from schools of engineering and economics).
(3) Academics	S University = 2 Z University = 2	They are teachers from schools of engineering and economics.
(4) International students	S University = 5 Z University = 4	They are in different level of study (first degree, master and doctoral), and come from different countries including Russia, Malaysia, the US, Pakistan, etc.

Data collection

There were four different sets of interview questions for the above-listed four groups of participants in the study. For participants in Group 1 (officials from government and agencies), there were 15 questions, as well as scope for follow-up angles, involving the national policies and strategies related to international students, inward student mobility and (global) common good, scholarship, services and requirements for international students, etc. For participants in Group 2 (university leaders), there

³ “Double World-Class” refers to “world-class university” and “world-class discipline” in China.

were also 15 interview questions about institutional policies and strategies related to international students, inward student mobility and (global) common good, the general profile of international students in the university, etc. For participants who were academics in universities (Group 3), there were seven general interview questions, with some of those questions centering on issues such as internalisation strategy of the university, international students' contributions, tuition fees and scholarship for international students. For international students in Group 4, questions were more specific to their learning experiences in China and their perspectives of studying abroad.

Each interview lasted between 30 and 70 minutes, depending on the interest of the participants and the natural pace with which the interview moved. At the beginning of each interview, researchers introduced the background of this project and how the interview will proceed. Also, before audio-recording all interviews, the researcher asked the consent of the participants. Interviews were conducted in both Chinese and English (according to the respondents' requirements) and then transcribed into written form by researchers. Researchers kept taking brief notes during the interviews in order to track the points raised by the interviewees.

Data analysis

The interview data were coded using NVivo version 12 under broad headings, for instance, "policies and regulations related to international students" and "inward student mobility and (global) common good". Then, according to the research questions, researchers grouped these headings into different tables for analysis. The categories were later modified as researchers further engaged with the transcripts.

In the paragraphs that follow, participants in the interviews were referred to by different codes, for the purposes of both ensuring anonymity and facilitating tracing references from the data (see examples of codes for participants in Table 5).

Table 5
Codes for different participants in interviews

Codes	Explanation
PGA1	the first participant from government and agencies, who is an official.
PSL2	the second participant in S University, who is a university leader.
PZA3	the third participant in Z University, who is an academic.
PZS5	the fifth participant in Z University, who is an international student.

Notes: P: participants; GA: participants from government and agencies; S: S University (a top research university with a higher level of internationalisation); Z: Z University (a local university) with a lower level of internationalisation; L: university leaders; A: academics; S: international students.

Ethical consideration

All interviews were confidential and anonymised. A consent form was sent to potential participants before the interview, and then signed by both the researcher and the participant. Participants were informed of the purpose of the research and of the ways in which the data would be used. The consent form also clarified how anonymity and confidentiality would be protected throughout this project. All interviews were conducted on an opt-in basis.

Results and findings

This section presents results and findings from semi-structured interviews of four groups of interviewees. Due to the limited word count, data from official statistic reports are listed and analysed in the Appendix to enrich this paper and help readers better understand changes and development of international students studying in China.

Perspectives of participants from government/agencies (N = 4)

Policies and strategies related to inward international students

For the purpose of building of world-class universities, talent cultivation and cultural integration, China was vigorously attracting international students (N = 3). Two participants mentioned that China's strategic goal was to host 500,000 international students by 2020, among which the number of international students engaging in higher education will reach 150,000. This was stated in the Plan of Studying in China (2010). After the formulation of the strategic objectives, the policies and support, especially the funding policy oriented to international students studying in China were very supportive. Chinese government scholarships were in place and provinces and cities also had relevant supportive policies to support and gear HEIs towards recruiting international students. In these years, under the framework of national diplomacy (including Chinese and foreign cultural humanistic exchanges), both the "Belt and Road" initiative as well as some important policies included international students studying in China as an important strategic part (N = 2).

PGA1: Our strategic goal is to recruit 500,000 international students by 2020... the policies, especially the funding policy, are quite supportive... under the framework of national diplomacy...the "Belt and Road" initiative, the Several Opinions on Promoting the Opening-up Process of Education in the New Period include international students studying in China as an important strategic part.

Two participants proposed that, in 2017, China issued the Decree No. 42, i.e., the Administrative Measures for the Enrolment and Cultivation of International Students by Schools, covering all aspects of international student management. This policy had been moderated on the basis of previous versions, in which international

students were encouraged to come to China for internships and spend part of their study time to learn more about Chinese society. In addition, the assimilative management of international students studying in China became a trend, which implied HEIs encourage Chinese and international students to live together thereby increasing mutual respects and understandings. By doing so, China hoped to have more students who had better knowledge about China, became friends to China and were on intimate terms with China (N = 3). In October 2018, China published the Quality Standards of Higher Education for International Students Studying in China, expecting to improve the quality and management of international education in China. Therefore, the keywords of China's policy toward international students in China could be summarised as: expanding scale, improving quality, and increasing efficiency. This also reflected the new direction and needs in the development of both Chinese HEIs and the whole country (N = 2).

PGA2: China is now much closer to the centre of the world stage than ever before. We need exchanges and integration among different cultures and groups. We hope that more students come to China to study, so as to better understand China, become familiar with China, and finally form friendly relationship with China.

China encouraged international students to study in China, and there was no quota for international student's recruitment in Chinese higher education system, which was entirely different from the recruitment of Chinese domestic students through college entrance examination (N = 3). Also, as for employment policy, in recent years, some coastal metropolitan cities in China had introduced more flexible policies, hoping to expand its openness thereby attracting international students to work in China (N = 2). Three participants pointed out that the government strategically guided the internationalisation of HEIs, and HEIs served the national goal of attracting international students. All participants (N = 4) from government considered relevant policies and strategies were effective, achieving the expected results.

PGA2: University policies are highly consistent with national goals...our country's understanding of internationalisation is from the perspective of cultural integration, even world peace and tolerance...as an integral part of the internationalisation strategy of the entire country and universities, policies on international students are highly valued and effectively implemented.

Management and regulations on international students

Four government officials agreed that all international students who were accepted by Chinese HEIs would not have any difficulties in their first entry. International students were required to obtain a student visa. The latest requirement in the Decree No. 42 allowed work-study experiences for international students during their study period. Chinese universities provided international students with the convenience of

all aspects of study and life; each university had specific regulations on the management of international students and most universities in China had established International Student Centre and Foreign Affairs Office (N = 3). Apparently, it was necessary for all international students to abide by national laws and regulations (N = 3). After graduation, students needed to go through some procedures to obtain a work visa and the employment environment for international students became more favorable. On the issues of welfare, human rights, personal initiative and dignity, international students in China received preferential treatment. This was one of China's cultural traditions, that is, treating guests well (N = 4). The so-called restrictions might be the cultural and value differences, and the resulting tensions (N = 2).

PGA2: in terms of welfare, human rights and dignity, I guess the treatment for international students, if it is not the best in the world, it must be one of the best in the world... because China has a long-cherished national tradition that we treat them as best as we can... you say restrictions and problems they may face... there may still be some cultural shocks and value conflicts...

Participants mentioned that China did not have the concept of immigration and it was not a country for immigration (N = 2). China had relatively tight regulations on foreign nationals' long-term residence, but it welcomed high-level talents to stay. International students did have some influences on policy-making, for example, the right of residence, entry and exit, and employment, and they played a positive role in promoting policy reforms. Three interviewees pointed out that when international students were studying and living in China, they would involve a series of issues related to medical care, social insurance and other public services, thus, when formulating policies, it is reasonable for the government to consider the needs of international students for their daily life.

PGA4: China doesn't have the concept of immigration... but international students do have impacts on some policies, for example, the right of residence, entry and exit, and employment issues, and they have played a positive role in promoting these reforms, which is a positive sign.

Inward student mobility and (global) common goods

All participants (N = 4) agreed that inward student mobility contributed to (global) common goods, which can be viewed in the following three areas: (1) Cultivating talents with global perspectives (N = 4); (2) promoting cultural exchange (N = 3); (3) boosting scientific research cooperation (N = 2).

PGA2: the main global common goods created by inward student mobility can be divided into two aspects. First, they bring different culture and

value to China, which help Chinese students understand the world better...
second, they also spread Chinese culture to the world...

Similarly, as for the merits and demerits of inward student mobility, all four participants considered that the merits were obvious. For the host country, these students promoted cultural exchanges and they could become talents who better understood China and were friendly to China. The education for them was also adapted to China's developmental goals, as China was increasingly at the center of the world stage and endeavored to build a community with shared future for mankind (N = 2). For students' home countries, these students were talents having international education experience and better understandings of Chinese society (N = 3). Two participants also believed that inward student mobility could promote social equity, as it advanced the sharing of educational resources, and helped some backward countries' educational development.

PGA4: I believe inward student mobility in China promote social equity rather than damage it, because it is good for the sharing of educational resources, and it is also a way to help some countries with less-developed education

Perspectives of university leaders and academics⁴ (N = 14)

Policies and strategies related to inward international students

Both universities have policies and strategies towards inward international students, which were in line with the internationalisation strategies and policies of national development (N = 11). University policies included specific service mechanisms, that is, increasing the support for international students; conducting assimilation management; introducing the new scholarship policy; opening bilingual courses (N = 10). Specifically, the internationalisation strategies of the two universities in different departments were mainly concentrated in talent cultivation, scientific research cooperation, faculty construction and cultural exchange (N = 8).

PSA1: Our university's internationalisation strategy includes several aspects. For example, education mainly includes student exchange programs as well as double-degree training programs... international scientific research cooperation...we have built many international scientific research centres...

S University's current working guidelines for international students were: expanding the size, optimising the structure, improving the management, and ensuring the quality. As a "Double World-Class" university in China, internationalisation was key

⁴ This section combines the perspectives of university leaders and academics together, as the interview questions for the academics are the concentrated and simplified version of questions for university leaders.

component in the development of S University (N = 6). Also, a series of major initiatives were carried out in past several years, for example, introducing a more diversified scholarship system and conducting management reforms (N = 5).

PSL4: we are working very hard to optimising the composition of international students... I think many universities in the past were making mistakes, because they only care about the number of international students... we must focus on the quality, trying to recruit high-level and excellent international students...

At present, Z University focused on the recruitment of international students in the “Belt and Road” countries (N = 4). In 2015, the university introduced an internationalisation strategy. This university highlighted post-graduate students’ recruitment, and had established a doctoral and master’s evaluation system (N = 3). Since there was no government scholarship in Z University, it planned to set up its own scholarship for international students, i.e. 20% of all tuition fees would be taken as scholarships for international students.

PZL5: our policy and strategy are definitely conforming to the strategy of national development... we pay much attention to “Belt and Road” countries, so we are now working on attracting students from these countries... we will also establish some additional scholarships.

As for S University, the level of internationalisation was relatively high. The proportion of international students was close to 10%, and the source countries of international students were more diversified, while the internationalisation level of Z University was relatively low. Hence, the priorities on inward international students were different in these two universities. More internationalised S University began to: (1) shift its focus from quantity to quality (N = 5); (2) pay much attention to the employment issues of international students (N = 4); (3) design featured courses for international students (N = 4); for less internationalised Z University, the proportion of international students was rather low, thus it still focused the number of international students, but proposed requirements on the number of degree students. Apart from this, it also made efforts to (1) establish new scholarships (N = 4); (2) improve services and accommodation for international students (N = 4); (3) increase the number of PhD students (N = 4); (4) increase the number of degree students (N = 4); (5) design teaching materials with Chinese characteristics (N = 3).

PSL3: We don’t pay much attention to the quantity now... we are thinking about opening some special projects and then attracting them... we hope to give international students some internship opportunities, and there may be some funding considerations.

PZL1: I guess the degree of Z University's internationalisation still needs to be pushed. The quality of international education in our university is relatively weak...

Concerning national policies, there was no restriction on the number of international students' recruitment (N = 10), but universities had their own requirements in international student recruitment (N = 5).

PSL1: There is no restriction on the number of international student recruitment... for us, the improvement of university reputation will help us to attract more students and we hope to recruit more high-quality students.

Management and regulations on international students

Both universities had regulations and requirements on international students based on national policies (N = 10). For international students' first entry, they needed to have a student visa and go through medical examination; for in-university supervision, both universities conducted assimilation management and increased the number of assistants for international student to avoid isolation; students must obey national laws and regulations; for students' graduation/employment, they needed to have a work permit after graduation, or they must return home immediately. Undergraduate students cannot stay in China after graduation, and they basically cannot receive a work permit. The policy for postgraduate students was relatively flexible, and students could obtain an employment visa in the free trade zone⁵ in some coastal metropolitan cities (N= 5). Basically, there were no restrictions, as long as the students were law-abiding. International students had the same rights as their domestic counterparts (N = 10).

PSL1: Students must have a student visa to come to China. For undergraduate graduates, there is still a policy barrier... they could not directly stay in China after graduation... graduate students have relatively good chances... It seems that the free trade zone and can give them a work permit.

PSL5: There should be no problem for international students... we take care of all things in their lives. There are a lot of activities for them... As for problems they have on campus, we help them promptly.

All 10 university leaders considered that national and institutional policies were effective. Apart from their own policies, the most frequently-mentioned policies and strategies were the Administrative Measures for the Enrolment and Cultivation of International Students by Schools (2017) (N = 6); "Belt and Road" initiative (N = 5); the Plan of Studying in China (N = 5); Effects of these policies and strategies included: diversifying students' source countries; increasing the number and quality

⁵ The zone is being used as a testing ground/pilot area for a number of economic and social reforms.

of international students; and increasing employment opportunities for international students.

PSL1: these policies are quite effective and we can also see some positive results, for example, benefiting from the Plan of Studying in China, our university now sees the increased number of international students and the types of scholarships for them are also increasing.

Inward student mobility and (global) common goods

Considering the contributions made by inward student mobility to (global) common goods, participants proposed that, inward students could compose an international talents pool, with people who had professional skills, had better knowledge about China and a close relationship with China (N = 9); inward student mobility may accelerate international exchanges between China and countries of student origin (N = 7), improve mutual understanding and respect (N = 6), strengthen international scientific research cooperation (N = 6), and economically, education for them can be seen as a potential economic growth point (though China has not yet achieved this result) (N = 2).

PSL2: International students studying in China will promote international exchanges... economically, the education for them is a potential economic growth point. For example, in Australia... for China, it is only a possible point, and there is no practical effect... China may already have this awareness now... to retain these talents to serve the society and make contributions.

All ten university leaders suggested the advantages brought by inward student mobility outweighed the disadvantage. Advantages include: (1) enriching students' international experience and vision (N = 5); (2) promoting exchanges among universities and mutual understandings among people from different countries (N = 3); (3) enhancing the internationalisation level of universities and expanding their international influence (N = 3); (4) improving the diversity of campus culture (N = 2); (5) having positive impacts on local society as well as the source countries (in terms of thoughts, culture, policy, etc.) (N = 2). Potential disadvantage may include: (1) problem of unfairness (N = 4), since international students occupied the opportunities for domestic students, excessively consuming the energy of the administrators as they often paid more attention to international students rather than the domestic students; (2) brain drain of the source countries (N = 1).

PZL5: If a student can integrate well into China... he or she will bring more benefits rather than bad things... we can connect more with other countries... also, when international students come to China, there will be situations that we have never encountered before, then we can make improvements in the regulations and policies...

Perspectives of university international students (N = 9)

As noted, the interview questions for international students were more specific, with an emphasis on their learning and life experience in China.

Policies and strategies related to inward international students

Most international students (N = 7) proposed that Chinese universities attached great importance to higher education internationalisation and the education for inward international students. At the same time, international students helped the university to accumulate experience in dealing with relevant issues thereby advancing the progress of internationalisation.

PSS2: I think internationalisation is a very important agenda in this university. There are students from many countries studying here, and they also help the university to improved... they help the university to deal with many problems it never met before.

4.3.2 Management and regulations on international students

Management and regulations on international students

Most students thought they had favorable experience in Chinese universities which matched their expectations (N = 8)

PSS1: Is this a good place? I must say this place can be described as heaven... I find out that China has already entered the modernised stage, and there is no such situation as the previous generations said... there are so many things we can learn... I guess China goes far beyond my expectation, it's wonderful.

Both universities offered specific courses and services for international students. Each of international student's dormitory had an assistant and there are also online information groups specifically for international students (N = 9). All nine interviewed students received generous scholarships from the Chinese government or the universities. They considered that both the Chinese government and universities were very supportive to international students, but the governments in their home countries were not very helpful, which were only responsible for document review and passport issues (N = 7). Students also mentioned that in a very few cases, there were some cooperative programs (between China and their home countries) and scholarships from home countries (N = 2)

PSS2: Chinese government gives international students a lot of scholarships. The amount of money is enough to cover all the fees we live and study here... we can also save money... but not everyone can have the scholarship... there is a selection mechanism to choose the qualified person and the selection standards are varied...

Basically, international students had few problems on campus (N = 6), though some of them (N = 3) encountered minor problems, for example, they thought the administrative procedures were too complicated, and the accommodation was poor in Z University. All nine students put forward that they never faced issues related to welfare, human rights, personal agency and dignity and they felt safer and more comfortable in China than any other places.

PSS3: I don't feel marginalised or disempowered, because I believe "Ru xiang sui su" (Do in Rome as Rome does), and I am obeying the laws of China and trying to see the world through Chinese people' eyes... in many ways, I am freer and safer here and happier here, which I have never felt in my home country...

Some students (N = 4) concerned about the employment issues in China, though universities arranged internships before graduation, but the employment support mechanism for international students was immature.

PSS5: I think there is a supporting mechanism for our employment, and we have an information group and the teacher promptly provides relevant employment information... but this is not enough for us, we still face a lot of problems in finding a good job in China.

Inward student mobility and (global) common goods

All participants noted that inward student mobility created benefits to host institutions, the host country and their home countries. For China and Chinese HEIs, inward student mobility contributed to talent resources, research cooperation, the international vision of students and universities, as well as cultural understandings. For home countries, inward student mobility brought back advanced knowledge and research output, and students studying abroad could also be regarded as role models for other students who hoped to study abroad. Five students also pointed out that there were also some bilateral cooperation projects in their home countries to support Chinese students to study there.

PSS1: This is beneficial for both sides. There is a young man in the sending country who undergoes good training in China... China... can also turn these international talents into its own human resources...

Eight interviewees expressed their willingness to stay for employment or continue further studies in China, and one of them mentioned that he hoped to stay and make contributions to China.

PSS3: I have a lot of things that I owe China...I probably will stay here, at least for several years, but that depends on whether China will accept me, but of course, I don't take this education for granted, and I hope there is a chance I can make contributions to China.

Most international students did not consider it was unfair for some people like them could have access to the experiences and benefits of international education (N = 7), because the selection of candidates to study in China depended on the ability of the applicants, and the opportunity for international education was on a global basis and it was beneficial for all. However, two international students assumed that it was not the international education itself generated educational inequity, but sometimes the under-developed information channels made some people inaccessible to relevant information.

PSS4: There may be some problems... some students don't know that there are such good chances. They just don't know that can come to this university and then apply for scholarships, for example, students from some undeveloped countries may not know this.

Discussion

The objective of the current research is to identify the (global) common goods produced and augmented by inward student mobility and its relevance to national policies and strategies in China. As inward student mobility involves different participants (host countries and universities, sending countries, university staff, international students, etc.) simultaneously, and its benefits flow to places at different levels (institutional, local, national and global), by using the common goods lens, we could interpret education for inward international students within at least the following three sets of relations: (1) governmental and institutional, this term is useful to explain some policies and initiatives in the Chinese context (Tian & Liu, 2018), thus government's influences, support, regulations on HEIs could be reflected; (2) common and individual, this term (common goods) may differentiate the common and individual benefits accruing from inward student mobility; (3) national and global, as this concept is multi-dimensional, it is helpful to explore the consistency and tensions between policies and practices concerning international students at different levels.

Findings of this study illustrate that inward student mobility contributes to (global) common goods, and meanwhile policies are compatible to these perceived global common goods to a large extent. Although some problems and tensions among policies, practices and (global) common goods are observed in this study, measures have been taken by both the Chinese government and HEIs.

Contributions of inward student mobility in China to (global) common goods

As we have defined in this paper, common goods are multi-level, including local, national and global common goods. Based on the research findings, inward student

mobility in China contributes to (global) common goods in the following five aspects, which are highly valued by interviewees from both the government and HEIs:

(1) Talents with global perspectives and respect to other cultures. Through international education, part of international students will become global citizens who care the whole world rather than their own countries. These talents may become leaders of the future world and make contributions to form a more inclusive, tolerable and equal world.

(2) The wider sharing of educational resources. Taking knowledge as a connecting point, inward student mobility intensifies the educational cooperation between different countries, accelerates the process of mutual recognition of credit and certificate, which boosts the sharing of educational resources among countries to a large extent. Also, students have the opportunity to obtain higher education in different places, who will then bring back advanced knowledge and research output to their home countries.

(3) Increased cultural exchanges, deeper mutual understandings and improved diversity of campus culture. On the one hand, international students bring different cultures and values to the host country, thereby forming a more diversified and inclusive cultural environment. On the other hand, international students, who have acquired social and cultural experience in the host country, could be portrayed as cultural ambassadors to press ahead cooperation and exchanges between the host country and their home countries.

(4) The improvement of policies and practices. The international students' presence may shape higher education policies and practices to be more efficiency-, service- and reputation driven. They help universities to optimise and update the management models and educational policies, potentially improving the level of universities. This is especially important for universities aiming to enter the world-class universities network.

(5) The potential economic growth point. The education for international students can be regarded as economic agents or drivers of knowledge and eventually of economic growth. For some universities, recruiting international students is an alternative source of revenue to ensure their financial sustainability.

In fact, the economic aspect of inward student mobility is particularly strong among Anglo-Saxon countries (Geddie, 2015) and extensively studied as the 'marketisation approach' to international education (Findlay, McCollum & Packwood, 2017). However, our results suggest that China gives less weight to the economic aspect of inward student mobility at this moment, this agrees with Jiang (2010b)'s view that the economic benefits of international students are not a focus in the higher education in China, as most Chinese universities are public institutions and strongly supported by the national government.

Nevertheless, Chinese interviewees highlights the increased soft power brought by inward student mobility, which can be regarded as a national common good with national boundary. Inward student mobility intensifies academic and scientific exchanges which are central to the soft power theory, and this can also be inspired by observations of how the US has gained friends in the political elites of hostile countries by the means of student exchanges (Nye 2004; Ma & Zhou, 2018). This theory suggests that international students with pleasant first-hand experiences of studying abroad will admire the host country's academic, social and political system and, in turn, nudge or steer cooperation between their home countries and the host country, push education, society and politics at home in the direction desired by the country they studied and lived in (Haugen, 2013). This is not only an opportunity for Chinese language and culture to enter the global platform, but also soft power expansion.

In general, these are the perceived potential national and global common goods created by inward student mobility in China, which undoubtedly reveal the unique value of inward international students. Despite that, the results of this study suggest that attracting and educating international students in China is never a pure business transaction with only market- and economic orientations, as both the Chinese government and HEIs attach great importance to the development and welfare of international students who desire to have educational, social, personal and professional development that underpins the process of “becoming” and “self-formation” (Marginson, 2014; Tran, 2016). Therefore, international education in China tends to be a practice of reciprocity, within the concepts of “ethics of care” (Blackburn, 1997; Abdullah et al., 2017), which highlights both parties (international students and HEIs) should ensure each party is involved in internationalisation benefits from their interaction and have genuine concern over the well-being of each other in the provision of international education. In this sense, international education in China could be viewed as a global common good itself, since both parties need each other to achieve their intended goals, which thinks highly of collective endeavor, shared participation/engagement, inclusion and responsibility, meshing with UNESCO's (2015) definition of global common goods.

Hence, international students should never be simply treated as “cash cow” and their desire to have a life-changing experience (through international education) should be valued. In turn, the cared for (international students) should acknowledge the energy and efforts invested by the carer (HEIs) to enhance the value of the relationship between both parties. In light of this, the narrative of ethical caring could build a conducive intercultural ecosystem to support the internationalisation activities, boosting greater learning between students and university staff, and ensuring mutuality in strategies developed for cooperation and collaboration with foreign partners, which is a key virtue in internationalisation from the outset (Blackburn, 1997; Abdullah, et al., 2017).

Sound development of policies and practices for international students studying in China

Results of this study show that in the Chinese context, inward student mobility is not only emerged as significant favorable pull factors for the internationalisation of higher education, but also contributes significantly to both the national and global common goods. Therefore, since the reform and opening-up, the Chinese government has been actively promoting inward student mobility by continuously adjusting relevant policy guidelines. By examining various recent policies, it is easy to conclude that the inward student mobility has been given a special priority in China, and the Chinese government has paid more emphasis on the quality, efficiency and structure of international education, with actions being taken at the national level. This reflects the positive attitude of the Chinese government, which contradicts the idea that the emphasis laid on international students is less in China, and the view that international students are less important to Chinese universities, because they are not seen as human resources due to their generally low academic performance (Jokila, 2015).

However, some researchers believe that the Chinese government's efforts to promote inward student mobility are only to achieve the policy objectives of diplomacy and education, while ignoring the contributions of international students in culture, politics, and economy (Cheng, Hou & Chen, 2013). Obviously, this comment is not objective, because findings of this study provide evidence that promoting mutual understandings and improving the quality of education through international education is an established strategy for the development of higher education in China, and this strategy does not exist in isolation, which falls in line with China's development goals of improving national soft power and cultural influence (Wang, Dai & Liu, 2014). Also, the neoliberals believe that China's efforts for educational improvement are characterised by export (Zheng, 2010). This comment seems to simply equate the internationalisation of higher education with a commercial trade activity, overlooking the internationalisation of Chinese higher education contains unique cultural appeals. Chinese culture advocates "harmony in diversity" and believes that different value systems should coexist harmoniously. According to our research findings, the dissemination of Chinese culture through international education is currently an important tool for China to build better political and economic relations with other countries, and the "bridge" is international students who understand and respect Chinese culture, show kindness to China and are on intimate terms with China. This is aligned with Schulte's (2012) idea that Chinese education actually takes place at the interface of global ideas and national strategies. Internationalisation and nationalism are not necessarily in conflict with each other in China; instead, special cultural aspects could benefit from international relations (Gu, 2001).

Although some problems and tensions among policies, practices and (global) common goods can be observed in the results and finding part, the Chinese

government and HEIs put forward relevant solutions to improve the learning, living and working environment for international students in the following aspects.

First, after a large number of international students flocking to China, there will be a question about how the Chinese education system adapts to the multiculturalism, coupled with the Chinese language as a barrier for a vast majority of international students. As a result, international students tend to form their own communities which sometimes requires unreasonable changes in the teaching and management regulations for their own interests, bringing negative effects for the development of international education in China. Against this background, interviewees from both the Chinese government and HEIs claim that they are devoted to implement the assimilation management for international students to accelerate the cultural integration, encouraging international students to study and live with their Chinese counterparts and also allocate Chinese assistants to help international students.

Second, China has relatively strict laws and regulations on international students' entry and exit. Meanwhile, it is not a country that has a liberal stance on immigration. Working or having internships during the study time are strictly regulated. Though both the Chinese government and HEIs endeavour to attract more international students studying in China and build a global talent pool, the employment mechanism is not in place, failing to retain talents who hope to work and make contributions in China. But very recently, a few of coastal metropolitan cities in China have re-tailored their policies on international students' employment (but only for postgraduate students) to secure highly-skilled international graduates, and potentially, these policies may expand to the whole country within the coming years.

Conclusion

The present research is both people-concerned and policy-focused, addressing issues by investigating perspectives from people directly involved in the process and examining official documents related to inward international students in China. Findings of this study reveal inward student mobility brings benefits to China and contributes global common goods flowing worldwide, which could also be regarded as a reason for the supportive national policies and strategies on international students in China. Though there are also some tensions in the policies and practices for international students (e.g., employment issue), both the Chinese government and HEIs exert themselves to address these issues. Most importantly, this study suggests that international education in China, as an essential part of higher education internationalisation, is a global common good, which emphasises collective endeavour, shared participation, inclusion and responsibility. Admittedly, international education in China is not flawless and further improvements need to be made in the future.

References

- Abdullah, D., Abd Aziz, M. I., & Mohd Ibrahim, A. L. (2017). The stories they tell: Understanding international student mobility through higher education policy. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 21(5), 450-466.
- Benson, D., & Jordan, A. (2011). What have we learned from policy transfer research? Dolowitz and Marsh revisited. *Political Science Review*, 9(3), 366-378.
- Blackburn, M. (1997). Internationalisation: Some ethical challenges. In *Proceedings of the 1997 Annual Conference of the Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia* (pp. 95-103). Adelaide, SA: Flinders University Press.
- Chen, Q., & Wen, W. (2018) “yi dai yi lu” chang yi xia lai hua liu xue sheng jiao yu: Shi ming, tiao zhan he dui ce [International education under the Belt and Road initiative: Missions, challenges and solutions]. *Gao xiao jiao yu guan li*, 12(3), 28-33.
- Cheng, J. F., & Huang, M. X. (2008). Lun lai hua liu xue sheng jiao yu li shi fen qi wen ti [The historic stages of international education in China]. *Zhong guo gao jiao yan jiu*, (12), 19-22.
- Cheng, J. F., Hou, S. F., & Chen, S. L. (2013). Strategic choices of development of China international education in the early twenty-first century. In *Proceedings of 19th International Conference on Industrial Engineering and Engineering Management* (pp. 259-269). Springer, Berlin, Heidelberg.
- Deneulin, S., & Townsend, N. (2007). Public goods, global public goods and the common good. *International Journal of Social Economics*, 34(1/2), 19-36.
- de Wit, H., Ferencz, I., & Rumbley, L. E. (2013). International student mobility: European and US perspectives. *Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education*, 17(1), 17-23.
- Fang, B., & Wu, Y. Y. (2016). Gao deng jiao yu lai hua liu xue sheng de bian hua qu shi yan jiu—ji yu jin shi wu nian tong ji shu ju de fen xi [A study on the changing trend of international students studying in China—based on the recent 15-year statistics]. *Gao deng jiao yu yan jiu*, 37(2), 19-30.
- Findlay, A., McCollum, D., & Packwood, H. (2017). Marketization, marketing and the production of international student migration. *International Migration*. 55 (3), 139-155.
- Geddie, K. (2015). Policy mobilities in the race for talent: Competitive state strategies in international student mobility. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*. 40 (2), 235-248.

- Gu, M. (2001). Modernisation and education in China's cultural traditions. In M. Gu (Ed.), *Education in China and abroad: Perspectives from a lifetime in comparative education* (A. L.J. Chan, Trans.) (pp. 101-110). Hong Kong: Comparative Education Research Centre, Hong Kong University.
- Han, W. C. (2014). Jing ji quan qiu hua shi jiao xia de guo ji ren li zi yuan guan li wen ti yan jiu—ji yu lai hua liu xue sheng jiao yu guan li de si kao [A study on international human resource management from the perspective of economic globalization—based on the education management of international students in China]. *Guan li shi jie*, (8), 182-183.
- Haugen, H. Ø. (2013). China's recruitment of African university students: Policy efficacy and unintended outcomes. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 11(3), 315-334.
- Hollenbach, D. (2002). *The Common Good and Christian Ethics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,.
- Jiang, K. (2010a). Lai hua liu xue sheng jiao yu de ping jing wen ti ji jie jue cuo shi [The bottleneck problems and solutions of international education in China]. *Da xue jiao yu ke xue*, (2), 21-25.
- Jiang, K. (2010b). Lai hua liu xue sheng jiao yu de zhan lue ding wei: Ji yu duo yin su de fen xi [Strategic positing of international education in China: An analysis based on multi-factors]. *Zhong guo gao jiao yan jiu*, (5), 17-20.
- Jin, W. (2012). Gai ge kai fang yi lai zhong guo gao deng jiao yu guo ji hua zheng ce de shan bian: Ji yu shu ju yu zheng ce de lian jie [The evolution of China's higher education internationalisation policies since reform and opening up: Based on the connection of data and policies]. *Zhong guo ren min da xue jiao yu xue kan*, (4), 29-48.
- Jokila, S. (2015). The internationalisation of higher education with Chinese characteristics: Appadurai's ideas explored. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 35(1), 125-139.
- Kehm, B. M., & Teichler, U. (2007). Research on internationalisation in higher education. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 11(3/4), 260-273.
- Knight, J. (1999). Internationalisation of higher education. In H. de Wit, & J. Knight (Ed.), *Quality and internationalisation in higher education* (pp. 13-28). Paris: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.
- Knight, J. (2004). Internationalisation remodeled: Definition, approaches, and rationale. *Journal of Studies in International Education*. 8 (1), 5-31.
- Li. T. (2000). *Zhong hua liu xue jiao yu shi lu (1949 nian yi hou)* [History of the Chinese international education (after 1949)]. Beijing: Higher Education Press.

- Li, M., & Bray, M. (2007). Cross-border flows of students for higher education: Push–pull factors and motivations of mainland Chinese students in Hong Kong and Macau. *Higher education*, 53(6), 791-818.
- Ma, J. L., & Zhou, Z. Y. (2018) “yi dai yi lu” yan xian gao duan liu xue sheng mian lin de tiao zhan ji qi dui ce [The challenges and solutions for high-level international education in countries within the Belt and Road initiative]. *Gao deng jiao yu yan jiu*, (1), 100-106.
- Marginson, S. (2014). Student self-formation in international education. *Journal of Studies in International Education*. 18 (1), 6-22.
- Marginson, S. (2016a). *The outline of project 1.2: Internationalisation of HE as a public good*. London: Centre for Global Higher Education.
- Marginson, S. (2016b). *Higher education and the common good*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Publishing.
- Marginson, S., & van der Wende, M. C. (2007). Globalisation and higher education. *OECD Education Working Papers (No. 8)*. Paris: OECD Publishing.
- Nye, J.S. (2004). *Soft power: The means to success in world politics*. New York: Public Affairs.
- OECD. (2018). *Education at a Glance 2018: OECD Indicators*. Paris: OECD Publishing.
- Riaño, Y., Van Mol, C., & Raghuram, P. (2018). New directions in studying policies of international student mobility and migration. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 16(3), 283-294.
- Schulte, B. (2012). World culture with Chinese characteristics: When global models go native. *Comparative Education*, 48(4), 473–486.
- Tian, L. (2018). World-class universities: A dual identity related to global common good(s). In: Q. Wang, Y. Cheng, & N. Cai Liu (Eds.), *World-Class Universities: Towards a Global Common Good and Seeking National and Institutional Contributions* (pp. 93-113). Rotterdam: Brill Sense Publishers.
- Tian, L. & Liu, N.C. (2018). Rethinking higher education in China as a common good. *Higher Education*. DOI 10.1007/s10734-018-0295-5.
- Tran, L. T. (2016). Mobility as ‘becoming’: A Bourdieuan analysis of the factors shaping international student mobility. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 37(8), 1268-1289.
- UNESCO (2015). *Rethinking Education. Towards a global common good?.* Paris: UNESCO. Retrieved January 28, 2017 from <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002325/232555e.pdf>
- van der Wende, M.C. (2001). Internationalisation policies: About new trends and contrasting paradigms. *Higher Education Policy*, 14(3), 249-259.

- Walker, M., & McLean, M. (2013). *Professional education, capabilities and the public good: The role of universities in promoting human development*. Abingdon. New York: Routledge.
- Wang, H. C., Dai, N., & Liu, H. G. (2014). Quan qiu hua bei jing xia de guo ji xue sheng liu dong yu zhong guo zheng ce xuan ze [international student mobility and China's policy choice under the background of globalization]. *Xia men da xue xue bao (zhe xue she hui ke xue ban)*, (2), 149-156.
- Yu, Z. F. (2009). *Gai ge kai fang 30 nian de lai hua liu xue sheng jiao yu [International education in China in the past 30 years since the reform and opening-up]*. Beijing: Beijing Language and Culture University Press.
- Yang, Q. G. (2018). *Tui dong gao deng jiao yu quan qiu liu dong jian she ren lei ming yun gong tong ti [Promoting the global mobility in higher education and building a community of shared future for mankind]*. China: Chinese Social Science Net, Retrieved December 28, 2018 from http://www.cssn.cn/zx/bwyc/201809/t20180906_4555415_1.shtml
- Zheng, J. (2010). Neoliberal globalization, higher education policies and international student flows: An exploratory case study of Chinese graduate student flows to Canada. *Journal of Alternative Perspectives in the Social Sciences*, 2(S1), 216-244.

Appendix: Changes and development of international students studying in China (2000-2016)

(1) The increased number of inward international students in China: There was a surge in the number of international students in the past 17 years. It can be seen from Table 6, except for 2003 (the setback of the SARS outbreak), the total number of international students in China increased by a large margin, with an average annual growth rate of 15.05% and the peak in 2004, reaching 42.63%. In 2016, the total number of international students studying in China arrived at 442,773, 8.5 times that of in 2000 (Figure 1). In addition to the substantial increase in the overall number, the number of international students' source countries also expanded significantly. By 2016, 205 countries and regions of the world's total 224 countries and regions sent students studying in China. The maximum number of international students from a single country increased from 16,787 in 2000 to 70,540 in 2016, an increase of 4.2 times. At the same time, the number of HEIs receiving international students in China also soared. In the past 17 years, the number of HEIs accepting international students in China increased by about 2.4 times, from 344 in 2000 to 829 in 2016. This number (829 institutions) occupied 31.5% of the total number of HEIs in China (the number of general HEIs in 2018 is 2,631⁶).

Table 6

The number of inward international students in China (2000-2016)

Year	Total number of international students	Annual growth rate	Number of source countries	Maximum number of students in a single country	Number of Chinese institutions accepted international students
2000	52150	16.64%	166	16787	344
2001	61869	18.64%	169	22116	363
2002	85829	38.73%	175	36093	394
2003	77715	-9.50%	175	35353	352
2004	110844	42.63%	178	43617	420
2005	141087	27.28%	179	54079	464
2006	162695	15.32%	184	57504	519
2007	195503	20.17%	188	64481	544
2008	223499	14.32%	189	66806	592
2009	238184	6.57%	190	64232	619
2010	265090	11.30%	194	62957	618
2011	292611	10.38%	194	62442	660
2012	328330	12.21%	200	63488	690
2013	356499	8.58%	200	63029	746
2014	377054	5.77%	203	62923	775
2015	397635	5.46%	202	66672	811
2016	442773	11.35%	205	70540	829

Source: (1) *Concise statistics for international students in China (2000-2016)* published by the Department of International Cooperation and Exchange of the Ministry of Education, and detailed information can be found at:

⁶ Based on statistics from the website of Ministry of Education:
http://www.moe.gov.cn/s78/A03/moe_560/jytjsj_2017/qg/201808/t20180808_344686.html

<http://www.cafsa.org.cn/research/72/2.html> and

http://www.moe.gov.cn/s78/A20/gjs_left/moe_850/index.html.

(2) *China Statistical Yearbook* (2000-2016) published by the Ministry of Education and detailed information can be found at:

http://www.moe.edu.cn/jyb_sjzl/moe_364/zgjynj_2015/.

Note: If not specified, relevant statistics below were all derived from the same source.

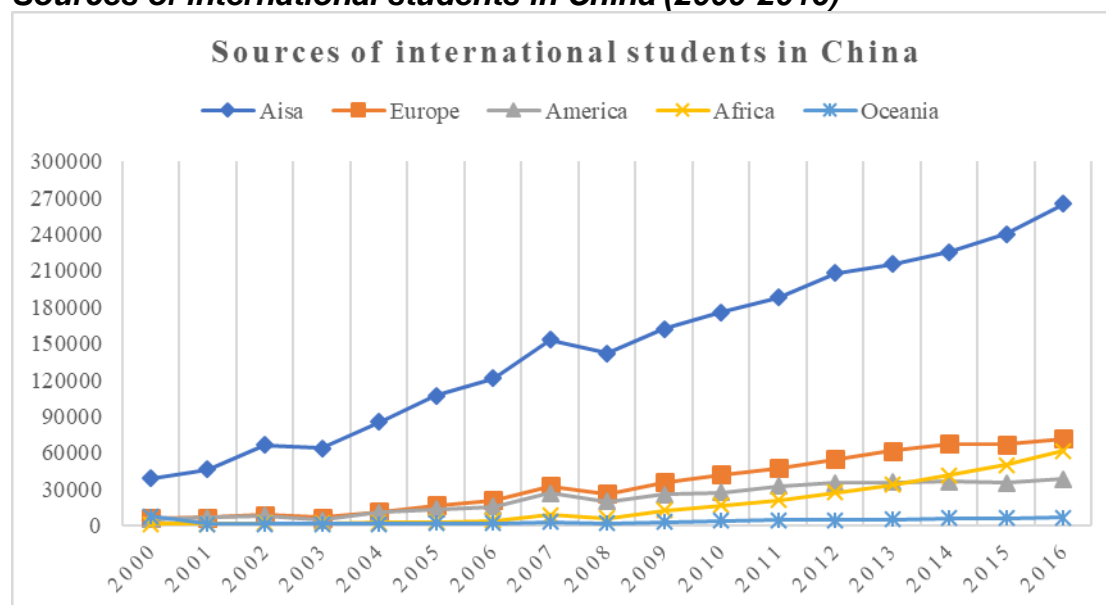
Figure 1

The increase of international students in China (2000-2016)



(2) The diversified source countries of international students: there was a sharp increase in the number of students in all continents and Asian students constantly occupied the dominant position. Students' source countries were diversified, which were closely related to the sending countries' total population, economic level, education status, geographical location, ethnic composition, customs and habits, study abroad policies, etc. Under the combined effects of various affecting factors, Asian students were always the dominant group among all international students. Figure 2 showed that the number of international students from all continents had increased dramatically in the past 17 years. The largest increase is in Africa, and in the past 17 years, the number of international students from Africa had increased by 44.4 times (from 1,388 in 2000 to 61,594 in 2016). The number of international students from Europe also experienced an upward trend, with a rise of 12.3 times in the past 17 years. In terms of absolute number, Asia countries was constantly the main sources of international students studying in China, and the proportion of Asian students in the total number of international students studying in China remained above 60%.

Figure 2
Sources of international students in China (2000-2016)



According to Table 7, the number of international students studying in China in some Asian countries was multiplying, making Asia countries the largest member of the top 10 countries sending students in China. For example, in 2016, eight Asian countries were ranking top 10. Since 2000, South Korea had been the leading country which sent the largest number of students to China, and this number far exceeded that of the second-ranked country. Also, the growth rate of the number of international students from the United States, Japan, and Russia had been in a relatively stable state for a long time. Additionally, in recent years, the rapid increase in the number of international students from Thailand, Vietnam, India, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Pakistan and other countries had made the three major European and American countries (i.e. the UK, Germany and Canada) out of the top-ten position. The most eye-catching growth in the number of international students studying in China was in Thailand, Kazakhstan and Pakistan. At present, Thailand is the third largest source country of international students in China. Of note, more than 90% of the international students from Pakistan were degree students in Chinese HEIs.

Table 7***The top 10 countries of sending students studying in China (2000-2016)***

Year	Rank	Top1	Top2	Top3	Top4	Top5	Top6	Top7	Top8	Top9	Top10
2000	country	South Korea	Japan	America	Indonesia	Germany	France	Singapore	Russia	Australia	Thailand
	student number	16787	13806	4280	1947	1270	891	854	703	676	667
2001	country	South Korea	Japan	America	Indonesia	Germany	Vietnam	France	Russia	Australia	Thailand
	student number	22116	14692	5413	1697	1321	1170	1057	1056	971	860
2002	country	South Korea	Japan	America	Indonesia	Vietnam	Thailand	Russia	France	Germany	UK
	student number	36093	16084	7359	2583	2336	1737	1492	1341	1226	1061
2003	country	South Korea	Japan	America	Vietnam	Indonesia	Thailand	Germany	Russia	Nepal	Mongolia
	student number	35353	12765	3693	3487	2563	1554	1280	1224	1199	1060
2004	country	South Korea	Japan	America	Vietnam	Indonesia	Thailand	Russia	Germany	France	Nepal
	student number	43617	19059	8480	4382	3750	2371	2288	2187	1954	1495
2005	country	South Korea	Japan	America	Vietnam	Indonesia	Thailand	Russia	India	France	Germany
	student number	54079	18874	10343	5842	4616	3594	3535	3295	3105	2736
2006	country	South Korea	Japan	America	Vietnam	Indonesia	India	Thailand	Russia	France	Pakistan
	student number	57504	18363	11784	7310	5652	5634	5522	5035	3857	3308
2007	country	South Korea	Japan	America	Vietnam	Thailand	Russia	India	Indonesia	France	Pakistan
	student number	64481	18640	14758	9702	7306	7261	7190	6590	4698	4450
2008	country	South Korea	America	Japan	Vietnam	Russia	Thailand	India	Indonesia	Kazakhstan	Pakistan
	student number	66806	19914	16733	10396	8939	8476	8145	7084	5666	5199
2009	country	South Korea	America	Japan	Vietnam	Thailand	Russia	India	Indonesia	Kazakhstan	Pakistan
	student number	64232	18650	15409	12247	11379	10596	8468	7926	6497	5738
2010	country	South Korea	America	Japan	Thailand	Vietnam	Russia	Indonesia	India	Kazakhstan	Pakistan
	student number	62957	19668	16808	13177	13018	12481	9539	9014	7874	7406
2011	country	South Korea	America	Japan	Thailand	Vietnam	Russia	Indonesia	India	Pakistan	Kazakhstan
	student number	62442	23292	17961	14145	13549	13340	10957	9370	8516	8287
2012	country	South Korea	America	Japan	Thailand	Russia	Indonesia	Vietnam	India	Pakistan	Kazakhstan
	student number	63488	24583	21126	16675	14971	13144	13038	10237	9630	9565
2013	country	South Korea	America	Thailand	Japan	Russia	Indonesia	Vietnam	India	Kazakhstan	Pakistan
	student number	63029	25312	20106	17226	15918	13492	12799	11781	11165	10941
2014	country	South Korea	America	Thailand	Russia	Japan	Indonesia	India	Pakistan	Kazakhstan	France
	student number	62923	24203	21296	17202	15057	13689	13578	13360	11764	10729
2015	country	South Korea	America	Thailand	India	Russia	Pakistan	Japan	Kazakhstan	Indonesia	France
	student number	66672	21975	19976	16694	16197	15654	14085	13198	12694	10436
2016	country	South Korea	America	Thailand	Pakistan	India	Russia	Indonesia	Kazakhstan	Japan	Vietnam
	student number	70540	23939	23044	18626	18717	17971	14714	13996	13595	10639

(3) The changing composition of international students: the proportion of degree students increased, while the percentage of advanced degree students was still small (see Table 8). In the past 17 years, the number of degree students and non-degree students had shown a growing trend year by year. Figure 3 indicated that although the proportion of non-degree education students declined, the ratio of degree students only increased slightly (from 26.3% in 2000 to 47.4% in 2016) in the past years, with non-degree education students still taking the dominant place. Among all degree students, undergraduates made up the largest proportion, being followed by postgraduates, and junior college students accounted for the smallest proportion. In recent years, the proportion of postgraduate students increased, while the proportion of undergraduates dropped. International students studying in junior colleges in China were mainly from developing countries with relatively slow development in higher education, for instance, countries in Southeast Asia. Master's students and doctoral students often represented the advanced level of higher education in China, but the number of international students in this group was relatively small, covering 26.4% in 2000 and 30.4% in 2016 respectively.

Table 8

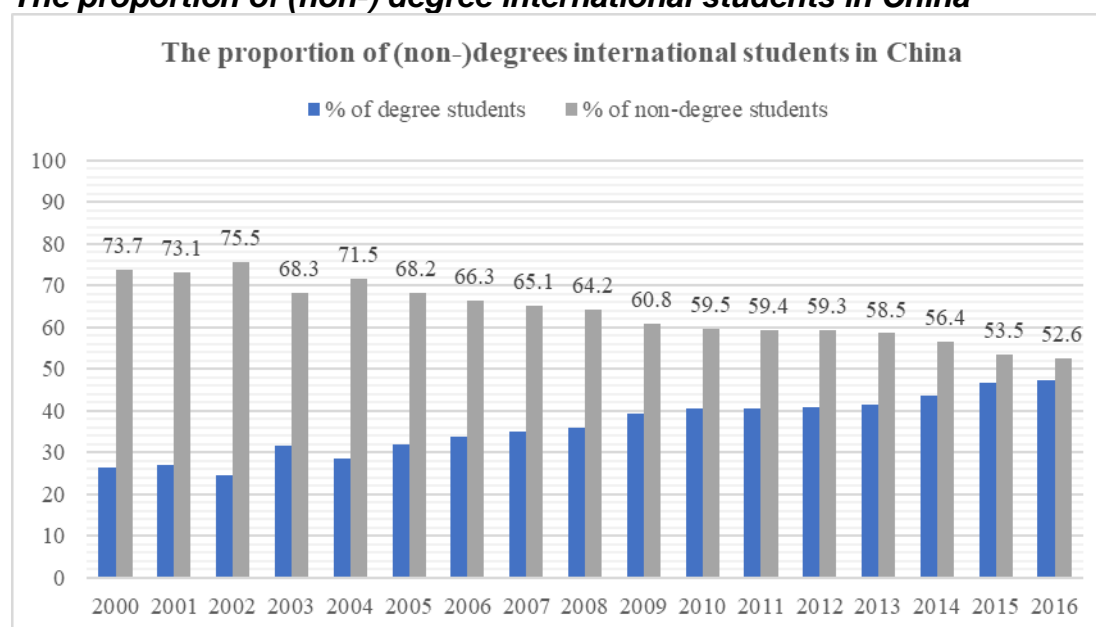
Proportions of different groups of international students in China

Year	% of international degree students	% of Junior college students in international degree students	% of undergraduate students in international degree students	% of master students in international degree students	% of doctoral students in international degree students	% of non-degree students
2000	26.3	1.7	74.6	16	10.4	73.7
2001	26.9	7.7	70.9	14.3	7.1	73.1
2002	24.5	2.4	77.5	13.6	6.6	75.5
2003	31.7	1.1	78.5	13.8	6.7	68.3
2004	28.5	1.4	80.2	12.3	6.1	71.5
2005	31.8	1.3	82.8	10.7	5.1	68.2
2006	33.7	1.8	82.4	10.9	4.9	66.3
2007	34.9	1.6	82.5	11.2	4.7	65.1
2008	35.8	1.1	81.1	12.8	4.9	64.2
2009	39.2	1	78.7	15.2	5.1	60.8
2010	40.5	1.1	75.8	17.7	5.4	59.5
2011	40.6	1.1	73.4	19.7	5.8	59.4
2012	40.7	1.2	71.8	20.8	6.2	59.3
2013	41.5	1.4	71.2	/	/	58.5
2014	43.6	/	/	21.8	7.4	56.4
2015	46.5	/	/	21.2	7.8	53.5
2016	47.4	/	/	21.8	8.6	52.6

Note: “/” means data are unavailable.

Figure 3

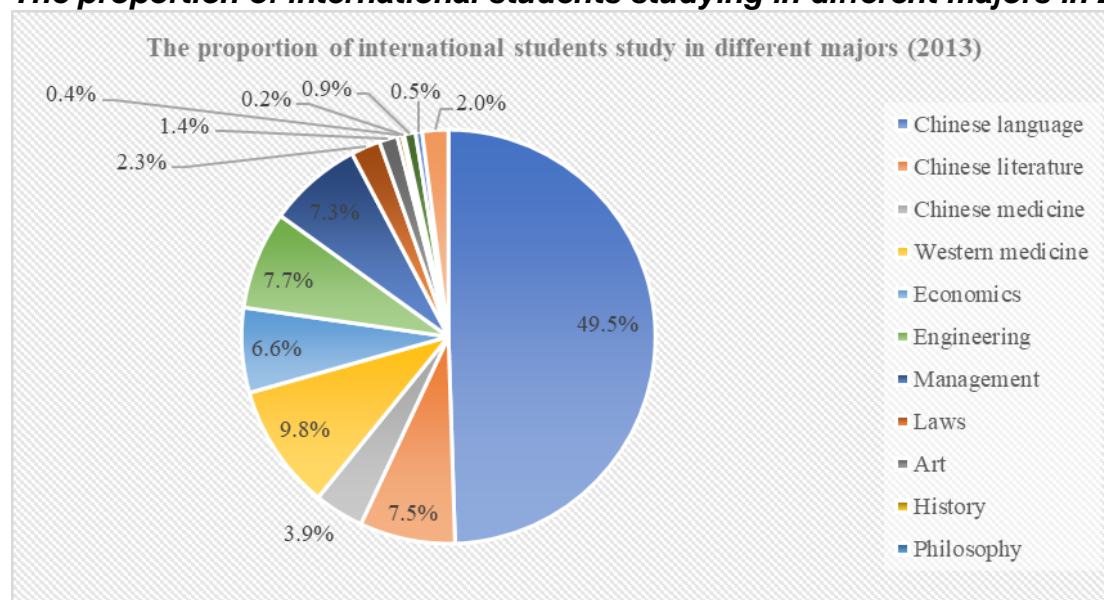
The proportion of (non-) degree international students in China



(4) Majors of international students: Chinese language study remained very popular in the past 17 years, and the students studying literature, medicine, engineering, economics and management kept growing. For a long time, Chinese language study had been the most popular major for international students in China. Students studying in Chinese language constituted half of the total number of international students. In 2011-2013, their proportions were 55.3%, 54.5%, and 49.5%, respectively. Students majoring Western medicine registered the second largest proportion, with a percentage of 9.2%, 9.3%, and 9.8% in 2011-2013. Moreover, the

ratio of international students studying Chinese literature, economics, engineering, and management amounted to 7% separately (see Figure 4). As one of the most popular majors in China, Chinese medicine attracted a large number of international students. It must be pointed out that though the number of international students majoring in the Chinese language was large, most of them are non-degree students.

Figure 4
The proportion of international students studying in different majors in 2013



(5) The growing number of scholarship-awarding international students⁷: the percentage of scholarship-awarding international students had remained at a lower level for a long time, and scholarships were increasingly tended to award to degree students. Table 9 demonstrated that in the past 17 years, the total number of international students who had received scholarships shot up, and the proportion of international students who won scholarships in the total number of international students showed an upward trend, indicating the Chinese government continuously increased the scholarships for international students. Figure 5 illustrated that degree students formed the main body of scholarship-awarded international students, and the proportion of international degree students who had received scholarships showed an escalating trend. It is not difficult to predict that with the increasing number of international students studying in China and the relatively limited

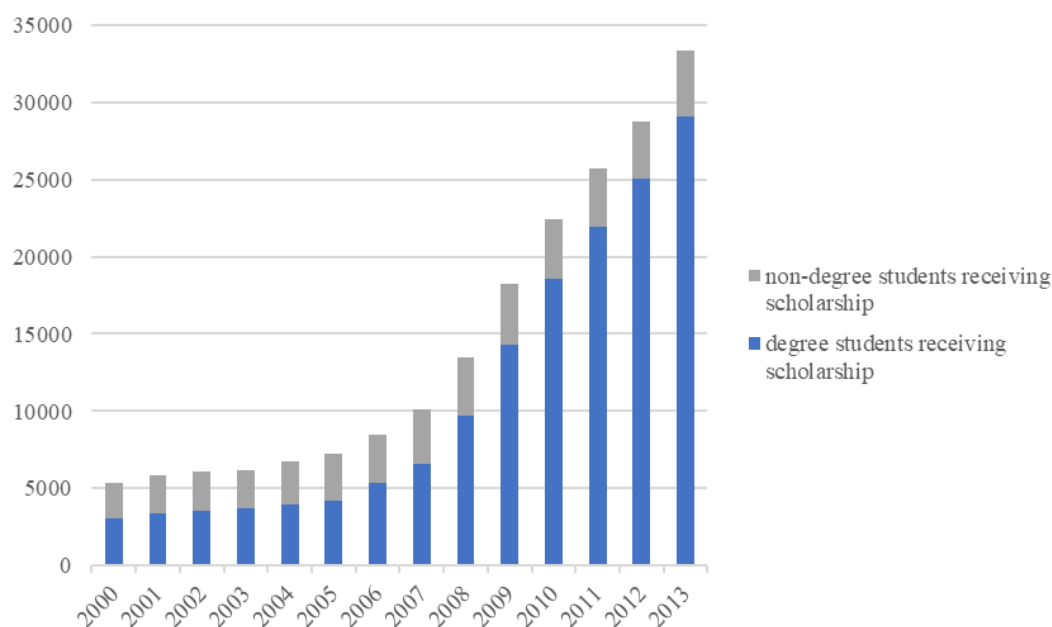
⁷ In order to promote the mutual understanding, cooperation and exchanges in politics, economy, culture, education and trade between China and other countries, the Chinese government has set up a series of scholarship programs to sponsor international students, teachers and scholars to study and conduct research in Chinese universities. Chinese Government Scholarship supports international students, teachers and scholars to pursue degrees at all levels (bachelor's, master's and PhD) or non-degree studies and to conduct research in China. More information about this scholarship and other scholarships can be found on: <http://scholarship.cucas.edu.cn/>

expenditure of Chinese government on students' scholarships, the Chinese government scholarship will be mainly provided to degree students.

Table 9
The number and the ratio of international students receiving Chinese government scholarships (2000-2016)

Year	the number of international degree students receiving scholarship	the ratio of international degree students receiving scholarship
2000	3044	56.8
2001	3368	57.7
2002	3558	58.6
2003	3713	60.3
2004	3945	58.7
2005	4227	58.6
2006	5357	63.1
2007	6615	65.2
2008	9681	71.6
2009	14275	78.2
2010	18563	82.9
2011	21905	85.3
2012	25025	87
2013	29037	87.1

Figure 5
The comparison of international degree/non-degree students receiving Chinese government scholarships (2000-2013)



Note: data in 2014-2016 are unavailable.