

Service Improvement for Overseas Students Making China the Largest Destination in Asia

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China is now making it the largest Asian destination for overseas students. The survey has reported, besides education quality, the service and support that government and institutes offer make a big difference to overseas students' study experience. The support shall include the extracurricular service, such as communication during application and career counseling. However, much more emphasis should have been put on such kind of service.

The survey is conducted among 1,892 overseas students in 26 universities and colleges in Shanghai. Though it shows 76.7% students take China as the top choice for international education, merely 59.2% students would like to suggest China if their friends plan to study abroad. The gap in the numbers indicates that the study experience in China does not meet their expectations.

I. China's overseas students get less supportive service

i. Less information in application

Firstly, international students would like to get more accesses to information when doing the application. However, they find the accesses are not that good. Quite a few students said that they held a rosy picture before came to China, but the gap does exist between their expectation and the real situation.

Secondly, though China has been engaged in building websites for overseas education, such as 'Study in China', only a quarter of the students in the survey felt content about them. Therefore, it means that these websites has a long way to go before they function well.

Lastly, over 80% students said they got information they want from friends or people around them, and they found this way is the most useful one. Such fact implies that we have to first make the education and the service good, so that more students would like to recommend China as a choice for overseas education.

ii. Less service got from exit and entry department

Less than 50% of the overseas students in China feel good about the services provided by the exit and entry department, while it reaches to 70-90% in other countries. They feel less content about its service attitude,

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There remain some problems in education of overseas students in China, such as education quality, service and support from government and universities. These problems prevent China from being an ideal country for overseas education, giving the students a less satisfactory impression.

whose figure takes up less than 40%. They said the people were cold and hardened, less willing to give the service, which made students' first impression about China was bad.

iii. Less assistance in orientation

Overseas students' satisfaction rate about the orientation service reaches less than 50%. Take the orientation week as an example. Much of the information is given in Chinese or in Chinese and English. However, many students are poor both at these two languages, making them have no idea about the key information. Besides, living condition is for sure on the top concerns. However, the satisfaction rate still remains low. On one hand, college life service is mostly campus-based, so less consideration is given to the ones who would like to live out of campus. On the other hand, overseas students know less about China's renting market, and their poor Chinese language often makes them fail to figure out the renting contacts. Thus their universities should extend more help in this regarding.

iv. Less convenient medical insurance

The Department of Education requires overseas students, whose study period spans over six months, to buy group comprehensive insurance from the specific domestic insurance companies. The survey shows only 49.7% overseas students who study over six months bought the medical insurance and only 24.8% students feel content about the insurance. This is because the group comprehensive insurance merely contains F.P.A, accidents insurance, and hospitalization insurance. However, outpatient personal medical expenses are excluded. And it is not convenient, for example, students have to pay the fee first and get the cover, which is not reasonable to the not that rich students.

v. Less communication with local students

Extracurricular activities offer overseas students chances to make friends with local students. Those who take part in these activities have higher chance to get to know Chinese students. However, there are still some problems. On one hand, overseas students lack enthusiasm. Only 70% join in the traveling and cultural activities. On the other hand, students feel less content. Even in the most welcomed traveling and cultural activities, less than 40% students feel content. However, in U.K and Australia, this figure reaches to 80% and 83% in the global picture.

Quite a few students write at the end of the survey that they expect their universities could offer more activities. This, to some extent, suggests that the existing ones fail to live up to the students or arouse their enthusiasm.

II. Advice for service improvement

Chinese government and universities should take more aspects into consideration. Instead of being confined by imparting knowledge, they are expected to grasp the ‘big picture’, giving more policies and service from appliance to graduation. Only in this way could China earn itself in the international education arena.

i. Improve cooperation of departments involved

The comprehensive service requires cooperation among departments where communication and teamwork will make a difference.

1. It is suggested that the Department of Education call for a joint conference, concerning the departments of exit and entrance, medication and insurance, work and employment. And make the conference a regular occasion to discuss about the education strategy.

2. Another feasible approach is to give cultural training to employees in exit and entrance department in order to improve their service. The training is aimed to equip them with necessary English skills, familiarize them with frequently asked questions.

3. Overseas students are encouraged to buy medical insurance if they stay in China over six months and make it a must in Visa application. And it is advised that medical insurance contain outpatient medical fees.

ii. More information provide on portal website

1. The portal website should provide more information about admission requirement, application, and visa, and also about life in China, accommodation, and medical insurance. The ultimate aim is to offer all the information the student might need in any case.

2. It is advised that the websites offer a detailed introduction to the key Chinese universities, including their programmes and strength, in order to show a comprehensive and interdependent Chinese education system. Besides, more links to certain universities and their schools should be inserted into the portal websites, giving students more access to the information of the university they might have interest in.

3. Regular censorship.

4. It is better for the websites to locate the target countries and to offer different versions in other languages, making it more convenient for students.

iii. More assistance for overseas freshmen

1. Make the orientation a multi-language environment and enrich the orientation week, dividing it into three aspects—study, life and community, to help students better accustomed.

2. Encourage student in volunteer work, giving new overseas students help. A possible approach is to involve the experienced overseas students in helping those who come from the same countries, so that they can communicate in their mother tongue.

3. Offer students more after-class activities. In order to arouse Chinese students' initiative to help overseas students, it can be made as a must for Chinese students or give them some awards for their help.

4. Enhance the accommodation service, making it beneficial to every overseas student. Universities can enlist trustworthy real estate agencies and give overseas students the list and more information about the renting market and related regulations. Besides, universities should help students understand the house rental agreement and give necessary advice to protect students' interest.

iv. More approaches to know China better

1. Carry out more volunteer work for overseas students. Expose them to the real Chinese community, and thus a bond can be created.

2. Encourage universities to build student unions for overseas students which can organize parties and activities, extend help and communicate with school departments.

3. Encourage governments to set up local overseas student union to provide interschool activities. Thus their friend circle can be enlarged.

4. It is suggested that the university internationalize its existing student union, if its overseas students reach a certain number. Involving more international students in student union can foster good communication.

v. Regular survey

The situation of the overseas students never remains the same. It is subject to the related policies at home and abroad, which means a certain practice will not hold its effectiveness all the time. It has been a social practice in other countries and regions to carry out a regular survey about overseas students' satisfaction towards the service and support they have received. And China can learn from this mode to improve its environment for overseas students.

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