Problems and Countermeasures for the Education of Mongolia's Overseas Students in Inner Mongolia

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Abstract. The education of overseas students plays an important role in defending a country's political image and improving political position. Many countries make a great effort to develop the education of overseas students which has become the direction and strategy on the development of higher education. With the rapid development of the economy, Chinese language has become so popular that plenty of international students come to China to learn Chinese and Chinese culture. Because of geographic advantages and historical origins in Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region and Mongolia, the number of Mongolian students who study in the college and universities in Inner Mongolia is in greater amounts every year. Although the education of Mongolian overseas students plays an important role in promoting the cultural exchanges between the two countries, the current situations and achievements in education so far are not satisfactory and optimistic. Accordingly, it is urgent to solve the current problems.

Keywords: colleges and universities in Inner Mongolia, overseas students from Mongolia, higher education, educational development.

1 Introduction

The geological location and historical origins of Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region of China and Mongolia have created an absolute advantage for colleges and universities in Inner Mongolia in reception and education of overseas students from Mongolia. Along with Chinese rush worldwide and rapid economic development of Inner Mongolia, colleges and universities of the region have witnessed a year-on-year increase in the number of students from Mongolia, a unique scene which is not seen in other higher learning institutes of China. Despite the rapid development in the education of overseas students, there are still problems, the unique ones compared with those in other higher institutions of China, remaining to be settled.

2 Problems in the Education of Overseas Students

Compared with other provinces and regions of China, Inner Mongolia has the largest population of overseas students from Mongolian, most of them come to China to study Chinese. They currently fall into two categories: for a bachelor's, master's or doctor's degree and for a better command of the Chinese language. And the former
outnumbers the latter. Among the former most study for a bachelor's degree. There are many problems to be tackled together with the rapid increase in the number of overseas students from Mongolia.

2.1 Many Mongolian Students Lack Proper Concept of Learning

Many Mongolian students lack proper concept of learning for the following reasons. First, as Mongolia does not have solid basic education, its people did not start to receive education on a general basis until the victory of Mongolian people's revolution. According to statistics, in 1921 only 5164 were literate. Against such a historical background, many Mongolian students lack a clear concept of learning and are unable to study independently. Second, Mongolia has a relatively small population and thus small employment pressure. Those who received higher education can mostly find a satisfactory job. Consequently, students, lack of self-discipline and motivation, form a disorganized learning climate. Third, as a result of the differences in educational systems, educational concepts, ideology and living habits between Mongolia and China, some of the Mongolian students fail to adapt to Chinese education mode, which interrupts their learning enthusiasm.

2.2 Students Lack Sufficient Command of Chinese ---the Precondition for Studying Major Knowledge

Compared with the overseas students from other countries, Mongolian students make relatively slow progress in their Chinese study for the following two reasons. First, Chinese belongs to Sino-Tibetan family, while Mongolian is a member of Altaic family. The differences between the two languages make it harder for Mongolian students to learn Chinese. Besides, there are no teaching materials tailored for Mongolian students, which makes it hard to teach them accordingly. The textbooks that Mongolian students use are all specific to British and American students with notes in English. Many Mongolian students have to learn Chinese words by looking them up in a dictionary for their English meanings first, a complex process indeed. Second, the majority of overseas students in Inner Mongolian colleges and universities are Mongolians, who can speak Mongolian whenever they want without any barriers to communication, unlike those students from other countries (such as Japan, Korea and Germany), who have to rely on Chinese for basic communication. Third, Mongolian students seldom or hardly communicate with Chinese students, failing to enjoy the best Chinese learning environment and learn about cultural customs and habits of the Chinese people. Enclosed in their own small world, they hear limited Chinese spoken by their teachers at class and speak mostly Mongolian in their daily life, which accounts mainly for the standstill of their Chinese learning.

Language beginners of Mongolian students start their undergraduate or postgraduate study after only one year of language study with limited command of everyday Chinese expressions. As new teaching plans specific to Mongolian students have not come into being in Inner Mongolian colleges and universities, Mongolian students have to share textbooks, teachers and teaching method with their Chinese counterparts. Overwhelmed by difficult subject terms and theories, they gradually lose their interest in learning.