The Chance and Challenge for Chinese Students Caused by New Policy of Studying in France

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Abstract: In 2018, French government promulgated new policy which aimed at non-EU international students, and waved reverberate in international students. According to interpretation of new policy and analysis of questionnaire, this essay is going to help Chinese students to understand the advantage and disadvantage thoroughly, also put forward effective opinions for it.

Keywords: New policy on studying abroad; Chinese international students; Chance and challenge

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As its vast cultural and art influence, France is known as a great power of knowledge and research. International students decide to go to France for the high-quality courses, faculty and diplomas. In France, in addition to Grandes Écoles, public universities are also popular for the prime teaching qualifications and cost-effective education. French government emphasize the invest on culture

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and education extremely, educational funding account for 23% of State revenues every year. International students can enjoy apartment, commute and other service provided by government, as same as local students. Therefore, French universities have a strong appeal to international students around the world, providing more students with the possibility to enjoy quality education. In November 2018, the Prime Minister promulgated a new policy (hereinafter referred to as the new policy) for non-EU students, substantially raising registration fees. After the implementation of the new policy, how will Chinese students who wish to study in France face the challenges and seize the opportunities?

1. Background of Raising Registration Fees for Non-EU Students

For more than a decade, the government has set the registration fees for French public universities. Registration fees for all types of public universities have risen slightly and slowly, with French public universities charging international students the lowest fees among peers. All the real educational cost the government bears increase the economic pressure —— international students who do not contribute to French taxes pay less than 2 percent of the actual cost and also have been treated equally. In addition, the continuous expansion of French public universities has exceeded the government budget and directly led to a decline in the quality of teaching and living standards of students, making French university less competitive in the world. So, it is not difficult to equate low cost of admission with its low quality of teaching.

According to the statistics from Campus France, from 2017 to 2018, there were more than 3,500 institutions of higher education in France, with a total of 2.68 million students, of whom 325,000 were foreign students, accounting for 12 percent. In 2019, Australia overtook France as the third largest non-English-speaking country to study abroad. France still has an appeal for international students, but it is growing less than other countries, both in terms of numbers and growth, which has already stagnated and begun to decline. France risks losing its competitiveness to attract international students and its fourth place.

Combined with many factors, in order to maintain the original advantage meanwhile restore the competitiveness of education, the problems of registration fee urge the French government to find a strong solution. Thus, the new policy of studying abroad came out.
2. “Choisir la France”

On November 19, 2018, in the face of the crisis, French Prime Minister Ed-ward Philip announced a new strategy to increase the attractiveness of French ter-
tiary education, “Choisir la France”, and set a target to enroll 500,000 international
students at the 2027. In addition to the increase in registration fees, the French
government has introduced a series of optimization plans to enhance French influ-
ence among the international universities. The main policies are as follows:

(1) Additional scholarships, grants and differential fees

In order to provide financial support for government’s investment in education, French public universities will charge differential fees for foreign students from non-EU countries. France is not the first European country to implement plan of differentiated tuition and registration fees. Most countries around the world have adopted differentiated fees in exchange for scholarships and hospitality. However, France has treated foreign students to be in the same way as local citizen and has its own attitude in the market all the time.

Within the framework of the strategy to improve the attractiveness and quality of student reception, international students of non-European Union or Swiss na-
tionality who are enrolled for the first time in higher education in France will have to pay a differentiated registration fee from the 2019 academic year, bear at least one-third of the actual cost of education —— 2,770€ per year for undergraduate’s courses and 3,770€ per year for Master’s courses. The French government will continue to bear two-thirds of the actual cost of education, though increase rapidly, the cost of studying abroad is still much lower than other major countries.

| Increase in Registration Fees for French Public Universities |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| **Undergraduate course** | 2018-2019 academic year | After 2019 | Rate of Increase |
| 170 € (¥ 1350) | 2 770 € (¥ 22000) | 16 |
| **Master course** | 243 € (¥ 1900) | 3 770 € (¥ 30000) | 15 |
| **PhD course** | 380 € (¥ 3000) | 9 |
Tuition Fees for Public Universities of The Top Four Destination Countries In 2019
(by Academic Year)

|                      | France | USA   | UK    | Australia |
|----------------------|--------|-------|-------|-----------|
| Undergraduate course | 2 770 €| 37 500 €| 10 000 €| 10 500 € |
| Master course        | 3 770 €| 30 900 €| 20 000 €| 19 600 € |
| Compared to France   | 8-13 times | 4-5 times | 4-5 times |

The increase in fees will bring in 4 billion euros, while the amount of scholarships for high-quality research projects and outstanding students will be significantly increased —— French government will award 15,000 large scholarships to foreign students, mainly from China, Turkey and Saudi Arabia, and the number is more than double, the winning rate is increase by 25% , means that a quarter of international students will be eligible for scholarships or free tuition fees; the maximum amount of scholarships is tens of thousands of euros (about 100,000 yuan). Another 6,000 university grants will be paid in cash or free-tax. With the help of agreements and strategic criteria, Chinese students will be exactly eligible to apply for these scholarships and may still pay the same registration fees as EU students.

(2) Simplify visa procedures and improve visa services

For Chinese students, visa rate is more important than tuition fees. In recent years, the French visa policy has been greatly improved, four-fifths visa application of Chinese students are approved in first time. Under this policy, the French visa rate are anticipated to increase from 75% to 90%, or even higher. This would reduce the loss of time and money and benefit more Chinese students. Since March 2019, the French government has opened a number of favorable policies for graduates: foreign students who have obtained a French master’s degree and returned to their country of origin may apply for a residence permit and return to France to look for job: Graduates (professional baccalaureate, Master, Doctor, MSc, Master of the Union of French universities) may stay in France for an additional 12 months; master and doctor may obtain a 5-year round-trip visa; and doctor can apply for a “talent passport”.

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(3) Offer French language training and increase English teaching

Currently, French is the fifth largest language in the world. According to the French Language Observatory of the International Organization of La Francophonie, there are 300 million French-speaking people, 235 million of whom speak French as their first language. In order to develop its status equally in non-French-speaking and French-speaking countries, every international student in France can receive intensive language training before going to France or before enrolling in school. Chinese students studying in France, as the main group of French Language Training Center, can continue to benefit from this new measure and broaden experience. Supported by policy, French universities will aim to increase the number of courses taught in English in order to accept more international students. There are 237 institutions of higher education in France offering courses in English, including 137 public Institutions; the number of courses taught in English has also increased fivefold, from 286 to 1,328 in 2018, of which 1,015 are entirely taught in English, and most of them focus on the master.

(4) Create an authentication mechanism to improve reception

In recent years, many French universities have had to cancel some of their majors in order to cope with the ever-expanding international student population and the fully use of educational hardware, some of the small-class courses were changed to large-class classes in the lecture theatre, and some students’ research projects could not be carried out due to lack of funding. Such teaching conditions are neither conducive to students’ study, nor to the development of scientific research in schools. The quality of teaching in French universities has been questioned, and the satisfaction has declined.

To meet this challenge, the French government will regulate the level of reception of international students at French universities by issuing specific certifications, and establish a fund called “Bienvenue en France” to support the hardware facilities and the service for studying abroad. Some eligible institutions for admission will be given qualifications to better handle student accommodation; each international student will be assigned a study abroad guardian to accompany them during their study abroad. Graduates can also enjoy tracking services and other reception services after graduate.

In addition, new funds can also help French universities to implement its international recruitment strategy better and increase publicity efforts.
(5) Run schools overseas and launch global publicity

It is necessary to cooperate with local educational institutions in order to better spread the propaganda in other countries. France has identified the ways of establishing universities abroad in cooperation with local universities. Since 2005, 13 Chinese-French universities have been set up in China, fulfilling the desire of both the French and Chinese universities to establish high-quality teaching courses and to train high-quality students.

French universities also exchange and cooperate with many Chinese universities, launching inter-university cooperation projects and visiting famous universities during summer vacation, it provides students with an initial understanding of the form and system of higher education in France by means of field visits, and more opportunities for students who are eager to study in France. At the same time propaganda also achieve the substantive effect.

3. Analysis of Survey Results

In order to understand how well Chinese students learn about the new policy and its impact on their intention to study abroad, we designed a questionnaire among of different majors in Jianghan University. We have collected 113 valid pieces of data.

Among 113 participants, 69 students majoring in French, accounting for 61.06%. There are 7 students majoring in art and design, 17 students majoring in business and 20 students from other majors, accounting for 6.19%, 15.04% and 17.7% respectively. Among the 55 interviewees who have the intention to study abroad, 44 majoring in French, 4 majoring in art, 3 majoring in business and 4 majoring in other majors. Among them, 41 students intend to study in France, accounting for about 36% of the total number, 40 students majoring in French and 1 majoring in art. As a big country of art and culture, France is not attractive enough for international students, which fully explains the importance of overseas publicity and the necessity of expanding its social advantages and benefits.

41 respondents showed how they familiar with the new policy. We learned that 65.57% of respondents are not very understanding of the new policy, about 34.43%, they focus mostly on the policy of registration fees rise, however, they are not acquainted with increasing scholarship, visa simplification, optimization, and other aspects of welfare policy to know each other very little. Most of them learned about the policy through the popularization of teachers in campus and the introduction of
self-media and news. A few of them learned about the policy through overseas study agencies. It can be seen that in terms of policy understanding, most students are in a passive state and the policy information they know is one-sided and not specific. In reaction to the phenomenon, each college French students can give full play to their professional advantages reasonable use of effective resources, such as community organization, information group, make relevant science of video or drawing includes spread on campus, in order to help more students to a more comprehensive and effective understanding to the policy, according to individual circumstance make reasonable and effective planning and adjustment in time.

In our samples, there are 47 people change studying intention, including 31 people were affected by the new policy, the “culprit” is rising registration fees. Its “appalling” effect in addition to let many students gave up the study plan, the subject of heat has caused part of the students’ interest in study in France, this also verify the low tuition makes people question the teaching quality and to a certain extent, reduce the study appeal But other elements of the new policy, such as an increase in French and English courses and improvements in the quality of teaching, have failed to gain attraction among students. On the one hand, cooperation and exchanges between Chinese and French universities need to be strengthened so that Chinese students can have a more comprehensive understanding of the French education system. On the other hand, Chinese students should also make rational analysis in response to policy changes and adjustments, so as to avoid missing opportunities due to “disadvantages”

In the investigation on the reasons for choosing to stay in France for different majors, 82.93% students chose France for the purpose of improving their French level, 65.85% were attracted by French culture, 3415% chose France for their school and major, and only19.51% were affected by educational preference. As a “capital of art” and “fashion center”, France is attractive to those who want to study abroad for its long history and rich artistic atmosphere. Of course, for French majors, the pure French language environment is one of the most important factors; And the cost of studying abroad in France has brought little appeal. For interviewees who do not choose France the language barrier is the main reason why they are reluctant to study in France. In addition, the school environment and atmosphere are the factors they value more, and professional restrictions and environmental adaptability are also the issues they pay attention to. It can be seen that the core concern of students on the topic of studying abroad is teaching quality rather than economic issues.
4. Conclusion

Through policy interpretation and survey data analysis, the French government issued the “Choisir la France” strategy, which conforms to the international development trend and captures the key point to effectively enhance the attractiveness of overseas students. Registration fee increases in student groups at home and abroad caused a strong reaction, although in the short time is not conducive to the development of study abroad in France, but in the long run, there exists a positive impact on the hot debate not only caused the students focus on French higher education career, also raised the French presence in other popular study in colleges and universities.

Although the policy has been introduced, it is still being implemented. Through the questionnaire survey, we find that the educational propaganda in France needs to be strengthened. While giving full play to the original advantages, only by constantly enhancing the professional characteristics and popularity of colleges and universities, and carrying out more mature overseas study cooperation projects, are the magical weapon for “evergreen” in the overseas study market. For students in Chinese colleges and universities, we should actively face the new overseas study policies issued by other countries with a more stable attitude, carefully analyze the advantages and disadvantages of the policies, and make reasonable plans and adjustments for future development based on our own situation. At the same time, only by constantly strengthening their own ability and raising level can they become more comfortable in dealing with “challenges” and seize “opportunities” in “crises”. No matter how “changeable” the situation is, they can remain calm.
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