

International Journal of Sciences: Basic and Applied Research (IJSBAR)

Sciences:
Basic and Applied
Research
ISSN 2307-4531
(Print & Online)

Published by:
LEGRER

ISSN 2307-4531 (Print & Online)

http://gssrr.org/index.php?journal=JournalOfBasicAndApplied

An Analysis of the Factors that Affect International Student Choice of Higher Education Institution Based "One Belt One Road" Policy

Zhang Beia*, Rashad Yazdanifardb

^{a,b}Malaysia University of Science and Technology (MUST)

^{a,b}Block B, Encorp Strand Garden Office, No. 12, Jalan PJU 5/5, Kota Damansara, 47810 Petaling Jaya,

Selangor, Malaysia

^aEmail: zhang.bei@phd.must.edu.my

^bEmail: rashad@must.edu.my

Abstract

The aim of this study is to investigate the factors through which international students choose higher education institutions (HEIs) in Shaanxi Province in China. It focuses on the variables that influenced international students' decision to choose HEIs in Shaanxi, China as their educational location. A questionnaire with 44 questions was developed and distributed to 714 students. Out of these 714 students, only 500 questionnaires were returned. The data analysis was conducted using the micro, meso, and macro factors highlighted in the conceptual framework. At various levels, the effect of the various independent variables on the decision of international students to study in Shaanxi province was evaluated. The results indicates that international experience of the university, language practiced by the university & , admissions policy adopted by the university has an impact on International Students' Choice of Study in Shaanxi Province. It is also important for international market positioning and enhancing the capabilities of higher education institutions.

Keywords: international experience; Admission policy; Choice of Study; Language Practice	٠.

^{*} Corresponding author.

1. Introduction

In recent years, countries that support the Belt and Road Initiative appear to be sending an increasing number of students to China. Furthermore, the same countries have emerged as major sources of internal students. In fact, 207,746 international students from Belt and Road countries were among the 442,773 international students who registered in China in 2017. Surprisingly, that made up 46.92 percent of thetotal. The Republic of Korea, the United States, Thailand, Pakistan, India, Russia, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Japan, and Vietnam are among the countries that contribute to such large numbers of international students going to China. Except for the Republic of Korea, the United States, and Japan, all of the countries mentioned above are predominantly Belt and Road countries [1].

As a result, local governments must make it a top priority to develop an action plan for globalising local education and economy while maximising geographical advantages and regional characteristics. They should also do so in order to stay current with China's overall layout. This entails making the most of available resources. Similarly, the initiative to provide platforms at home and abroad that promote complementary strengths, sound cooperation, and joint development of schools and enterprises should be considered in the above-mentioned area. The responsible authorities should develop coordinated measures to support and guide local education systems in carrying out extensive cooperation and exchange programmes with countries along the Belt and Road as part of this process. As a result of these efforts, a regional demonstration zone for educational cooperation and exchanges will be established, and the local education standard will be raised [2].

Shaanxi has risen to the top of the list of destinations for Central Asian students studying abroad as a result of the proposals mentioned above being implemented. Shaanxi welcomed nearly 12,000 international students from 156 countries and regions in 2018. Interestingly, more than 6,000 of the students mentioned above came from countries along the Belt and Road. The statistics cited accounted for 54 percent of the total number of international students in the province, emphasising the point made above. Furthermore, the figures showed that international students accounted for more than half of all students for three years in a row [3].

However, existing management policies in colleges and universities for international students have proven incompatible with the increased enrollment. International students are usually supervised separately. They are regarded as a relatively privileged group. In essence, this depicts a low degree of openness and internationalization. As a result, given the current trend of an increased number of international students and a higher degree of internationalisation, such a management approach is no longer appropriate. To put it another way, the management is outdated [4].

In recent years, China has seen a steady increase in the number of international students. This is a departure from the past, when most international or international students flocked to the United States. Even though the United States remains one of the most popular educational destinations, the trend is shifting for Chinese students. Studies from the past show that the rise in the number of international students in China has coincided with the country's rapid economic growth, as seen in the literature review section. China has the world's largest nominal GDP, while its real GDP is second only to the United States when measured by GPD per capita.

Other countries around the world have taken notice of China's above-mentioned economic growth. For a long time, some of them have attempted to replicate the American economic growth model with little success. Even developed countries in the Americas and Europe have reached a stalemate in terms of economic growth, and they are seeking new ideas and approaches to revitalize their economies. They see education as one of the sure paths to medium and long-term prosperity. As a result, the number of international students who have gone to study in Chinese higher education institutions, such as colleges, universities, and technical institutions, has increased. They come from all over the world, including the United States, Europe, Latin America, and Africa, among other places.

Solving the eminent management problems is a prerequisite for rolling out education frameworks' development. Therefore, this study considers "the management of foreign students in Shaanxi Province" universities as the primary research endeavor and to solve this emerging problem, it is focusing on the following objectives:

- 1. Explore the impact of university ranking and repute on international students' choice of study in Shaanxi province
- 2. Investigate impact of medium of instruction preferably English on students' choice of study in Shaanxi province
- 3. Explore the impact of admission policy of university on students' choice of study in Shaanxi province

The research focuses mostly on the level and issues of higher education that overseas students in China today encounter. China's importance as an educational hub in Asia has grown over time. Surprisingly, the majority of these overseas students are from Central Asian nations, although considerable numbers also come from the United States and Europe. The Road and belt initiative is one of the primary pull factors. The road and belt initiative has 71 participating nations. The purpose of their participation in the Road and belt programme is to enhance collaboration and integration.

These integration and cooperation are particularly vital for economic development and infrastructure initiatives. The countries desire that their infrastructure plans were synchronized and of the same calibre. In addition, they desire for all of these projects to adhere to the identical criteria. This conclusion is only feasible if everyone is in sync and works together. Students from the countries of the Silk Road and the Silk Road Economic Belt are coming to China as a result of the potential benefits of such collaboration. They feel that if they could acquire a Chinese education, collaboration between their countries would improve and they would be able to replicate the Chinese model of success. During the course of their higher study in China, these international students from central Asian nations encountered several obstacles. The Chinese feel that their education has been internationalized, but their administration suggests otherwise. Specifically, the social management of international students and curriculum intimates a localized education. This perception must be corrected and the underlying difficulties, whether actual or perceived, must be resolved. On the basis of the research design, the following hypotheses are formulated:

1. H01: International Experience of the university influences the decision of international students to study in Shaanxi Province.

- 2. H02: The Language used by the university influences the decision of international students to study in Shaanxi Province.
- 3. H03: The university's Admissions Policy influences international students' decision to study in Shaanxi Province.

2. Methodology

The total number of samples for this study will amount to 500. All of these 500 samples size from institutions in the province of Shaanxi. A final crucial consideration when selecting these 500 students is that they should be scattered across the province of Shaanxi's several institutions and universities. This is because universities may control their overseas students in subtle or substantial ways. The universities/colleges in the Shaanxi province of China contain the majority of China's university students. The available general data pertain to all international students in China, regardless of the college or region in which they are obtaining their education. This study, however, is limited to universities and colleges in the Shaanxi provinces. As a result, the frame reduces its scope and eliminates all universities and colleges outside of Shaanxi. Consequently, this removes the vast majority of overseas students studying in China outside of Shaanxi region.

The second section of the sample frame is devoted to foreign students studying in China. Now that they have been reduced to only those attending colleges and universities in Shaanxi province, it is still insufficient. This is mostly because study topics are becoming more focused and specific. The research examines the challenges Belt and Road international students confront in terms of how universities manage them. The existing registry of overseas students participating in research is still very broad. It examines international students from all continents, including Asia, Europe, North America, South America, and Africa, as well as others not specifically named. Therefore, it is essential to limit the sample to international students from Belt and Road nations.

The third sample frame examines the professors and administrators at these Shaanxi provincial colleges. Colleges provide a vast and diversified array of courses and specialties. Some are only taken by international students, while others were taken by local students. In contrast, a significant proportion of them are taken by both local and international students. The sample frame focuses on the courses, subjects, and instructors who instruct these activities to international students and those who overlap. This eliminates the teachers who are only responsible for courses and disciplines designed for local pupils. This is because they do not interact with international students, do not understand their difficulties and obstacles, and cannot meet their demands.

Research Findings & Discussion

2.1. Descriptive Analysis

Table 1 displays the demographic information of the students who participated in this study. There were 262 male participants and 238 female participants in the study. Thus, the overall sample size for the study was 500 participants. It indicates that the majority of participants (290) were from Asia. Africa had the second-highest number of participants (121) behind Asia. Europe had the third-highest number of participants (38), placing it in third place. There were twelve participants from North America and two participants from Oceania. The

majority of respondents (216) were enrolled in scientific and technology-related studies. The second-highest number of students (206) were enrolled in humanities and social sciences programmes. There were 71 students enrolled in medical school and 7 students enrolled in languages.

Table 1: Demographic information of students

Gender	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	262	52.4	52.4	52.4
Female	238	47.6	47.6	100.0
Total	500	100.0	100.0	
Country of Origin	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Asia	290	58.0	58.0	58.0
Africa	121	24.2	24.2	82.2
South America	38	7.6	7.6	89.8
Europe	37	7.4	7.4	97.2
North America	12	2.4	2.4	99.6
Oceania	2	.4	.4	100.0
Total	500	100.0	100.0	

Study major	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative
				Percent
Science and technology	216	43.2	43.2	43.2
Humanities and social	206	41.2	41.2	84.4
sciences				
Medicine	71	14.2	14.2	98.6
Linguistics	7	1.4	1.4	100
Total	500	100.0	100.0	

2.2. Inferential Analysis

H01: The international experience of the university has an impact on international students' choice of study in Shaanxi province.

Students are the subject of the questionnaire survey. This hypothesis was evaluated using frequency distribution and cross-tabulation. The outcomes are explained in tables 2 and 3. A cross-tabulation of prior foreign-life experience found that 38% of individuals with prior experience chose to study in Shaanxi province, China. Without prior experience, 50.8% of interviewees would not suggest China as a study destination for international students. Only 8.2% of individuals without prior experience acknowledged selecting Shaanxi province as an international student study destination. The chi-square test was used to determine whether the foreign experience of the university influences the decision of international students to study in Shaanxi province. The p-value of the Chi-Square test was significant (.000), which is less than 0.05 at a confidence level of alpha (95 percent). Therefore, existing foreign-life experience corresponds positively with a student's decision to study in China's Shaanxi province. Thus, the first hypothesis, which predicted that the foreign

experience of the institution influences international students' decision to study in Shaanxi province, was supported. In conclusion, the foreign experience of the institution influences the decision of international students to study in Shaanxi province. Thus, hypothesis 1 failed to be rejected.

Table 2: Frequency distribution of students based on prior life experience

				Can you sug also study in China?	Total	
				Yes	No	-
Existing	foreign-life	Yes	Count	154	51	205
experience			% of Total	30.8%	10.2%	41.0%
		No	Count	41	254	295
			% of Total	8.2%	50.8%	59.0%
Total			Count	195	305	500
			% of Total	39.0%	61.0%	100.0%

Table 3: Chi-Square test to check international experience of the university has an impact on international students' choice of study in Shaanxi province

	Value	Df	Asymptotic	Exact Sig. (2-	Exact Sig. (1-
			Significance (2-	sided)	sided)
			sided)		
Pearson Chi-Square	190.568a	1	.000		
Continuity Correction	188.003	1	.000		
Likelihood Ratio	200.905	1	.000		
Fisher's Exact Test				.000	.000
Linear-by-Linear	190.187	1	.000		
Association					
N of Valid Cases	500				

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 79.95.

H02: The language practiced by the university has an impact on international students' choice of study in Shaanxi province.

The subjects of the questionnaire survey are teachers and students. Teaching language is an important aspect of student's experience in the University, hence a determining factor in the program selection and the study destination. Regression analysis was conducted with three independent variables to ascertain the relationship

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

with student choice to study in Shaanxi province in China.

Table 4: Regression analysis on language practiced by the university and its impact on international students' choice of study

Model S	Summary										
Model	R	R^2	Adjusted	Std.	Error	Change Statis	stics				
			R^2	of	the	R ² Change	F	df1	df2	Sig.	F
				Estin	nate		Change			Chang	ge
1	0.534 ^a	0.285	0.221	0.22	191	0.285	65.822	3	386	0.000	

a. Predictors: (Constant), After coming to Shaanxi province, currently, what standard of Chinese language do you correspond., Did you study Chinese systematically after coming to Shaanxi province, Before coming to Shaanxi, what type of Chinese did you correspond

The regression model had an R-value of .534, showing a strong positive relationship between studying in China and the independent variables. R-squared of .285 shows that 28.5% of values fit the model. The table 5 the results of ANOVA after applying regression to the university's language practise and its influence on international students' decision to study in Shaanxi province. The ANOVA findings presented in the table 5 indicate that the p-value is significant with a confidence level of 95%. The value of the unstandardized and standardised coefficients indicates a correlation between the university's systematic language practise and the decision of international students to study in Shaanxi province. The use of language by students prior to their arrival in Shaanxi province is slightly connected with the values of the standard and unstandardized coefficients. In addition, the correlation between the standard of the Chinese language after moving to Shaanxi province and the coefficients of standardisation and non-standardization is poor. China's language requirements are crucial to a student's decision to enrol there. The significance of the Regression and ANOVA analyses indicates that our second hypothesis was supported. Therefore, it was found that the university's language policy influences international students' decision to study in Shaanxi province. Thus, hypothesis 2 failed to be rejected.

Table 5: ANOVA output after applying regression on language practiced by the university and its impact on international students' choice of study

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
1	Regression	33.871	3	11.290	65.822	.000 ^b	
	Residual	85.079	496	.172			
	Total	118.950	499				

a. Dependent Variable: Will you suggest to your friend to also study in Shaanxi province in China?

b. Predictors: (Constant), After coming to Shaanxi province, currently, what standard of Chinese language do you correspond., Did you study Chinese systematically after coming to Shaanxi province, Before coming to Shaanxi, what type of Chinese did you correspond

Table 6: Description of standardized and unstandardized coefficients after applying regression

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		В	Std. Error	Beta	_	
1	(Constant)	.689	.105		6.573	.000
	Did you study Chinese systematically after coming to Shaanxi province	.502	.038	.503	13.117	.000
	Before coming to Shaanxi, what type of Chinese did you correspond	.087	.027	.125	3.267	.001
	After coming to Shaanxi province, currently, what standard of Chinese language do you correspond.	.014	.064	.008	.218	.828

a. Dependent Variable: Can you suggest to your friend to also study in Shaanxi province in China?

The value of the unstandardized and standardised coefficients indicates a correlation between the university's systematic language practise and the decision of international students to study in Shaanxi province. The use of language by students prior to their arrival in Shaanxi province is slightly connected with the values of the standard and unstandardized coefficients. In addition, the correlation between the standard of the Chinese language after moving to Shaanxi province and the coefficients of standardisation and non-standardization is weak. China's language requirements are crucial to a student's decision to enrol there. The significance of the Regression and ANOVA analyses indicates that our second hypothesis was supported. Therefore, it was found that the university's language policy influences international students' decision to study in Shaanxi province.

According to the findings of the study, language is a significant influence in determining academic preferences in China's Shaanxi province. Students connected their decision to study in China to their proficiency in the Chinese language prior to their arrival in China. [5] argues that international students must acquire Chinese as a second language; failing to do so may result in social isolation with host country students. A lack of Chinese competence before to travelling to China can induce social anxiety and impede social interactions among international students. The language ability of the host country is crucial for international students because it is one of the ongoing stressors during the acculturation process. Consequently, many international students recognise that language is a crucial element in determining where they will study.

As a result, the majority of teachers utilise Chinese as their primary language, as indicated by the responses of teachers. 84 percent of professors questioned deliver their lectures in Chinese, whereas 16 percent utilise English, as shown in the graph below.

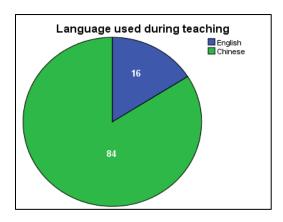


Figure 1: language used by teachers in class

The findings of this study are consistent with those of [6]. Transition into the classroom is a persistent obstacle for overseas students. When overseas students encounter unfamiliar language and instructional techniques, they frequently experience irritation, anxiety, and uncertainty, which may ultimately hinder their academic performance. Cultural and educational differences have a significant impact in the adjustment of international students to new contexts.

H03: The university's admission policy influences overseas students' decision to study in Shaanxi province.

This section outlines the pertinent policies created by the government to attract international students, including an awareness of admissions regulations and an appeal to China's enrollment policy. Students are the subject of the questionnaire survey.

The findings of the Chi-square test are evidently consistent with the data. With current knowledge of China's admissions rules, a greater number of students have chosen China as their study destination. The majority Chinese students (34.1 %) (See Table 7) who had prior knowledge of admissions policies did not favour Shaanxi province as their study destination. Similarly, a substantial number of students who chose to study in China (144) had prior knowledge of admission policies. Due to the varying degrees of study at universities in Shaanxi province, it is essential to carefully examine the varying needs, according to the research.

Table 7: Frequency distribution of students based on prior understanding of admission policies

				Can you suggest to your friend to also study in Shaanxi province in China?		Total
				Yes	No	-
Prior understanding	of	No	Count	51	170	221
admission policies			% of Total	10.2%	34.1%	44.3%
_		Yes	Count	144	134	278
			% of Total	28.9%	26.9%	55.7%
Total			Count	195	304	499
			% of Total	39.1%	60.9%	100.0%

At a confidence level of 95% (See Table 8), the chi-square value of prior knowledge of China's admission rules

and choice to study in Shaanxi province is 42,663, while the p-value is.000. The significance of Chi-Square reveals that prior knowledge of admission policies and choice of study in Shaanxi province are connected with one another. Further, Chi-Square is used to examine whether the university's admissions policy influences overseas students' decision to study in Shaanxi province.

Table 8: Chi-Square test to check prior understanding of admission policy adopted the university has an impact on international students' choice of study in Shaanxi province

	Value	Df	Asymptotic	Exact Sig. (2-	Exact Sig. (1-
			Significance (2-	sided)	sided)
			sided)		
Pearson Chi-Square	42.663 ^a	1	.000		
Continuity Correction ^b	41.465	1	.000		
Likelihood Ratio	43.958	1	.000		
Fisher's Exact Test				.000	.000
Linear-by-Linear	42.577	1	.000		
Association					
N of Valid Cases	499				

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 86.36.

At a confidence level of 95%, the chi-square value of prior knowledge of China's admission rules and choice to study in Shaanxi province is 42,663, while the p-value is.000. The significance of Chi-Square reveals that prior knowledge of admission policies and choice of study in Shaanxi province are connected with one another. Further, Chi-Square is used to examine whether the university's admissions policy influences overseas students' decision to study in Shaanxi province. Thus, hypothesis 3 failed to be rejected.

3. Research Findings & Discussion

Interactions between students and teachers outside of the classroom, international experience, and language are the three characteristics associated with Micro level in this study. The data demonstrated, first and foremost, that student-teacher contact played a substantial effect in students' selection of Shaanxi province for study. The first hypothesis of the study was that the foreign experience of the institution influenced the decision of international students to study in Shaanxi province. The Chi-Square test was utilised to examine the initial hypothesis. The results were deemed significant with a confidence level of 95%. Consequently, the initial research hypothesis was accepted [7]. The second hypothesis of the study indicated that the language used by the institution influenced the decision of overseas students to enrol in Shaanxi province. The second hypothesis was tested by regression analysis. Regression analysis also yielded substantial results. This meant that the second research hypothesis was accepted as well [8] These two factors have a substantial impact on a student's decision to study in Shaanxi province, China, and are crucial to a student's decision to study in China. When incorporating their promotional efforts, China's educational institutions should account for the decisions made by international

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

students [9]. The majority of education advertisements are written in languages other than English, posing a difficulty for students whose first language is English. This is due to the possibility that the language translation may not display all of the information [10]. Some of the pupils demanded that the school records could only be written in Chinese, posing some difficulties for the applicants. Foreign applicants can benefit greatly from information in English and other widely known languages [11].

In addition, foreign schools could consider giving academic writing or Chinese language support to assist overseas students with language obstacles. The information will provide a timely comprehension of the particulars, allowing them to make prompt decisions [12]. Chinese educational institutions are keenly interested in the multiculturalism of universities. Additionally, it has strong interactions with countries participating in the Belt and Road Initiative. Therefore, students from countries participating in the Belt and Road Initiative are interested in studying in Chinese universities [13]. In addition, the universities provide students with chances for international internships and exchanges, thereby creating good partnerships with internationally renowned campuses. China is economically developed and home to numerous multinational corporations and businesses that draw students from underdeveloped nations [14]. China is an important destination for international students who place a premium on gaining international experience. When Chinese universities communicate pertinent information, expand communication-related activities, and improve information accessibility, international students benefit considerably [15].

The establishment of a free communication network is an important consideration for international students while answering application questions. Due to the prompt communication and providing of pertinent information, this enhances the experience for the customer. Students search China's WeChat, Facebook, and government website for critical information. In addition, email is the primary mode of communication between applicants and colleges. Therefore, Chinese institutions should train specialists to give candidates with accurate and prompt feedback. The strategy improves the efficiency of communication channels and enables overseas applicants to learn more about China.

4. Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to investigate the style of administration and cultivation of international students in Shaanxi province in light of the Belt and Road Initiative. The findings imply that the hypotheses presented at the outset of the study have been confirmed. Acquiring global experience, aspirations, and the institution's reputation are the major determinants of international students' university choices in China. The reasons presented demonstrate the importance of micro, meso, and Chinese universities focusing on the enhancement of promotional methods and the fulfilment of students' specific demands. In general, the research enables China to comprehend the destination preferences of overseas students. The comprehensive poll represents the current perspectives of overseas students. This study's findings will assist Chinese universities in enhancing their communication approaches and strategies in order to recruit more international students.

Although it was beneficial to examine the elements that influence international students' decisions to study in China, there are a number of other factors that should be investigated in the Chinese context. First, it is essential

to build upon this research by examining student ideas to see which services, such as professional psychological or academic counselling, they would like to see improved. Subsequently, additional research should be performed to determine the factors that influence the performance of international students in China, particularly at the participating universities. Student academic achievement is influenced by a number of things. In addition to educational methods, there are also social and cultural variables. Do the same factors that determine their choice of study location also affect their academic performance? Thirdly, an exploratory study with a distinct study design should be done to examine how each student corps deals with the issues they face at the institution. This material will be essential for foreign student counsellors and institutions that aid students in transitioning to the Chinese way of life. Further, in the context of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, it is essential to investigate the impact of the pandemic on international students' choice and desire of study destination. In addition, the learning progress of students as well as their accompanying psychological and financial impacts, as well as the impact of these elements on their studies, are considered.

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