Research on the Attractiveness of Improvement of Hainan Higher Vocational Colleges to Overseas Students under the Background of “The Belt and Road Initiative”

-A Case Study of Sanya Aviation and Tourism College

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Abstract. The overseas students have been always deemed as the important channel of multinational cultural exchanges and the sound platform of presenting the national image, especially for Hainan Province, the important strategic point of the South China Sea. The development of education of overseas students and the intensification of education exchanges with the neighbouring countries are necessitated by serving the diplomacy, promoting the education, deepening the reform of education, expanding the opening to the outside world and promoting the continuous development of higher vocational colleges. This paper analyses the existing status and problems in respect of education of overseas students at higher vocational colleges in combination of the practice experience, and thus proposes the essential guidelines and tactics to improve the attractiveness of Hainan vocational colleges to overseas students.

Introduction

The intensification of cultural and academic exchanges, the expansion of mutual overseas students and the development of cooperation school-running have constituted the important content of the “The Belt and Road Initiative” Strategy. Hainan, close to South Asia and Southeast Asia geographically, is a critical strategic point of “The Belt and Road Initiative”. In this sense, the development of education of overseas students at Hainan higher vocational colleges is of great significance to serve the “The Belt and Road Initiative”, promote the education, deepened the reform, expand the opening up outside and serve the construction of international tourism island. Sanya Aviation and Tourism College, located at Sanya, Hainan, is actively responding to the “The Belt and Road Initiative” by vigorously expanding the market of overseas students from South Asia and Southeast Asia. In recent years, it has enrolled almost 400 overseas students from India and Nepal, etc. and accumulated experience in enrollment, education and management of overseas students. This paper, in combination of the background of “The Belt and Road Initiative” strategy and with the practice experience of Sanya Aviation and Tourism College as a case study, has analyzed the existing status and problems in respect of education of overseas students at higher vocational colleges, and thus proposed the essential guidelines and tactics to improve the attractiveness of Hainan vocational colleges to overseas students.

Significance of Improving the Attractiveness of Higher Vocational Colleges to Overseas Students

Improvement of the Attractiveness of Higher Vocational Colleges to Overseas Students is Necessitated by Serving the Diplomatic Strategy of South Asia and Southeast Asia

The peculiar geographic location of South Asia and Southeast Asia has determined their important status in Chinese diplomatic strategies with surrounding countries. The interactions between China and countries will exert significant effect on the regional and global strategic pattern. As the South Asian Sub-Continent and Southeast Asia have been always the key points and difficulties of our
diplomatic direction, the new-generation central collective leadership has obviously intensified its
diplomatic plan and layout in respect of the surrounding countries. Up to now, China has confirmed
its strategic partnership with South Asia and Southeast Asia at high level, wide areas and multiple
levels. With South Asia and Southeast Asia have become the new “highland of growth”, these regions
are of the most critical strategic significance to China and the intensification of bilateral (multilateral)
interactions between China and regions in South Asia and Southeast Asia through expansion of
educational and cultural exchanges has become increasingly strategic important; therefore, the
intensification of educational exchanges between Hainan and the surrounding countries will closely
combine the advantages of China in terms of education and culture, etc. and the development
demands of South Asia countries, which shall be of important theoretical and actual significance to
promote the relationship between China and South Asia countries and serve the strategy of “The Belt
and Road Initiative”.

Improvement of the Attractiveness of Higher Vocational Colleges to Overseas Students is
Necessitated by Promoting the Education, Deepening the Reform, Expanding the Opening up
and Serving the Construction of International Tourism island. With the Promotion of the
Internationalization Course of Hainan Province, the Internationalized Education and
Exchanges must be Considered as the Important Content of Hainan Cultural Construction

As pointed by Vice-governor Wang Lu, at present, Hainan is still incompetent for cultivating
international talents, cannot well fulfill the necessity of the “The Belt and Road Initiative” and the
construction of international tourism island. Thus efforts shall be made to promote its education
opening to the outside world, support the colleges to “go out” and “make introduction” so as to
improve its international influence and popularity, and better serve the national humanistic
diplomacy. As definitely pointed out in the Innovative Development Action Plan of Higher
Vocational Education (2015-2018) issued by the country in 2015, the higher vocational colleges shall
“cooperate with the national strategy of “The Belt and Road Initiative”, expand the vocational
education cooperation with the countries along the line of ‘The Belt and Road Initiative’”; besides, it
also mentioned “efforts shall be made to explore the channels and policies for the developing
countries to carry out vocational education assistance”. Therefore, the improvement of attractiveness
of Hainan higher vocational colleges to overseas students is of great significance no matter to the
construction of Hainan international tourism island, the reform of national vocational education and
the implementation of the policy of opening to the outside world, or promote the cooperation
relationship among countries involved in the “The Belt and Road Initiative”.

Improvement of the Attractiveness of Higher Vocational Colleges to Overseas Students is
Necessitated by Promoting the Continuous Development of Higher Vocational Colleges

Recently, with the continuous descending of national quantity of students seated for the
matriculation, the competition among higher education institutions for excellent students has become
increasingly ardent. Besides, considering the social discrimination against the academic degree
grated by higher vocational colleges, many higher vocational colleges are confronted with great
reduction of students; however, with the rapid development of higher vocational education in China
for over a decade, except few developed countries, China has become comparatively advantageous in
college scale, specialty construction, course setting, teaching team, integration of production and
teaching, etc. As far as the college’s actual conditions are concerned, the ratio between overseas
students and domestic students has increased from 1:60 in 2011 to the current 1:5. Improvement of
the attractiveness of higher vocational colleges to overseas students will be not only conducive to
make up for the insufficiency of students but enhance the momentum for the continuous and stable
development of higher vocational education [1].
Brief Analysis of Problems Encountered by Higher Vocational Colleges in Terms of Education of Overseas Students

Competition with Universities

The current overseas students are studying at “universities in priority and colleges as supplementation”. In terms of attractiveness to overseas students, the higher vocational colleges are subject to three disadvantages in comparison with universities: firstly, in terms of education policy, the scholarship granted to overseas students usually orients to universities while the overseas students at higher vocational colleges are unable of applying for scholarship; secondly, in terms of the experience of enrolling overseas students, with the rapid development of higher vocational education for over a decade, the higher vocational colleges which have just started in terms of enrollment of overseas students feature weak foundation and shortage of experience; thirdly, in terms of quality cultivation, it is difficult for higher vocational colleges to compete with universities in terms of specialty construction, staff and various resources, etc.[2].

Difficulty in Enrollment and Low Cultivation Quality

The current enrollment of overseas students is characterized as follows: outstanding universities are waiting for the students’ application, general higher education institutions are yelling for the students’ application and higher vocational colleges are begging for the students’ application. Due to the above-mentioned three disadvantages, the program of overseas students of many higher vocational colleges have become “two short-term” programs, that is, the short-term tour study (the language training as the majority) and the short-term language training program. No matter which program is concerned, there are very few overseas students for the purpose of professional education or professional study. In their opinions, the higher vocational colleges have been degraded to the “language cultivation institution” or the “tour study tool” while losing the “initial intention” of cultivating technical and skill talents [3].

Shortage of Rules and Regulations, Incompetent Management

As the majority higher vocational colleges have few overseas students, the colleges are found of such problems as less attentions paid to and deviated understandings of the enrollment of overseas students, shortage of rules and regulations, incompetent management. Many colleges even believe no necessity of stipulating specific rules and regulations; instead, they act as per their experience due to few overseas students; or they only believe it would be OK as long as the overseas students pay the tuition and thus exercise “loose” management for the sake of mutual conveniences [4].

Tactics for Higher Vocational Colleges to Improve Their Attractiveness to Overseas Students

The improvement of attractiveness of higher vocational colleges to overseas students can be achieved from multiple perspectives. Considering universal problems encountered by the said higher vocational colleges, this paper proposes some more pertinent tactics to improve their attractiveness to overseas students in combination of the working experience of Sanya Aviation and Tourism College. These tactics can be summarized as the essential guidelines, that is, pay close attention to demands, focus on characteristics, carry out initiative propagandizing, strive for support, emphasize education, improve quality, optimize system and intensify management.

Pay Close Attention to Demands and Focus on Characteristics

The higher vocational colleges cannot compete with the universities in terms of academic education; but in comparison, the former pays more attention to the skills cultivation and practice at enterprises. In this sense, as long as the higher vocational colleges pay close attention to demands and focus on their characteristics in terms of multiple professional education emphasizing on skills, can they absolutely overtake the universities.
Taking the College as the example, on the basis of its field investigation of the colleges and hotel industries in Nepal and India, etc., they’ve found the local higher vocational colleges have great cooperation aspiration in terms of overseas students. Countries in South Asia and Southeast Asia feature beautiful natural scenery, profound and unique historic culture and greatly abundant tourism resources but in shortage of hotel talents due to weak national foundation and turbulent political scene, etc.; as a result, the great potentials of their tourism and hotel industry cannot be fully utilized. Among them, the tourism industry in Nepal has become the leading income source of its economy but the local colleges are much incompetent for cultivating high-quality hotel talents. For the hotel industry in India, the scale is expanding by 20% to 25% annually; however, the shortage rate of excellent hotel talents has reached 30% to 40%. The hotel industry both in India and Nepal is laggard behind. There’re no suitable and sufficient practice opportunities for students majoring in hotel management; at meanwhile, in face of increasingly enormous Chinese tourists, hotel practitioners who can speak Chinese are greatly demanded. Besides, the College is located at Sanya, Hainan which highlights exceptional advantages in cultivation of hotel talents. As the pioneer in the construction of Hainan international tourism island, Sanya is vigorously creating itself to be a fine international tourism city. At present, over 20 high-end five-star international hotels are settled at Sanya, enabling the city to highlight the densest high star hotels domestically beyond Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou, etc. At the peak season, the occupancy rate will reach above 90%. Hotel Management at the College is known as the characteristic specialty at Hainan provincial level for its superior staff, more cooperating hotels and high teaching quality. In addition, the multiple high-end brand hotels at Sanya and extremely high occupancy rate have created incomparably outstanding conditions and industrial culture for the training of practice skills in respect of hotel management. On this basis, the higher education institutions in Nepal and India, etc. have intense cooperation intentions of designating overseas students to study hotel management at the College.

**Carry Out Initiative Propagandizing and Seek Support**

At present, the majority colleges are still enrolling overseas students by the original three means, that is, information announcement on line, reliance on the agency under cooperation and waiting for application of overseas students. The propagandizing effect is not obvious. For the cooperation achieved by waiting, both parties usually have low mutual reliability and weak sustainability.

Taking the College as an example, the key of increasing the propagandizing effect is to transform from passive waiting to taking the initiatives by enrolling overseas students from three perspectives, that is, emphasis on three channels of seeking cooperation: firstly, emphasis on field visit and negotiation on the spot abroad, which is conducive to master the actual conditions and negotiate the possibility of cooperation. The College has carried out field visit Nepal, India, Malaysia, Thailand and other countries in South Asia and Southeast Asia to understand the authentic demand of cooperation of foreign colleges. Secondly, emphasis on recommendation by friend colleges and universities, for example, the cooperating party in Nepal was recommended by our friend university: Austria Salzburg University of Applied Sciences. In this way, we can better know the background and trust in cooperation. Thirdly, emphasis on the participation in diversified domestic education exhibitions, for example, China-ASEAN Higher Education Exhibition and Beijing International Higher Education Exhibition, etc. In terms of cooperation, the College focuses on “fanning out from a point to an area”, that is, develop cooperation with a reliable cooperation university in a country. With the appearance of the cooperating effects, the superior employment of students and the spreading of cooperation achievements can form the “reputation effect”, which will attract more colleges and universities from the same country to participate in the cooperation. For example, when the overseas students from Nepal International College of Hotel Management (ICHM) completed their study at the College, many students have achieved the opportunities of working at five-star hotels in such countries and regions as U. S., Australia, Britain, Dubai, Singapore and Japan, etc. and performed excellently, which have not only expanded the quantity of overseas students involved in the cooperation program but attracted the Global Academy of Tourism and Hospitality Education in Kathmandu, Nepal (ISTH) to participate in the cooperation.
Emphasize Education and Improve Quality. Quality is the Lifeline of Higher Education Institutions and their Overseas Students Program

Improvement of the cultivation quality of overseas students shall play the central role in the education of overseas students. At present, the higher education institutions, especially the higher vocational colleges are likely to reveal “two simplenesses” in terms of cultivation of overseas students, that is, speaking some Chinese simply and know some terms simply. Such cultivation effect may result in their unsustainability of enrollment of overseas students.

Taking the College as an example, the College has been continuously devoting itself to optimize the teaching mode and improve the teaching quality. By full utilization of the superior hotel resources and excellent hotel practice environment, the College has carried out innovation and reform of the courses based on the characteristics of vocational education. It opens theoretical and practice courses as per the ratio of 1:1 and strictly adheres to “two persistences”, that is, persistence in studying theories in practice at enterprises and persistence in studying language in the culture edification. In the first persistence, the students are arranged to have hotel management and practice courses at diversified five-star hotels while senior managers of these five-star hotels are invited to teach the students majoring in hotel management. In comparison with the pure theoretical teaching, such kind of cooperation teaching mode highlights better practicability and communicative efficiency, which is conducive to improve the overseas students’ actual operation capacity and more favourable to improve the teaching quality. In the second persistence, the theoretical courses, with Chinese language teaching and culture teaching as the basis, include the Chinese comprehensive courses and the culture courses, in which, the former considers the language teaching as the priority, including phonetic teaching, vocabulary teaching, grammar teaching and Chinese character teaching, etc.; and the culture courses are usually carried out by means of theme-based teaching, including Peking Opera facial makeup course, paper-cutting course, calligraphy course, national painting course, film & TV course, RMB culture, cooking culture, festival culture, wedding culture and culture of the animal of Chinese birth year, etc. In this way, the overseas students’ experience of Chinese culture can be intensified and the overseas students can understand Chinese culture to the largest extent on the basis of language study. The majority graduate overseas students majoring in hotel management have achieved better development and many students even obtain offers of working at five-star hotels in U. S., Britain, Australia and Japan, etc. because of their education background of studying Chinese and majoring in hotel management in China at meanwhile.

Optimize System and Intensify Management

The management of overseas students can directly affect the quality of their cultivation and further affect the school’s attractiveness to the overseas students. Upon exploration for long time, the College has gradually summarized the “secrets” of managing overseas students, that is, optimized system, action as per regulations, definite duties and responsibilities, linkage of departments, mutual supplementation of relaxation and strictness as well as proper management.

First of all, optimized system and action as per regulations. It is of vital significance to optimize and intensify the education of overseas students by establishing and optimizing relevant rules and regulations on education of overseas students. As the enrollment of overseas students by higher vocational colleges has only been exercised for short time, there’s not been a set of scientific management system in respect of overseas students; but the affairs of overseas students are associated with the leadership and management of multiple departments including national foreign affairs, education, public security, entry & exit, etc., diversified laws, regulations and management rules are involved. At the moment of strictly abiding by these rules and regulations, efforts shall be made to refine and stipulate the supporting system at the school level so as to enable various affairs to be carried out in a standardized and rigorous manner based on regulations[5]. The College has earnestly executed relevant provisions of the Ministry of Education of P. R. C. and the Department of Education of Hainan Province, initiated from the actual education and management of overseas students, and established a series of systems suitable to the school’s actual conditions, such as the
Management Methods of Overseas Students, the Regulations on VISA of Overseas Students and the Dormitory Management System of Overseas Students which are associated with the teaching and management of students. Thus the College has gradually performed in a standardized and systematic manner in terms of its education running externally and management of overseas students. In addition, the College carries out the entry education and announce its rules and management systems upon enrollment of fresh overseas students. At meanwhile, personnel from the Exit-Entry Administration are invited to carry out education in terms of exit & entry of foreign people so that the students can identify relevant provisions upon entry; besides, the provisions on study status management, dormitory management and classroom criteria, etc. are compiled to the manual for overseas students, which will be issued to the students early after their entry while the entry education is carried out in a systematic manner.

Secondly, definite duties and responsibilities and linkage of departments. As the study, practice and living, etc. of overseas students are associated with the College’s various departments, the duties, responsibilities and labour division of relevant departments must be defined. The establishment of a sound management system is the foundation for doing well in the education of overseas students. According to relevant provisions of the Ministry of Education, P. R. C. and the Department of Education of Hainan Province, the College has established the International Exchange and Cooperation Centre to converge and manage the enrollment, management, teaching management and living services, etc. of overseas students. On this basis, the coordination mechanism of education and management of overseas students has been established so that the International Exchange and Cooperation Centre can take the lead to solve the problems and difficulties available in the education and management of overseas students. As verified by the fact, although the integration of management, education and service of overseas students have intensified the daily workload of the centre, it is conducive to centralize the efforts of various departments, optimize the allocation of the College’s restricted manpower and material resources, and thus achieve the maxim benefits.

Thirdly, mutual supplementation of relaxation and strictness as well as proper management. The foreign affairs have no small matter. As the affairs of overseas students serve the national diplomatic undertaking. Generally, the management personnel of colleges and universities behave more “polite” and “kind” to the overseas students. Sometimes, the management of their teaching and living is carried out in a more relax manner, and partial overseas students seem weak in self control. Some overseas students are more likely to be late for class or stay away from school. In this regard, the College persists in “mutual supplementation of relaxation and strictness as well as proper management” and transforms the status of “considering them as foreign guests in priority and students in supplementation” to “equal status and identical management” [6]. In the course of management, their different cultural backgrounds, different ways of dealing with affairs and different cognition behaviors shall be fully respected; at meanwhile, equivalent rigorous requirements shall be proposed to them in terms of course, practice and living, etc., the same to the Chinese students based on the thought of “equal status and identical management” so as to guarantee the teaching quality, prevent the occurrence of any accident and avoid passive management.

References


