

Higher Education for International Students in China: A Review of Policy From 1978 to 2020

ECNU Review of Education
2021, Vol. 4(4) 873–889
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DOI: 10.1177/2096531120974382
journals.sagepub.com/home/roe



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Abstract

Purpose: By reviewing policies on higher education for international students, this article aims to investigate the change of social–historical context, policy issue, and policy solution and provide implications for policymaking.

Design/Approach/Methods: The study used qualitative text analysis. One hundred and twelve policy papers were collected from the PKULAW database and the Ministry of Education official website. Deductive categories were constructed under themes like social–historical context, policy issue, and policy solution separately.

Findings: Four stages have emerged from the text analysis. The policy focus witnessed a shift from openness to expansion and then to quality. The policies made by the central government changed a lot accordingly. China is increasingly active in higher education internationalization and eager to make the education for international students an attractive brand with high quality. To realize this target, policies should be made based on different types of international students. Additionally, it is necessary that policies provide detailed guidance and accelerate capacity building in all majors.

Originality/Value: This study contributes to existing knowledge of higher education for international students in China by providing qualitative policy text analysis, and the insights gained from this study may be of assistance to policymaking in the future.

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Keywords

Higher education for international students, policy review, qualitative text analysis

Date received: 7 June 2020; accepted: 27 October 2020

Overview of the problem

With the increase of international student mobility as a global phenomenon, a considerable amount of literature has been published in this field to investigate the policy in individual countries or compare the policies between countries. Knight (2004) defined four rationales driving internationalization: social/cultural, political, academic, and economic rationales. Stier (2004) identified idealism, instrumentalism, and educationalism as the ideologies in higher education internationalization. Stein and de Oliveira Andreotti (2016) categorized the instrumentalist discourses into cash, competition, and charity. Although reducing international student issues to a category of internationalization has been viewed as unsatisfactory, there is a strong consensus among researchers with regards to the rationale of related policies in major recruiting countries, like the U.S., the U.K., Australia, and Canada. As indicated by the term “great brain race” (Wildavsky, 2012), attraction and retention of international students were recognized as the main policy issue in these countries. International students have been viewed as a solution to national skills and funding shortfalls (Sá & Sabzalieva, 2018) because of their possible contribution to human capital and revenue sources (Zheng, 2010). Overall, economic rationale and instrumentalism ideology, especially in the form of cash and competition (Chan & Wu, 2019), played a leading role in the literature studying policies in these common destination countries. On July 6, 2020, the Trump administration announced a policy that would bar international college students if their school’s classes are all online. In contrast, the U.K., Australia, and Canada issued a more friendly and open policy to support and keep international students affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The new visa policy in America was viewed as serving political aims and making international students “pawns in a political drama” (Columbia Broadcasting System [CBS], 2020). This policy has sparked controversy considering the fact that many American colleges depend on international student tuition (Stimson, 2020), and the destination countries including America need more immigrants with college degrees to avoid a shrinking economy introduced by a dropping fertility rate (The Roanoke Times, 2020). Facing eight federal lawsuits and opposition from universities, the Trump administration rescinded the restrictions for international students on July 14, 2020 (Bierman et al., 2020). It’s fair to argue that economic rationale is still the mainstream for policymaking in traditional recruiting countries even if there was temporary political consideration during a pandemic.

As a traditional large exporter of international students, China is becoming a competitor with leading host countries in this market during recent years. It is now one of the biggest study abroad

destinations with a total number of 492,185 international students in 2018 (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China [MOE], 2019). There are a large number of published studies (e.g., Guo & Wang, 2008; Liu & Zhang, 2018; Wang & Xie, 2017; Zhang, 2014) that describe the policies in China generally and reflect on these policies by listing various challenges China is facing. However, few of them have been able to draw on any policy study based on empirical evidence. Considering the changing role of China in international student mobility, different reviews and explanations emerged from existing empirical policy studies. Kuroda (2014) held the view that the education for international students had also been viewed as providing economic benefits for China during the 1990s. Chen (2016) found that political rationales are dominant across different periods, and economic rationales were only highlighted after the 1980s. Apart from a strong instrumental agenda, idealism is also in play, at least rhetorically, by emphasizing the platform for mutual understanding between China and international students' home country. Chan and Wu (2019) argued that policies in China fit in the discourse of charity before the turn of the century. However, more attention should be paid to the role of charity discourse in cultural diplomacy with the influence of political factors in the new century, especially after 2010. The evidence reviewed here seems to suggest a dominant role for political rationale. Nevertheless, much uncertainty still exists about the role of other types of rationale and ideology. As a result, the authors seek to address these gaps in this study by investigating the change of social–historical context, policy issues, and policy solution with the policy papers published after 1978 as evidence.

Method

Public policy study became an independent field since the 1950s. Policy-oriented education research mentioned by Ball (1997) is one of the applications of public policy study. It can be categorized into three types. They are research on alternative policy plans, research on proposing alternative plans, and research on policy process (Lu & Ke, 2007). The third type aims to understand education from social, political, economic, and cultural perspectives, which is represented by Stephen Ball. Around the 1960s to the 1970s, the empirical-technical approach was dominating in policy research, which views policy as a kind of fact and aims for an optimal solution. However, policy was more inclined to be studied as text or discourse after the 1970s, which is called the discursive-critical approach (Tsang, 2007). This discursive-critical approach advocates understanding policy text against the context it was embedded in.

Following this discursive-critical approach, qualitative text analysis was used in this study in order to gain insights into the social–historical context, policy text, and the relation between them. Different from classical content analysis, which is limited to “manifest content,” qualitative text

analysis is a form of analysis in which understanding and interpretation of the text play a far larger role (Kuckartz, 2014, pp. 31–33).

Policies were searched from 1978 until June 2020 in the PKULAW database developed by Peking University Yinghua Company and Peking University Center for Legal Information¹ and archive stored on MOE official website.² Policies were only included in the analysis if they were issued by the central government and if they were related to any of the following key words. The key words cover international student, foreign student, overseas student, scholarship, and international education. Since this study only aims to investigate policies related to international students in college,³ those policies not relevant to higher education were excluded from this study. After eliminating irrelevant policies, 112 policy papers were finally selected for this study.

Sixty-one percent of the 112 policies were issued by MOE independently, while 21% of them were issued in cooperation with other ministries. The three most usual cooperators were the Ministry of Finance (MOF), Ministry of Public Security (MOPS), and Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA). More than half of the policies (58%) were published as notification, which is strong in terms of binding force but lacks specific guidance.⁴ In Table 1, there are basic descriptions of policies mentioned in this review. The policies will be named after their number in the following paragraphs for convenience.

All of the 112 policies were analyzed to build thematic categories in light of the topics they are addressing. Deductive category construction was used to find code segments of the text under themes like social–historical context, policy issue, and policy solution separately following the research objective. Four stages emerged from the analysis based on the change of context and policy issue. The first three stages show us how and why the policies changed in the past. The last stage indicates the focus of recent policies and the possible direction for future.

Evolution of policy issue and solution: From cautious opening-up to integrated management

Cautious opening-up and quality priority

After 10 years of the “Cultural Revolution,” the education system in China has been damaged seriously. In order to build the basic frames of education for international students, the policies after 1978 mainly focused on synthetic issues, which referred to various aspects related to international students’ learning and life. The number of international students at this stage is relatively small and increased very slowly. In 1978, only 1,236 international students were studying in China. The number increased to 5,835 until 1988 (Yu, 2009, p. 284). The policies at this stage proposed the enrollment of self-financed students and local government autonomy in decision-making. According to Policy No. 15, a complete higher education system, including technical

Table 1. Selected policies addressing higher education for international students.

No.	Year	Policy
2	1979	Report of Conference on Foreign Student Affairs
15	1985	Regulations on the Administration of Foreign Students
16	1986	Regulations on Foreign Student's Learning in China
17	1987	Notification of Enhancing and Improving the Administration of Foreign Students
22	1989	Regulations on Enrollment of Self-financed Foreign Students
27	1991	Trial Measures of Awarding Degree for International Students in Chinese Higher Education Institutions
33	1992	Measures of Expenditure Standard and Administration Regulations Related to Foreign Students
34	1992	Trial Measures of Accepting Foreign Students into Postgraduate Programs
35	1992	Measures of Chinese Proficiency Test (HSK)
46	1995	Measures on Funds Management for International Students
48	1995	Regulations on International Student Registering with Certificate of Chinese Proficiency (HSK)
51	1997	Measures on Annual Review of Scholarship for International Students
55	2000	Regulations on the Administration of Foreign Students in Higher Education Institutions
62	2003	Notification of Training Program on Integrated Service Related to International Student Affairs (2003)
63	2004	Notification of Enabling National Management Information System for International Students
64	2004	Notification of Establishing National Training System for Leaders in Charge of International Student Affairs (Notification of Training Program)
68	2005	Notification of National Training Program for Leaders in Charge of International Student Affairs
72	2006	Notification of Training Program on Integrated Service Related to International Student Affairs (2006)
74	2007	Provisional Regulations on Quality Control Standard of Medical Undergraduate English-Taught Program for International Students
75	2007	Notification of Seminar for Directors in Charge of International Student Affairs
83	2010	Regulations on International Student Registering with New Certificate of Chinese Proficiency (New HSK)
84	2010	Project of Study in China
90	2013	Notification of Selection of Branded Curriculum in English-Taught Program
92	2014	Notification of the Statistics of International Students
95	2015	Visions and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road
97	2015	Notification of Improving the Chinese Government Scholarship System and Increasing the Funding Standard
100	2016	Opinions on the Work of the Opening-up of Education in the New Era
101	2016	Education Action Plan for Jointly Building the Belt and Road

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

No.	Year	Policy
104	2017	Regulations on the Enrollment and Education for International Students
107	2018	Quality Regulations of Higher Education for International Students (on Trial)
110	2020	Notification of Learning and Implementing President Xi's Response to Pakistani Students in University of Science and Technology Beijing
111	2020	Notification of Normalizing the Work of Accepting International Students into Chinese Higher Education Institutions
112	2020	Opinions on Accelerating and Expanding Opening-up of Education in the New Era

secondary school, junior college, undergraduate program, postgraduate program, and visiting program, has been established in 1985.

The policy response at this stage was opening the education system to the world cautiously, and quality was given priority. This finding emerged from the policy text analysis in terms of the target group, their status, and the treatment they got in China. In Policy No. 2, accepting and educating foreign students were defined as China's internationalism duty. It is expected to cultivate talents for friendly countries, improve mutual understanding between China and countries of origin, and unite more power against hegemony. As mentioned by Policy No. 15, international students should be required strictly with honest help in learning, be affected actively without coercion in political attitude, and be treated considerately with strict management in daily life. Policy No. 16 stated that students from those countries having intergovernmental agreement with China are most welcome. Policy No. 17 mentioned that cooperation with developing countries is the base for China's foreign policy, and quality assurance is the precondition of multilevel and multichannel development in terms of recruiting students from developing countries. As for foreign students' learning, Policy No. 17 defined strict requirement and enthusiastic help as the basic principle. As for foreign students' living, Policy No. 17 defined moderate preference and strict management as the basic principle. Based on these policies, we can conclude that the international students at this stage mainly came from developing and friendly countries. They are viewed as foreigners with political status as much as learners. As a result, selection was very cautious with clear criteria. Once they were enrolled in Chinese colleges, they were expected to be treated seriously and strictly to make sure the quality of academic learning and the stability of political alliance with friendly countries.

Standard establishment and resource guarantee

As a result of social and political changes in Eastern Europe and Soviet Union countries around 1990, the world system had changed so much and exchange between China and other economies

became more intensive. Policy No. 22 set up regulations helpful for increasing self-financed international students, including the power of decision-making at college level in terms of enrollment. This policy indicated the government's active attitude toward expansion of education and involvement of more universities. The number of international students at this stage increased fast, and the percentage of self-financed students went up and kept at a high level until now. In 1990, there were 7,494 international students studying in China, and half of them were self-sponsored (Yu, 2009, p. 284). In 2000, the number of international students jumped to 52,150, and almost 90% were self-sponsored (MOE, 2005). However, the existing policies failed to provide detailed education standards and adequate resource for the rapid expansion. As a result, the policies at the second stage paid much attention to establishing standards and guaranteeing resource.

Policy No. 27 defined the requirement and procedure for international students being conferred bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees in China. According to Policy No. 33, the lump sum appropriation of scholarships was transferred from the central government to college, and the colleges could keep the balance. However, the college was also responsible for the excessive expenditure. Under this general regulation, the way of spending money by the college was also clarified in the policy in detail. As the revised version of Policy No. 33, Policy No. 46 additionally defined the appropriation as earmarking, which provides a further financial guarantee for international students. According to Policy No. 51, a student awarded a scholarship was required to be evaluated on their performance and achievement every year in order to make sure the scholarship was used properly. Policy No. 34 formulated the qualification and procedure of international students applying for postgraduate programs in China. Policy No. 35 introduced details of the Chinese Proficiency Test (HSK), and Policy No. 48 defined the HSK certificate as one of the requirements for international students applying for undergraduate and postgraduate programs in China. This review of policy solutions shows that a package of standards, from enrollment to graduation, has been set up. Additionally, financial support with strict supervision from the central government is the main strategy to make sure these standards are realized at the college level.

Integrated management and leadership development

After two decades of reform and opening-up, China has witnessed rapid economic development. Under the background of higher education internationalization, the number of international students in China increased more rapidly, especially after China joined the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001, and the central government removed limitation on the number of international students according to Policy No. 55 issued in 2000. Facing the challenges introduced by rapid expansion, the policies issued before 2000 was not enough to deal with various problems in international students' learning and daily life. Colleges needed more support apart from the standard and financial support mentioned in the last section, especially for colleges with little

experience in accepting international students. As a result, the policies at this stage attempted to enhance the integrated management and leadership development.

Compared with policies on synthetic issues published at the first stage, Policy No. 55 was legislation on college behavior. This policy aimed to realize legalization and standardization in management at the college level by requiring that all leaders and teachers related to education for international students should learn and obey the policy. Management Information System (MIS) was created and demanded to be used by colleges who are accepting international students according to Policy No. 63. With the increasing number of international students living in China, various aspects of the society were expected to set up clear rules. In order to respond to the social need, policies on banking, public health, and insurance affairs related to international students were issued as well.

Apart from learning policy, leaders in charge of international student affairs were also required to participate in a training program hosted by the MOE from 2003 to 2007 according to Policies No. 62, No. 64, No. 68, No. 72, and No. 75. The content of the training program held in 2003 included international relations, challenges in the education for international students, administration skills, and experience exchange between trainees. From 2004, the training program has been divided into three parts emphasizing general management skill, special project management skill, and overseas investigation, respectively. Until 2007, more than 1,500 leaders have been trained according to the data published by Policy No. 75.

Education quality began to be mentioned as an agenda by Policy No. 74 and a series of policies on enrollment plan for undergraduate English-taught programs in medicine were issued every year accordingly. Different from the focus on helping students' learning at the first stage, these policies covered all elements of education quality including enrollment, curriculum, teaching, and graduation with detailed regulation. However, attention was only paid to undergraduate English-taught programs in medicine at this stage.

By establishing integrated management at the college and social level and developing leadership by a training program, the policies at this stage aimed to provide solutions for issues introduced by the rapidly increasing number of international students from more countries of origin.

Policy solution in the new era: Brand building and quality assurance

Since China surpassed Japan and became the second largest economy in 2010, it engaged in global governance more actively and attempted to push forward major country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics. Education for international students has been viewed as part of national strategy and national image in the new era. However, the education quality for international students is questioned by the public, especially when the public have the misunderstanding that the Chinese government has sponsored most of the international students by scholarships. In addition to

continuous policy based on those issues that had been discussed before 2010, like enrollment plans and teacher training in medicine majors, the theme of policies published at this stage mainly focused on brand building and quality assurance in order to show China's active engagement in higher education internationalization.

As one of the education history milestones, the *Outline of China's National Plan for Medium and Long Term Education Reform and Development (2010–2020)* proposed further expansion of education for international students and the idea of Project of Study in China. As a response to this outline, Policy No. 84 formulated in 2010 set the China 2020 targets of 500,000 person-times for the international students studying in all education sectors and 150,000 international students in tertiary degree programs. It indicated that China is expecting to “construct education and service system for international students which is compatible with China's international status” and “cultivate large quantities of graduate who know China well and treat China friendly” (MOE, 2010). By keeping a balance between quantity, structure, quality, and effectiveness, China is more confident to build the study in China as an international brand. Policy No. 95 explaining Belt and Road Initiative defined student exchange as one of the strategies to enhance “people-to-people bond” (National Development and Reform Commission [NDRC], 2015) and improve cooperation between countries. Ten thousand government scholarship opportunities have been promised to the countries along the Belt and Road every year according to this policy. Policy No. 100 and Policy No. 101 provided more educational solutions under the general framework established by Policy No. 95. Policy No. 100 reaffirmed the target of branding the study in China by making branded majors and curricula. The policymaker expected that Chinese experience can be understood better through international students. Policy No. 101 explained the branding as making China the most attractive destination for international students along the Belt and Road and started several special projects to support the branding.

As for the theme of quality assurance, the policies at this stage aimed to go beyond English-taught program in medicine. Policy No. 84 first proposed the quality assurance as an independent section in policy paper. Specific policy solutions for quality assurance included reform of HSK (Policy No. 83), selection of branded curriculum in English-taught program for all majors (Policy No. 90), regulation on the use of MIS and publication of the data collected (Policy No. 92), and raising funding standard of scholarships (Policy No. 97).

The transfer of policy solution to brand building and quality assurance broadly supports the work of previous studies on international student mobility. “Push–Pull” theory, which was originally developed to explain the migration (Lee, 1966), has since become common in researches on international students' motivation for studying abroad. A great deal of research has attempted to investigate push (outbound) and pull (inbound) factors influencing international students' decisions (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; McMahon, 1992). The quality and reputation of education in the

host country, students' knowledge and awareness of the host country, recommendations from friends and relatives are among the most frequently mentioned pull factors. Obviously, the policy solutions of brand building and quality assurance help the Chinese government to enhance the pull factors attracting more international students.

Even considering the possible trend of deglobalization and the statements of decoupling from China made by some developed countries recently, the Chinese government does not plan to change its policy solution in 2020. In Policy No. 110, humanity was defined as the basic principle for dealing with international student affairs under COVID-19 pandemic. Improving education quality to attract international students and insisting on opening-up by building internationally renowned study centers was claimed as the long-term strategy. Policy No. 112 reconfirmed the role of opening-up of education in the new era. More active and broader opening is expected by the policymakers. Again, branding the study in China was mentioned as a strategy to realize high quality of education for international students.

Among the policies aimed at brand building and quality assurance, two policies issued recently are worthy of further analysis to decode the current policy concern and direction in the near future. They are Policy No. 104 and Policy No. 107. Policy No. 104 has been defined to deactivate Policy No. 55 and Policy No. 107 followed Policy No. 104 to provide more detailed regulations on quality assurance. Recent Policy No. 110 discouraging the expansion at the expense of quality referred Policy No. 104 and Policy No. 107 as basis. This citation confirms the significance of Policy No. 104 and Policy No. 107 in current policy system. As a result, the authors analyze Policy No. 104 and Policy No. 107 by comparison with Policy No. 55. Three themes emerged from the comparison of policy text.

Shift of the Chinese government's standpoint from passive involvement to active engagement

The word "accepting" used in Policy No. 55 was replaced by the word "enrolling" in Policy No. 104. International students had to leave China after graduation within the limited time according to Policy No. 55. Such kind of regulation was not mentioned in Policy No. 104. On the contrary, the colleges were required to establish contact with international alumni. More detailed guidance about how to facilitate international alumni network can be found in Policy No. 107.

Other specific articles in Policy No. 107 also showed that the Chinese government is holding a standpoint of complying with international norms and building confidence in its own culture as well during the transition from access expansion to quality improvement. For example, one of the education targets is cross-cultural communication and global competence for participation in international affairs. Curriculum structure is required to be internationally compatible and comparable, especially for majors like science, engineering, agriculture, and medicine. International

students' rights including security, privacy, and so on are also guaranteed. Meanwhile, the international students are expected to understand China better by taking compulsory courses like Chinese language and Chinese culture. Passing level III or above in HSK has been listed as one of the requirements for graduation according to the type of program. Level III in HSK requires that students know 600 words and can communicate in Chinese at a basic level in daily, academic, and professional lives.

Decentralized management helping to establish quality assurance system with multiple subjects

Before Policy No. 55, there was another policy on education for foreign students in kindergarten, primary school, and secondary school issued in 1999. The publication of Policy No. 104 deactivated the two policies together and Policy No. 104 is suitable for international students of all ages. According to Policy No. 104, the decision-making authority related to international students in basic education was totally moved to provincial government. For higher education, there was no national planning for international student enrollment anymore, and the decision-making authority was moved to colleges in most cases. However, the enrollment of students sponsored by central government scholarships was still mainly decided by the government. As defined by Policy No. 107, colleges were asked to establish internal supervision mechanism and were supposed to take principal responsibility in quality assurance.

Multi-participation and external quality assurance were also defined clearly. Different from Policy No. 55, which defined the university as the only organization in charge of foreign student affairs, Policy No. 104 allowed non-university organizations and industry associations to provide management and service for international students. Public and private enterprises, social groups, and individuals were allowed to set up scholarships after approval by a higher education institution and provincial government according to Policy No. 55. In Policy No. 104, they were encouraged to set up scholarships without any regulation of approval. The authority of scientific research institutions providing master's programs and education organizations providing nondegree programs was also recognized by Policy No. 104. Meanwhile, the central and provincial governments' responsibilities to supervise international students and colleges enrolling them were emphasized as an independent chapter in Policy No. 104.

Converged management helping to set up comprehensive quality standard

Teaching plan and curriculum structure were allowed to be adjusted according to foreign students' background in Policy No. 55. However, they are required to be integrated into the general planning under converged management. Like an assistant for political and ideological work in a class of local students, an assistant for a class of international students was also required by Policy No. 104

to deal with students' daily affairs and help them to communicate with administrative offices. These changed policies have been defined more clearly by Policy No. 107 which converged teaching, management, and service for local and international students with the same target, procedure, and criteria. The government aimed to set up a comprehensive quality standard by realizing converged management, and Policy No. 107 can be viewed as the initial step of the effort.

Taken together, policy text analysis in the new era shows that China is increasingly active in higher education internationalization. Although she has become the third biggest around the world and the most popular in Asia as a destination country for international students, China is eager to make the education for international students an attractive brand with high quality. Additionally, the three specific themes emerged from recent policies suggest that management improvement has been viewed as the leading strategy for education quality.

Conclusion and implication

This study reviewed policies related to higher education for international students in China after 1978. It has identified that policy issues changed according to context at home and abroad. Policies published by the central government tried to provide solutions as a response to the changing issues. Four stages have emerged from qualitative text analysis.

Around 10 years after 1978, a basic framework was required for a career starting from scratch. As an opportunity mainly opened to friendly countries, the education for international students was advanced cautiously by targeting quality of academic learning and political alliance.

With the great change of world systems happening around 1990, education opening-up in China became more aggressive. Clear standards and sufficient resources were needed to motivate students and higher education institutions. Overall standards from entrance requirement to degree granting were set up by policies. Scholarships with strict supervision of winners and colleges were viewed as a resource guaranteed by the central government.

Facing the challenges introduced by rapid expansion of international students after 2000, part of the policy issues has been transferred from campus management to the society management and from government responsibility to college responsibility. As a response to this transformation, integrated management at the college and social level was established and training programs for college leaders were defined as routine by policies.

After 30 years of reform and opening-up, the year 2010 was viewed as a new starting point for education development in China. Education for international students is expected to be compatible with China's rising international status. Therefore, policies published in the recent 10 years put emphasis on brand building through quality assurance.

Generally speaking, the policy focus witnesses a shift from openness to expansion and then to quality. The policies made by the central government have changed a lot accordingly. The authors

argue that the policies before 2010 were relatively independent from the “brain race” (Wildavsky, 2012) discourse. Although political concern was mentioned as motivation in policy papers, educationalism also played as a major rationale since most of the policy solutions were aiming at the improvement of education for international students. After 2010, pervasive instrumentalism seems to play a rising role in policymaking when China joined the global competition more actively and deeply. However, the concern is not what international students contribute to Chinese economic development but what cultural and political ideas they understand and introduce to their own countries. This concern can be understood as political or idealism agenda. Nonetheless, the meanings of these terms need to be reinterpreted in the Chinese context. By emphasizing education quality in recent policies, it seems a rolling-back of educationalism. However, the current policy system does not provide sufficient solutions for building an international brand under instrumentalism, nor does it meet the requirement of improving education quality under educationalism. Therefore, the authors provide several insights for the future policymaking to realize expansion with high quality.

First, this study suggests that policies should be made based on different types of international students. According to the latest statistics of international students, degree students account for 52.44% and graduate students only account for 17.28% in 2018 (MOE, 2019). Compared with the statistics in 2000,⁵ the structure of education levels has changed quickly. However, the percentage of degree students is still lower than the numbers in many traditional recruiting countries.⁶ There are differences between degree students and nondegree students in terms of their learning motivation, education experience, and expecting outcome. Nonetheless, most of the policies are general or particular for students holding Chinese government scholarships. These policies failed to provide specific solutions for education related to different types of international students. Insufficient attention was paid to the education issues exclusively related to self-financed students who have been accounting for around 90%⁷ after 1994. For degree students, a strict standard of enrollment is the precondition for education quality. It is suggested to make policy giving college full autonomy to select degree students based on their academic performance. For nondegree students, they are mainly self-financing, and strict academic qualification for entrance does not make much sense, but quality assurance of the education process is still vital. It is suggested to make policy encouraging market competition and guaranteeing supervision by college and government as well. Considering the controversy over the quality of education for international students, raising the percentage of degree students is a helpful strategy to realize expansion with high quality, especially the percentage of graduate students. Apart from annual statistics, quality evaluation of education for all types of international students needs to be published every year as a response to public concern.

Second, this study raises the necessity that policies provide detailed guidance and accelerate capacity building in all majors. Based on 40 years' policy evolution, a mechanism of resource input and general quality regulation has been set up. However, colleges, who are supposed to take the principal responsibility in a more decentralized system, are facing various challenges in quality assurance. Considering the existing difference between international students and local students in terms of political and cultural background, the policy solution of converged management is too vague to direct teaching and administrative practice. Policies are expected to set up a more specific quality indicator system for teaching and learning in all kinds of majors. The *National Standard on the Teaching Quality of Higher Education Institutions (2018)* covering 587 undergraduate majors and the *Provisional Regulation on Quality Control Standard of Undergraduate English-Taught Program in Medicine (2007)* may provide reference to the construction of an indicator system. In order to implement these policies well, teachers in all majors and administrative staff at the basic level are suggested to participate in training programs regularly. The routine training programs for leaders and teachers in medicine already established by policies may provide reference to the construction of a full-scale capacity-building system.

Contributorship

Yuting Zhang was responsible for writing the abstract, the bulk of the main body; finalizing the paper; and responding to reviewers' comments. She covered various aspects of the paper including analyzing the four stages of policy development, identifying the current policy concern and direction in the near future, and making the policy implication. Yu Liao contributed by reviewing the general situation of international student mobility and literature on policy rationales driving higher education internationalization, collecting and grouping the policy papers used as data in this paper, and translating some policy texts into English.

Declaration of conflicting interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The authors disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship and/or publication of this article: 2019 Key Project of Educational Science Program in Zhejiang Province (2019SB114).

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Notes

1. See <https://www.pkulaw.com/>.
2. See <http://www.moe.gov.cn/>.
3. According to the latest definition given by *Regulations on the Enrollment and Education for International Students*, international students refer to all students studying in China without Chinese nationality. Since

the number of international students in Chinese kindergarten, primary school, and secondary school is still very small, most of the policies and researches only pay attention to international students in higher education. As a result, international students in this study mean junior college students, undergraduate students, and graduate students in degree programs and preparing students, advanced visiting students, and visiting scholars in nondegree programs.

4. The 112 policies were numbered according to the publication date.
5. In 2000, degree students accounted for 26.28% and graduate students accounted for 6.23% (MOE, 2005).
6. Take the U.S., the U.K., Australia, and Canada as examples. The enrollment of international students at bachelor level accounted for 4%, 14%, 14%, and 11%, respectively, while the enrollment of international students at graduate level accounted for 39%, 76%, 80%, and 49%, respectively, in 2017 (OECD, 2019, p. 242). In the MOE statistics for Chinese higher education, degree students include international students in junior colleges, undergraduate programs, and graduate programs. Other types of international students in long-term programs and trainees in short-term programs are counted as nondegree students. This standard of classification is different from the OECD indicator system. Meanwhile, the number of international students in long-term programs, in junior colleges, or in undergraduate programs is not always available in MOE statistics. As a result, it is hard to compare the percentage of degree students between China and OECD countries directly. However, the reader can estimate that the percentage of degree students in China is relatively lower. It could be attributed to the fact that a large number of international students are studying Chinese in nondegree programs.
7. The percentage is summarized from the data in the *Educational Statistics Yearbook of China (1978–1997)*, *Educational Yearbook of China (1998–1999)*, and *MOE Statistics of Education for International Students (2000–2018)*. The specific percentage for each year is not listed here because of the space limitation.

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