Problems and Countermeasures in the Education of International Postgraduates in China

Zhong-Liang WANG\textsuperscript{a}, Jing ZHANG\textsuperscript{b} and Bei WANG\textsuperscript{*}

Fisheries College, Guangdong Ocean University, No. 1 Haida Road, Mazhong District, Zhanjiang, Guangdong, China

\textsuperscript{a}leong2006@126.com, \textsuperscript{b}wong19820204@126.com, \textsuperscript{*}511403795@qq.com

Keywords: International postgraduates studying in China; Education quality improvement; Problems and countermeasures.

Abstract. The issues of current situation of graduate students studying in China, problems occurred in the process of training and how to improve the quality of training were analyzed in this paper. And reasonable countermeasures to improve the quality of postgraduate students studying in China was given to enhance the competitiveness of China’s postgraduate education in the international arena.

Introduction

For a long time, the Chinese government has attached great importance to the education of international students in China. In order to promote the development of international students' education, the government has continuously formulated and improved the policy of foreign students' education according to the actual situation of the development of foreign students’ education in China. In 2015, the government formulated the “2015-2017 Study Abroad Work Plan,” proposing “strengthening the quality assurance of studying in China and promoting the sustainable and healthy development of studying in China.” With the enhancement of China's comprehensive national strength, the level of economic and educational development has been greatly improved. And thus, the attractiveness of studying in China has gradually increased, and the scale of education for international students in China has gradually expanded. Postgraduate education for international students, which is considered to be an important part of postgraduate education in China, is an educational form for training high-level international talents in higher education institutions. It promotes international cooperation and exchanges in education, builds world-renowned high-level universities, and it will be of great significance to promote folk friendship and friendly exchanges between Chinese and foreign youths. Under the background of the flourishing development of International students' education in China, we must thoroughly study the problems existing in training and teaching management, and improve the quality of training and education of postgraduate students studying in China.

Current Status of Graduate Students Studying in China

According to the latest data of foreign students from the Chinese Ministry of Education, the total number of foreign students receiving academic education in 2018 was 258,122; accounting for 52.44% of the total number of international students in China, an increase of 16,579 (6.86%) over the same period in 2017; there were a total of 85,062 master's and doctoral students, an increase of 12.28% compared with that in 2017, including 25,618 doctoral students and 59,744 postgraduates. However, with the continuous expansion of the scale of international students studying in China, some problems in the process of training graduate students studying in China have gradually emerged.

Problems in the Training of Postgraduate Students Studying in China

The expanded scale of graduate students studying in China has led to the development of the educational industry, the improvement of the level of education internationalization, and the
integration of educational resources. However, we should clearly observe the problems existing in curriculum, training system, teaching staff and teaching management system, etc., which related to the postgraduate study in China, cannot fully meet the needs of the development of international postgraduates’ education. And it urgently requires the education authorities and institutions of higher learning to face the problems and striving to promote the quality of training of postgraduate students studying in China by self-innovation and self-improvement.

**Lack of Specificity in Course Setting and Training System**

At present, most of the international graduate students studying in China come from developing countries such as Africa and Latin America. The differences in the level of scientific and technological development among countries result in significant differences in the basic knowledge, academic research level and practical ability between international students and Chinese students. Therefore, it is necessary to teach students in accordance with their aptitude, and the relevant courses and training models should be fully integrated with the specific conditions and characteristics of graduate students studying in China [1]. However, judging from the actual situation, the setting of the relevant courses and the formulation of the training plan for international students are duplicated from the inherent mode for Chinese graduate students. The personalized learning needs of the graduate students studying in China are not met in a timely and reasonable manner. As a result, there will be a “disjointedness” between the courses taught in their countries and the courses they will study in China, which will keep the students in a state of not being able to adapt and studying passively, and then greatly reduces their learning enthusiasm in China. Additionally, the course system for all-English or Chinese-speaking courses for graduate students studying in China is incomplete, for example, lack of textbooks related to new developments, new methods and new approaches which reflecting Chinese characteristics, and this will seriously affect the attractiveness of learning in China for students who want to learn advanced concepts, professional knowledge and skills in China.

**Lack of Professional Supervisors and Teaching Faculties**

For the past few years, the number of international graduate students recruited from English-speaking countries is increasing, however, the number of teachers that are capable of teaching in English is not enough. There is a lack of supervisors and teaching faculty with high English level, strong professional ability and wide international perspective. The graduate students enrolled in science and engineering colleges generally learn highly specialized subjects, and this requires teachers must teach in English, which is a huge challenge for teachers majored in science and engineering in China [1]. Furthermore, some teachers have difficulty in communicating with international students due to their relatively low level of English, and few interactive activities in the process of teaching will greatly affects the training quality of the graduates studying in China.

**Inadequate Indicators of Educational Effectiveness Evaluation**

China’s current degree management system has not clearly defined whether to adopt the same degree standards for international students as graduate students in China, and this issue is also a controversial problem in the process of training graduate students in China. In order to guarantee the quality of graduate students, doctoral and master's degree applicants must publish papers or obtain certified scientific research results before graduation in some colleges and universities. If the same standards for graduate students studying in China were adopt, it will inevitably lack flexibility, which may put a lot of pressure on the graduate students studying in China, and also reduce their enthusiasm for studying [2]. However, the adoption of a single indicator such as attendance or graduation defense is not conducive to the comprehensiveness and objectivity of educational effectiveness evaluation. Therefore, how to improve the evaluation index system of educational effectiveness is an issue that must be considered in the process of cultivating high-quality graduate students studying in China.
The Education Management System is Distempered

The management of graduate education in China generally involves multiple departments and multiple links, for example, the enrollment management and daily management of the foreign graduate students are mostly handled by the foreign affairs management department, while the teaching management and degree management of the graduate students are mostly the responsibility of the teaching management department, and the quality of the graduate students studying in China is therefore affected by many factors. Due to the lack of institutionalization and standardization of management, there are phenomena such as making excuses and untimely communication in various departments, which will inevitably affect the development of postgraduate education in China [3].

Countermeasures for Improving the Quality of Postgraduate Study in China

International postgraduate education is the highest level in the structure of higher education in China, and its quality of training plays an important role in improving the international influence and competitiveness of higher education in China. The large-scale development of postgraduate education in China can be described as both opportunities and challenges. To seize opportunities and meet challenges, we need to promote the quality of postgraduate education in China from the following aspects.

To Establish and Improve the Training Mode for Graduate Students Studying in China

The establishment of a targeted and distinctive training model is a prerequisite for improving the quality of postgraduate education and achieving training goals. At the present stage, the disparity between the graduate students studying in China and the graduate students in China is obvious, as well as the language barriers, and this all determine the particularity of training graduate students studying in China. Training objectives, curriculum and practice courses should meet the characteristics of graduate students studying in China. For example, to implement the credit system management of the academic year, adjust curriculum and appropriately reduce the total credits, and encourage the individualized development of graduate students studying in China, and to set up specific training program for graduate students from different majors [4]. At the same time, the construction of textbooks and the collection of literature should be strengthened by encouraging teachers to compile teaching materials and enrich the resources of textbooks to improve the situation of no suitable teaching materials for graduate students studying in China, and improve the education quality of postgraduate students studying in China.

To Strengthen the Construction of Teaching Staff

On the one hand, some outstanding talents with overseas academic background could be introduced directly, and on the other hand, we need to pay more attention to encourage young teachers with academic potential to go abroad for a short-term training. In view of the problem that the relative low English language level of supervisors, the young teachers with higher English language level and excellent research ability could be appointed as assistant supervisors and play their roles in the cultivation of postgraduate students studying in China, and these young assistant supervisors could be supervisor candidates to expand the supervisor team in future.

To Conduct Diversified Assessment of Teaching Effectiveness

The formulation of relevant regulations for degree awarding should be appropriately adjusted on the basis of comprehensive consideration of the existing standards in China and other countries and the specific situation of graduate students studying in China. In the actual operation process, it should be appropriately and flexibly grasped under the premise of adhering to the standards and requirements of degree awarding. Under the premise of achieving the same educational goals, the criteria for granting graduate degrees in China could be appropriately relaxed. The academic dissertations should emphasize their abilities to apply what they have learned, and meet the
demands of sending countries of international students. For the scientific achievements of graduate students studying in China, colleges and universities should provide more choices for students, and focus on the improvement of practical skills and Chinese language skills.

**To Sound and Standardized Teaching Management Regulations**

Based on the characteristics of the graduate students studying in China, combined with the specific conditions for training graduate students, the relevant management regulations of the training process, such as the criteria of degree awarding, requirements of the Chinese language proficiency and research results and training programs, need to be formulated to strengthen and standardize the training process of graduate students studying in China and improve the quality of training. The method of “consistent management” in the process of teaching management should be adopted to promote the recognition of Chinese culture by graduate students studying in China and improve management efficiency [5]. Meanwhile, the teaching management should be regulated from the aspects of management concept, management level and resource allocation, and then an excellent management team for international students could be constructed.

**Summary**

As an important part of international education exchange, graduate education in China will become a highlight of the internationalization of higher education. To think deeply about the opportunities and challenges existed in the development of postgraduate education for international students in China is not only an issue worthy of attention and discussion in the reform and development of higher education, but also an important opportunity for the internationalization of higher education in China. Colleges and universities in China should learn the successful experience of foreign graduate education, update the concept, expand thinking, and then formulate a scientific training program and create a humanized training environment for graduate students studying in China, and fully demonstrate the soft power in the market competition of graduate students studying abroad to ensure the healthy and sustainable development of the graduate education program for international students.

**Acknowledgement**

This research was financially supported by Graduate Education Innovation Program of Guangdong Ocean University (201708), Guangdong Graduate Education Innovation Program (2019JGXM57), Education and Teaching Reform Project of Guangdong Ocean University (XJG201833) and Quality Engineering and "Innovation Strong university Engineering” Teaching Project of Guangdong Ocean University (2018).

**References**

[1] X. J. Liu. Some Thoughts on the cultivation of foreign postgraduates (In Chinese). Academic Degrees & Graduate Education, 2006, 7: 47-50.

[2] W. H. Chen, W. C. Dong and X. G. Liu. Problems and Countermeasures of Graduate Education for students from Africa (In Chinese). Academic Degrees & Graduate Education, 2012, 8: 54-58.

[3] J. Wang. A present education condition analysis of the foreign graduate students coming to study in China (In Chinese). China Higher Education Research, 2006, 6: 21-23.

[4] R. J. Xu, Z. Z. Lu and B. J. Zou. Reflections on Foreign Graduates' Education in China (In Chinese). Tsinghua Journal of Education, 2003, 24(6): 96-99.

[5] X. Y. Zhang. Probe into some problems concerning the cultivation of overseas postgraduates (In Chinese). Journal of Tianjing University of Technology and Education, 2013, 23 (3): 73-75.