

TRENDS IN INTERNATIONAL STUDENT MOBILITY: A STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE UK AND CHINA AND THE CHINESE STUDENT EXPERIENCE IN THE UK

JENNY FERNANDES

ABSTRACT

This article will examine the current trends within international student mobility, focusing on the UK and China. It will delineate the forecasts for future growth and the development of the international trade in education. The years 2004 and 2005 saw the first decline in the number of Chinese students opting to study in the UK since the launch of the Prime Minister's Initiative. This is an issue of concern as it contradicts forecast growth rates and has major implications for the financial health of a number of universities in the UK. Through the discussions on the motivations of host and sender countries, the student experience will be considered as a possible reason for the decline in interest from Chinese students. A sample UK University will be a case study to examine the relationship between the student experience, the resultant word of mouth and the effect this may have on recruitment. The aim is to enable greater understanding of the Chinese student experience and the effect it may have on international student recruitment.

INTRODUCTION

International student mobility saw a dramatic rise in the 1990s and early 21st century. In 2004, Vision 2020, a report by the British Council, Universities UK and IDP Education Australia Ltd, predicted that growth in global demand for international student places was likely to continue over the next 15 years: a possible increase was anticipated from 2.1 million in 2003, to 3.3 million in 2010, to 5.8 million in 2020. Part of the reason for this is that in the post industrial era, with the emergence of the Knowledge Economy, attitudes to higher education have changed considerably and this has had a significant impact upon the movement of international students. The Knowledge Economy means that an effective higher education system is integral to the success of a country's economy, as knowledge is an essential resource providing countries with a competitive advantage and a means for economic advancement. The attention of government has, therefore, focused on the potential economic value of higher education not just in terms of educating their own populations but as a resource, to be traded on the world market for profit. The outcome is that market forces increasingly play a role in higher education and, as a result, there has been a commodification of education. The rate of growth and its distribution in terms of host and sender countries are of significant interest to both government policy makers and individual higher education institutions alike, not least because of the potential advancement of their economic, political and diplomatic interests.

A CASE STUDY OF THE UK AS A KEY HOST COUNTRY

The UK has a healthy tradition of welcoming international students, benefiting from its position within the EU as the sole English speaking country. In 1999, the Prime Minister's Initiative (PMI) was launched, aiming to place the UK at the heart of the world's international student mobility map, harnessing the economic benefits of international student mobility and building long-term relationships with key economic allies (Education UK, 1999). The PMI facilitated a number of changes to assist international students interested in studying in the UK: streamlining visa

arrangements; reducing restrictions on working part-time; expanding the number of scholarships through the Chevening Scholarship scheme; and launching the 'Education UK' brand to provide a unified marketing message showcasing British education, ensuring a more proactive and cohesive approach in an increasingly competitive market (Education UK, 1999). The 'Education UK' brand aimed at addressing traditional stereotypes of the UK, positioning it as responsive, welcoming and world class. The branding exercise was important: research conducted by the British Council into the student decision making process indicated that students often choose the country in which they will study first, prior to the institution. The Education UK brand was, therefore, a tool to raise the profile of UK education and represented a significant departure from previous activities, reflecting the introduction of market forces in education and its resultant commodification. The PMI also set out targets specifically to increase the UK's overall market share to 25% by 2005, with an additional 50,000 students in higher education, and 25,000 international students in further education. This equated to a total earnings potential of approximately £700M *per annum* (Education UK, 1999). Such was the success of the campaign; the higher education target was met by 2003/04, with 221,635 international students, 61,000 more than the target set by in the PMI and two years ahead of schedule (British Council, 2005). This represented a 54% increase on international student figures for 1996/97.

The economic benefits gained through trade in education have been a key motivation for the development of the UK's policy to attract more international students. Educational services are one of the UK's greatest exports – its value has doubled over the past five years, from £6.5B to £10.3B and it is now the fastest

Table 1: No. of EU and International Students and Their Economic Value (2003/04)

	No. of EU students	Economic Value (£M)	No. of Internat'al students	Economic Value (£M)	Total No. of students	Economic value (£M)
E Midlands	3690	42	10615	174	14305	216
E England	6585	75	18560	305	25145	380
London	23445	268	53370	882	76815	1150
SW England	6440	74	12020	197	18460	271
W Midland	7925	90	19895	327	19895	417
NE England	3830	44	10315	169	14145	213
NW England	7890	90	19025	312	26915	402
SE England	14945	170	26410	434	41355	604
Yorks & Humber	6815	78	21685	356	28500	434
N. Ireland	4540	-	1820	-	6360	67.2
Scotland	11725	-	19550	-	31275	360
Wales	5950	-	7830	-	13780	151.5

Source: Investing in the UK: The impact of the UK's International Student Market (British Council 2005). Please note: this table represents the total number of international students in these regions and includes both higher and further education students.

growing export earner ahead of the tobacco, food, insurance and drinks industry (Brown, 2005). In addition to the direct earnings, it is estimated that international students are worth an additional £12B indirectly via education related exports (British Council, 2005:2). At an institutional level, a three year undergraduate degree will generate on average £30,000 in tuition fees. Through the development of mass higher education, public funding of UK higher education has been stretched and institutions have been forced to become more inventive in their search for new sources of funding. International students provide institutions with a significant source of funding and are increasingly essential for the financial health of UK institutions (table 1).

There are also accepted political and cultural benefits from hosting international students. "It is widely assumed that foreign graduates will return home having assimilated not only appropriate expertise but also strong links to the country in which they earned their academic degree" (Altbach, 1991:34). Such relationships are particularly important to the UK today, as it has seen its position on the world stage and resultant sphere of influence greatly reduced. This is likely to be further reduced with the emergence of China and India as potential superpowers for the 21st Century. Maintaining a global network of people in power who have experience and understanding of the UK through its education system continues to be a way of facilitating continued global influence indirectly. Institutions also benefit from powerful international alumni who act as ambassadors, reinforcing recruitment messages in terms of career advancement. Furthermore, institutions benefit from the international dimension to campus life that international students bring; for instance, domestic students and staff are exposed to international views and ideas (The Council for International Education, 2000). Additional to the international dimension, international student promotes quality and efficiency, as those **organisations operating internationally** are normally more competitive than those that trade domestically (British Council, 2005:3). Also, in light of the shifting patterns of demand for certain courses, international students often allow departments and **programmes** to remain open, ensuring their long-term viability, while for other subjects of an international nature, international students contribute to the academic richness of the **programmes**.

TRENDS IN THE NUMBER OF CHINESE STUDENTS IN THE UK

China is now the largest source of international students in the UK. The base scenario in the Vision 2020 report forecast the continued expansion of the Chinese market and the number of Chinese students in the UK with a possible 130,900 by 2020. (The Vision 2020 Report assumes five factors will attract international students, namely: quality of education, employment prospects, affordability, personal security, lifestyle, education accessibility.) Even under the pessimistic scenario, which assumes that all the main factors which attract international students were to worsen, it predicts the number of Chinese students in the UK would be approximately 34,000 in 2010 and 72,000 by 2020 (British Council, Universities UK and IDP, 2004:40). However, if the dip that was seen in 2004 and 2005 was to continue, this could have a dramatic effect on the economic value of the UK educational export market and the financial health of individual institutions. The British Council advised that there were 117,300 Chinese students studying abroad in 2003, a 6% decrease on 2002, while the number of students returning from overseas after completing their studies was 20,100, 15% more than 2002 (Chinese Ministry of Education 2004). In 2003 there was a 4% decrease in the number of Chinese students studying in the UK, compared to a 97% increase in 2002 (table 2). In 2004, the number of UK visa applications and visas issued fell (table 3), while in February 2005, Universities Centralised Admissions System (UCAS) reported a 25% fall in Chinese undergraduate applications (Maslen, 2005).

Table 2: UK's Share of the Chinese Study Overseas Market, 2001–2003

	2001	2002	% Change	2003	% Change
No. of Chinese Students Overseas	83,973	125,179	+ 49%	117,307	- 6%
No. of Chinese Students in the UK	13,605	26,856	+ 97%	25,823	- 4%

Source: British Council Briefing, Nov 2004

Table 3: Chinese Student Visa Applications and Visas Issues 2001–2004

		2001	2002	2003	2004
China	Received	25,807	36,301	37,980	31,684
	Issued	13,605	26,856	25,823	19,632

Source: British Council China: Student Visa Statistics 2001–2004

A CASE STUDY OF CHINA AS A KEY SENDER COUNTRY

With a population of over 1.28 billion, China has rapidly become one of the world's major economic powers: in 2001, it was ranked 6th in the world in terms of GDP (British Council China (a), 2005). China is now the world's largest user of cement, steel, copper, iron ore and tin and is responsible for one third of the recent growth in demand for oil (Brown, 2005). This rapid growth has had a significant impact on its education system and the demand for higher education. During the Mao Era, higher education in China was modelled on that of the USSR to meet the economic demands of the communist system (Mok, 2005). The system was bureaucratic, lacked flexibility and stifled initiative, however, it was free to students and graduate employment was guaranteed through government placements (Keming, 2000). The shift from a planned economy to a social market economy in the 1980's and 1990's, opened up China to increased foreign activity and facilitated the emergence of a private sector in a system where everything had previously been state owned. The result was a more dynamic job market (Williams, Liu and Shi, 1997). At the same time there was a realization of the impact of the knowledge economy and the resulting need to invest in human capital. The development of a robust higher education system, therefore, became a central focus of the Chinese government. The over-riding theme was to reduce central control with a move away from micro management by central government to macro management (Chinese Ministry of Education, 2004). In addition, the Chinese government pursued a policy of institutional mergers to address the issue of too many single discipline and professional HEIs (British Council China (a) 2005), and to meet the growing demand, allowed the expansion of the private education sector, which had been abolished under Mao. Finally, the Chinese government also strived for academic excellence through Project 211. This aims to address three main areas: "overall institutional capacity, key disciplinary areas, and a public service system of higher education" (British Council China (a), 2005), through strengthening approximately 100 institutions. As a result enrolment in higher education increased from 3.4% in 1990, to 7.2% in 1995 to 11% in 2000 (Yang, 2002) and 15% by 2002 (Chinese Ministry of Education, 2004). Funding of the expanded higher education system has been problematic. World Bank data indicate total Chinese expenditure on education was 1.04% of the world's total, despite Chinese students equating to 17.9% of the world's total student body (Keming,

2000). The situation is only likely to get worse. In 2003 there were 120 million children enrolled in primary school in China and 19 million enrolled at University – demonstrating the potential increase in demand. The Chinese government has, therefore, made significant advancements in the area of higher education, although the full impact of the reforms has yet to be felt. As a result, it has emerged as a key ‘sender’ country in the 1990s and 2000s.

MOTIVATIONS OF A SENDER COUNTRY

There are a variety of motivations for sender countries and the individuals that study overseas. Part of the demand for an overseas university education relates to domestic supply of higher education. As discussed, while China has made huge strides forward, self sufficiency has not yet been achieved. As China has developed the primary and secondary education system and there has been an increase in the number of qualified high school graduates with greater educational aspirations. The restricted supply of higher education within China has meant that individuals are often forced to look elsewhere. There has also been an expansion of the middle class in China, with greater resources available to them to facilitate studying overseas than previous generations (Altbach, 1991). The culture within Chinese families has always been to prioritise education, in part due to the influence of Confusionist values within Chinese society. Research has indicated a “preoccupation of Chinese parents in the provision of a quality education for their offspring” as “university education... would confer much status upon the parent within Chinese society” (Chan, 1999:295). This is further exacerbated by the one child policy in China. Another major factor for individuals is the perceived value of the foreign degree and related career advancement (Altbach, 1991). In the case of China, the curriculum and skills taught at universities are in many cases outdated, focusing on traditional teacher-centred learning, with an emphasis on passive learning, examinations, recalling facts and rote learning, (Chan, 1999:301). This is in sharp contrast to the Western style of teaching which is learner-centred and aims to build a student’s independence, analytical skills, debating skills and questioning. Finally, over the past ten years, prospective students have become more exposed to the opportunities outside their home country through enhanced communications networks and the emergence of the internet while, at the same time, international travel has become much easier and more affordable.

However, the number of students from China studying overseas and in the UK has declined. There are a number of suggested reasons for this. Firstly, high unemployment levels and under-employment of returning graduates has resulted in scepticism over the value of an overseas degree. This is due in part to the dramatic rise in the number of returning graduates: between 1978 and 2002, 172,800 students returned to China, compared to 20,100 in 2003 alone (Chinese Ministry of Education, 2004), of which 35% had difficulty finding suitable employment back in China (Chinese Ministry of Education, 2004). Often foreign graduates find themselves disadvantaged as a prolonged absence from China can mean that they are divorced from the reality of local economics. Secondly, the effects of educational reforms within China are starting to take effect. Between 1998 and 2003, China increased its local higher education provision by 50%. The proliferation of private universities and the expansion of local provision by foreign universities, allowing Chinese students to access foreign degrees in China, have ensured that the majority of students can secure a place at university at a lower cost to an overseas degree. In addition, China itself is now looking to position itself as a regional hub for international students. Thirdly, migration has become politically sensitive and countries have tightened their immigration regulations, making it more difficult for students, particularly in the science fields, to obtain a visa. Rejection rates of student visa applications have increased, and students have found the process more arduous and expensive. In 2005,

the UK government increased the cost of applying for a student visa by 136%, from £36 to £85. It also introduced and subsequently increased a charge for student visa extensions and is currently debating removing a student's right to appeal if a visa application is declined. The combined effect of this has negated many of the benefits generated through the PMI. The associated negative publicity has again focused students' attention on the actual value of studying overseas, encouraging them to, at the very least, consider alternatives. Fourthly, there is the issue of cost. International students pay full cost for their tuition fees and there are fewer scholarships available, which means that students are increasingly self-funding and families make substantial sacrifices to enable their children to study overseas. As competition within the market place increases, students have become better educated in the process and make more informed decisions, which may result in students not studying in the UK. Finally there is the issue of the international students' experience and the question as to whether or not students are satisfied with their experience in the UK.

THE CHINESE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

This research project focused on the latter factor: the student experience is one of the elements over which institutions have greater control. The Vision 2020 report identified the academic experience and lifestyle as key factors which will influence a country's appeal and by implication recruitment trends. In addition, the marketing profession places an enormous emphasis on word of mouth as an element to a brand's success in the market place. "Word of mouth referral is one of the most powerful forms of promotion that international institutions can use... it is a means of reassuring prospective customers of the value of the product they are purchasing, as it indirectly builds some of the more intangible benefits of a particular brand" (Mazzarol and Soutat, 2001:60&98). In the context of international student mobility there is arguably a direct correlation between the student experience and the generation of a positive or negative word of mouth. A student's academic and lifestyle experience will inform their opinion of an institution, and the UK as a study destination. The objectives of the research project were to evaluate how Chinese students rated both their academic and lifestyle experience, whether or not their experience met their expectations, and if, as a result, they would or would not recommend both the UK and their institution.

The project focused on Chinese students and graduates from a UK University. The findings arguably provide an insight into one university's experience which could in turn provide lessons for the UK as a whole. The research question required the collection of a breadth of data to build a picture of the issues which contributed positively or negatively to the student experience. To aid understanding of these interests, a questionnaire was distributed via email, to a mailing list of Chinese students, and highlighted via departments which had a concentration of Chinese students. The response rate was 10.5%, equivalent to 34 students/alumni. The low response rate may be in part due to questionnaire fatigue (students are regularly asked for feedback on a range of issues) and the timing of the distribution of the questionnaires. It may also have been useful to have a paper-based version of the questionnaire, in addition to the electronic version. The response rate may be an issue of concern when identifying the lessons that can be learned from the research. The responses of those who do not respond are likely to be different from those who did respond (Bell, 1995). It could be suggested that those who were feeling disenfranchised by their experience are less likely to respond than those who had an extremely positive experience and are keen to contribute to the institution as a result. Consequently, the data gathered may be biased slightly towards those who had a more positive experience, and have a greater probability of stating that their experience met their expectations.

RESULTS

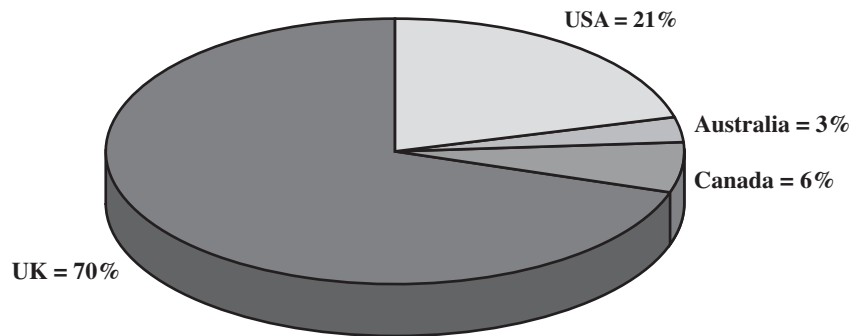


Figure 1: Preferred Destination of International Students at the sample UK University

70% indicated that the UK was their first choice of study destination. This is not surprising as it would be expected that a higher proportion of those studying in the UK would have rated it as their first choice. Nevertheless, arguably it reinforces the importance of the Education UK brand. Of the 30% that indicated the UK, the USA was the most popular alternative, reflecting its position as the most favoured destinations for international students.

CHINESE STUDENTS' ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

Arguably the overall academic experience is the most important aspect of a student's experience as it is the academic qualification that will ultimately be achieved that is one of the key motivating factors for undertaking a degree programme. The feedback on the academic experience showed that 91% of students rated the elements within the academic experience consistently as average, good or excellent. A UKCOSA study, "Broadening Your Horizons" used a slightly different rating system; however, 87% of students that responded to that survey stated that they were either satisfied or very satisfied with their academic experience (UKCOSA, British Council, Universities UK and SCOP, 2004). Therefore the results of this study suggest that the sample University compares favourably with the overall UK picture. The importance of a diverse student body was highlighted by one student who pointed out, "It always harms the diversity of students by having too many students from one country. It reduces the attractiveness perceived by the Chinese students if the university is seen to have 'too many Chinese students.'" While the rating given to this element was not poor, it was less well rated than other elements. A common problem experienced by the sample University, and across the UK, is that students from certain countries tend to gravitate towards particular groups of courses. Therefore, while the overall picture of the student population may show a healthy diversity of students it may not reflect the situation within particular courses. The concentration of students from one country can negatively impact on the learning experience, potentially reducing the level of discussion as students find it more challenging to express their view points in English. Where the teaching methods that the majority of students within a class are used to differ from the teaching methods employed in the UK, it can mean that students struggle to adjust. There may, therefore, be a link between the rating of the diversity of the student body and the higher proportion of poor and average ratings given to the assessment methods. In light of these findings, a suggestion would be to consider methods to facilitate the recruitment of Chinese students to a wider diversity of courses and expanding programmes which develop generic skills and can build students understanding of the assessment methods used.

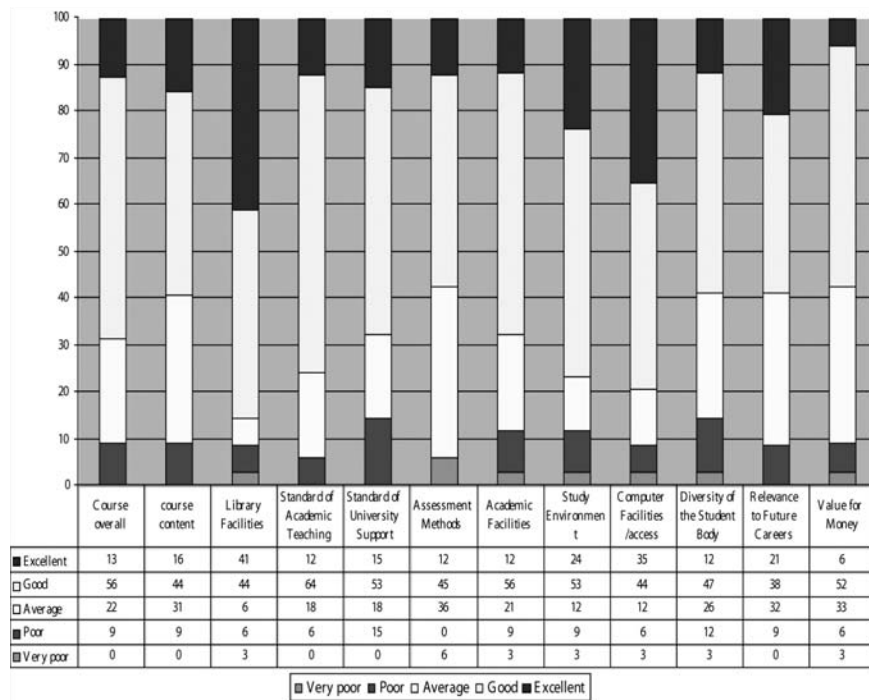


Figure 2: Respondents Rating of Academic Experience by Percentages

The ratings given to the relevance of the degree programme to students’ future career prospects and the perception of value for money are issues of concern. Career advancement is one of the main motivating factors and as previously discussed one of the reasons the British Council has given for the recent decline in the number of Chinese students studying in the UK. The results do not show that alumni were disillusioned on the basis of employment prospects on their return to China, however, one respondent made the point that as he had graduated in 2000 there was less competition when job hunting. In terms of value for money, while the results relating to the cost and value for money are not surprising, arguably it is important for universities to make the link between value for money and the financial sacrifices students are making (not simply the price of tuition fees), as this will influence how price sensitive the market place is. In addition it is essential for future recruitment that the link is made between the courses offered and the career opportunities that courses generate when considering future course development. These themes also emerged from the open comments section, emphasizing their importance. One student commented, “I’m impressed by the well prepared course... yet for me, a law student, it would be more helpful for us to have more access to the UK legal institutions like law firms, as we could be better positioned in an international perspective when we are working back in China.”

CHINESE STUDENTS’ LIFESTYLE EXPERIENCE

Respondents were also asked to rate their lifestyle experience. Overall when compared to the academic elements, a lower proportion of the lifestyle elements were rated as either good or excellent.

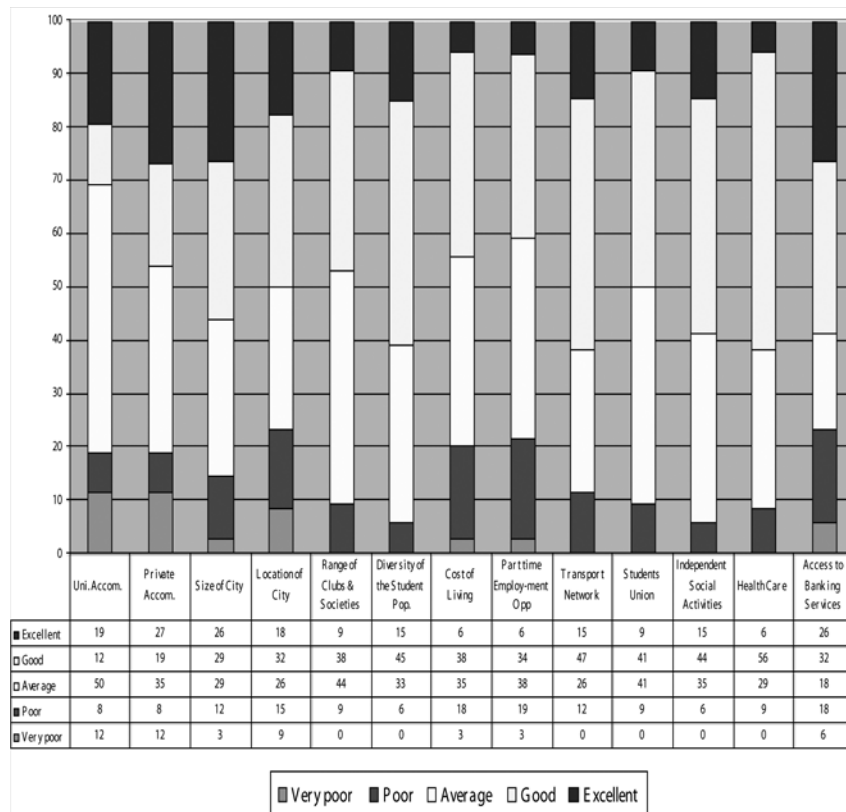


Figure 3: Respondents Rating of Lifestyle Experience by Percentage

Accommodation, the cost of living and the availability of part-time employment emerged as the most poorly rated elements. This is tied to the results relating to value for money within the academic experience and the fact that the UK continues to be perceived as a more expensive option. Open comments made relating to the lifestyle also highlighted the issue of cost: "...most importantly, the international tuition is unaffordable". In contrast, the transport network and health care received the highest proportion of good or excellent ratings, with 62%, closely followed by independent social activities and access to banking with 59% rating them as good or excellent.

When comparing the academic and lifestyle experience, the smallest proportion to rate a particular academic element as good or excellent was 57%, the highest proportion to rate any element as good or excellent was 85%, and over half the academic elements saw 69% or more respondents rate them as good or excellent. By contrast, the smallest proportion to rate a particular lifestyle element as good or excellent was 31%, the highest proportion to rate any element as good or excellent was 62% and over half only saw between 40% and 55% rated as good or excellent.

Respondents were then asked whether or not their total experience had met their expectations. 74% stated that their experience had met their expectations, while 12% stated that their experience had exceeded their expectations. 14% respondents stated that their experience did not meet their expectations. It should be noted that the question did not assess what students' expectations actually were, that is if they had high or low expectations to begin with. Also Chinese students can be reluctant to criticise authority which may bias these results slightly. Asked whether or not respondents would recommend the UK, 94% stated that they would. Students were

asked to detail reasons relating to the academic and lifestyle experience as to why they would or would not recommend the UK. The academic reasons repeatedly stated related to the quality of the teaching and research environment – “The UK has one of the best educations in the world”. The lifestyle reasons stated related primarily to the exposure gained to a western culture – “Good experience for learning western life and culture” – and the life skills which are gained as a result of studying overseas – “It improves your ability of self-dependence, dealing with various emergencies”. Of the 3% that said they would not recommend the UK, the issue of cost was raised. At 85%, the total number of respondents who would recommend the sample University was slightly lower. Again academic reasons for recommending the institution related to quality and the reputation of the academic staff. In terms of the lifestyle reasons, British culture featured very strongly. Other reasons included the international mix of the university – “Living in the accommodation with students from five countries is so much fun” – and the friendliness of the local people.

As students were asked to rate each of the elements independently and not to rank the elements in terms of their overall importance when considering whether or not they would recommend their experience, it is difficult to assess the level of influence of each of the elements. However, on the basis of the themes which emerged from the open questions and earlier discussions, it would appear the areas of greatest concern to students are the relevance of their degree to their future careers, value for money and academic quality. If institutions are aiming to maximise their recruitment from China, they should arguably be achieving a rating of good or excellent in each category. While the results were inconclusive as to whether or not the student experience at the sample University could be used to explain the dip in Chinese numbers, it did identify several warning signs which need to be addressed.

CONCLUSION

It is clear that there has been a shift in the nature of international student mobility, as the number of students studying overseas jumped from approximately 238,000 in the 1960s (Chen and Barnett, 2000), to 1.5 million in 1994 and an estimated 2.1 million in 2003 (British Council, Universities UK and IDP, 2004). Through its rapid expansion, international education has emerged as a major force within the global trade in services. Host countries are now pursuing international students through more aggressive marketing campaigns due to the political, economic and diplomatic benefits international students can bring to both individual universities and the wider society. Parallel to the increased activity of the host countries, China emerged as one of the most important sender countries. The research identified a number of complex issues affecting international student recruitment and the relationship between the UK and China, specifically increased global competition, growth in transnational education and the domestic provision within sender countries, immigration legislation, lack of employment opportunities for returning graduates and the possible dissatisfaction with the international student experience. It is difficult to assess which of these elements has had the greatest impact. However, the cumulative effect when looking at the Chinese market and the number of Chinese students studying in the UK, is a downturn in student numbers. On the basis of the external factors, it can be concluded that the international student experience is extremely important to universities as a means of differentiating themselves in an increasingly crowded market, as it is an element that universities have actual control over. The research showed that, in the case of the sample university, the overall Chinese student experience was positive. However, arguably the proportion of elements rated as “average” was too high, meaning that there are a number of areas where improvements could be made. The proportion of elements rated average may have been sustainable when the market was less competitive but in the current environment it could have a negative effect on future recruitment. One

of the most interesting issues to emerge was the importance of students' degrees to their future career. When considered in conjunction with the dramatic increase in Chinese graduates returning to China and the difficulty a significant proportion of students have finding work, this issue is likely to become critical to the wider higher education sector, as students look for concrete evidence of how a particular degree will facilitate their career development as, it is likely to be tied to students' perception of the value for money. Universities, therefore, will need to examine the portfolio of courses offered, ensuring that it fits with what the market wants, both from a student and industry perspective, rather than the traditional approach to course development which has in the past been dictated by academic interest as opposed to market demand. This will be particularly challenging for Universities given the diversity of the international student population and complexity of the global employment market. In addition, universities should look more closely at how best to utilise their alumni network.

It can be concluded that as the international student experience was reasonably positive, it is unlikely to have contributed to the dip in international student numbers at the sample university and in all probability the effect of the external factors has been greater. However the results did present a number of warning signs which, if they are not addressed may result in the international student experience having a detrimental effect over the longer term. It is suggested that any university should be aiming to achieve a rating of good or excellent to maintain their competitive advantage and generate positive word of mouth. In conjunction with this, universities need to focus on how they can influence the external factors influencing international student mobility. A particular issue that the UK faces is the emerging inconsistencies in government policy, specifically, immigration, which has become increasingly controversial, as international students are experiencing the fall out from the likes of the 'war on terror'.

International students are fundamental to the financial and cultural health of UK universities. The Chinese market has matured and students have become more sophisticated, with a clearer understanding of their objectives for undertaking study overseas. As a result universities cannot afford to be complacent and must understand the financial commitment they are asking students to make. It is essential that universities invest in the student experience — both home and international — as the expectations of students are increasing as are the number of alternatives. If universities fail to do this, the dip in Chinese student numbers seen in 2004 and 2005 may continue and may even spread to other countries.

REFERENCES

- Altbach, P.G. (1991) Impact and Adjustment: Foreign Students in Comparative Perspectives, *Higher Education*, 21, 305–323.
- Bahra, H. (2000) How to Woo Students From Overseas, 2000, *Times Higher Educational Supplement*, UK, 10 November 2000.
- Bell, J. (1995) *Doing Your Research Project: A Guide For First-Time Researchers in Education and Social Science Research*, UK: Open University Press.
- British Council, Universities UK and IDP (2004) *Vision 2020: Forecasting International Student Mobility, A UK Perspective*, UK.
- British Council (2005) *Investing in the UK: The Impact of the UK's International Student Market*, UK.
- British Council China, 2005. Getis Profile: Report for China [online] [Accessed 29 October 2005]. Available from World Wide Web, www.britishcouncil.org/getis-china-market-report.htm
- British Council China (2005) Student Visa Statistics 2001–2004 [online] [Accessed 29 October 2005]. Available from World Wide Web, <http://cemis.britishcouncil.org/development/Student%20Visa%20Statistics%202001-2004.pdf>
- Brown, G. (2005) Chancellor of the Exchequer Speech at the Academy of Social Science, Beijing. [online] [Accessed 4 October 2005] Available from World Wide Web www.uk.cn/bj/print_index.asp?menu_id=327&artid=800.

- Boucher, R. (2005) We are in Danger of Driving International Students Away, Speech by V. Chancellor of the University of Sheffield to UK Visas. Unpublished.
- Business Asia, Economist Intelligence Unit (2005) Home and Away, *The Economist*, XXXVII (6)
- Chan, S. (1999) The Chinese Learner: a Question of Style, *Education and Training*, 41 (6/7):294–304.
- Chen, T. and Barnett, G. (2000) Research on International Student flows from a Macro Perspective: A Network Analysis of 1985, 1989 & 1995, *Higher Education*, 39(4): 435–453.
- Chinese Ministry of Education (2004) Survey of the Educational Reform and Development in China [online] [Accessed 29 October 2005]. Available from World Wide Web, www.edu.cn/20041223/3125151.shtml.
- Chinese Ministry of Education (2004) Work Related to Students and Scholars Studying Abroad [online] [Accessed 29 October 2005]. Available from World Wide Web, www.moe.edu.cn/english/international_2.htm
- Dongping, Y. (2000) Educational Evolution in China (I), (II) & (III) [online] [Accessed 29 October 2005] Available from World Wide Web, www.edu.cn/20010101/22290.shtml.
- Education UK Partnership (1999) Brand Report. [online] [Accessed 2 December 2005] Available from World Wide Web, <http://educationuk.britishcouncil.org/brand/report199909/index.htm>
- Education UK (1999) Prime Minister Launches Drive to Attract More International Students. Press Release issued 18 June 1999 [online] [Accessed 29 October 2005]. Available from World Wide Web, <http://educationuk.britishcouncil.org/news/1999/0618/index.htm>
- Goh, J. (2005) *British Council China Education Market*. Unpublished.
- Keming, H. (2000) Chinese Higher Education: 21st Century Challenges, *International Higher Education*, Winter edition.
- Maslen, G. (2005) Falling Chinese Student Numbers Threaten Income, *Times Higher Educational Supplement*, UK, 8 April 2005.
- Maxey, K. (2003) *International Student Mobility in the Commonwealth – An Update*, UK: UKCOSA and The Council for Education in the Commonwealth.
- McMaton, M. (1992) Higher Education in a World Market: An Historical Look at the Global Context of International Study, *Higher Education*, 24(4).
- Mok, K. (2005) Globalisation and Educational Restructuring: University Merging and Changing Governance in China, *Higher Education*, 50, 57–88.
- The Council for International Education (2000) *Student Mobility on the Map: Tertiary Education on Interchange in the Commonwealth on the Threshold of the Twenty First Century*, UK: UKCOSA.
- The Task Force on Higher Education and Society (2000) *Higher Education in Developing Countries: Peril or Promise*, UK: UNESCO and World Bank.
- UKCOSA, British Council, Universities UK, SCOP (2004) *International Students in UK Universities and Colleges: Broadening Our Horizons, Report of the UKCOSA Study*, UK: UKCOSA.
- Williams, G., Liu, S. and Shi, Q. (1997) Marketisation of Higher Education in the People's Republic of China, *Education Policy*, 10(2): 151–157.
- Yang, R. (2002) Lost Opportunities in the Massification of Higher Education in China International, *Higher Education*, Summer Edition.