

**Exploring the Factors that Influence Chinese Students to Study  
in Finland**



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Lingxi Hu

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<b>Author</b>	Lingxi Hu	<b>Year</b> 2020
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<b>Supervisor(s)</b>	Annaleena Kolehmainen	

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ABSTRACT

Chinese students are the third biggest international student source in Finland. The trend is rising as Finland has shown up more frequently in Chinese people's daily life. Commissioned to the Häme University of Applied Science, a higher education provider in Finland, this study tries to discover the reasons and then propose recommendations based on this research question: Which factors impact Chinese students to choose Finland as a study destination?

In this thesis, the author first introduced the general background of the Chinese overseas study industry and then referred to several classic theories that explain the influence of Push and Pull factors on international mobile students. On the next step, both qualitative and quantitative research methods were used to gather statistics about how Chinese students make decisions to come to Finland.

As a result of the research, a list and analysis of the push and pull factors in the case of Chinese students and Finland was showed, by combing theoretical know-how and the actual situation. It is stated that the core push factors are a curiosity of foreign culture, domestic high level of competition and so forth; the core pull factors are, for example, education level at host country and tuition fee policy. In the end, the author gave some suggestions and recommendations of feasible actions to the commissioning company to help it better connect with the Chinese market, such as an optimization plan for Chinese social media and offer student support cooperating with the Chinese Embassy.

**Keywords** Chinese student, Finnish education, international student mobility, push-pull hypothesis, tuition fee.

**Pages** 49 pages including appendices 4 pages

# CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION .....	1
1.1	Background .....	1
1.2	Purpose of the Thesis .....	1
1.3	Commissioning Company .....	2
1.4	Research Method .....	2
2	SOCIAL BACKGROUND OF THE RESEARCH .....	3
2.1	China's Overseas Study Industry .....	3
2.1.1	Industry overview .....	3
2.1.2	Status quo and trend .....	4
2.2	Häme University of Applied Science .....	6
2.2.1	Goals of Chinese students' admission .....	6
2.2.2	Tuition fee and scholarship policy .....	6
3	THEORY .....	9
3.1	International Student Migration .....	9
3.2	Push and Pull Hypothesis .....	10
3.3	Cultural Theory .....	12
3.3.1	Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions .....	13
3.3.2	Controversy and limitations .....	17
4	RESEARCH METHOD .....	17
4.1	Qualitative Research .....	18
4.1.1	Introduction of interviewee .....	18
4.1.2	Objectives of the interview .....	18
4.1.3	Interview process .....	18
4.2	Quantitative Research.....	19
4.2.1	Research objectives.....	19
4.2.2	Sampling and data collection .....	19
4.2.3	Measurements .....	20
4.3	Limitations .....	20
5	SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS .....	21
5.1	Push Factors.....	23
5.1.1	Curiosity of foreign culture.....	23
5.1.2	High level of competition and pressure .....	23
5.1.3	Language practice.....	24
5.1.4	Employment pressure .....	24
5.1.5	Environmental issue .....	25
5.1.6	Education level at home country .....	25
5.2	Pull factors .....	26
5.2.1	Education level at host country.....	26
5.2.2	Tuition fee and scholarship environment .....	27
5.2.3	Security issue.....	28

5.2.4	Advantages of profession .....	28
5.2.5	National culture.....	29
5.2.6	Natural environment.....	29
5.3	Other Factors to be Considered .....	30
5.3.1	International experience .....	30
5.3.2	Family influence .....	31
5.4	Findings From the Head of Education Section Interview .....	32
5.4.1	Policy of future employment.....	32
5.4.2	Policy of tuition fee .....	33
6	DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....	33
6.1	Propaganda .....	33
6.1.1	Branding .....	33
6.1.2	Cross-cultural Interaction.....	35
6.2	Quality Control.....	35
6.2.1	Source of students.....	35
6.2.2	Education.....	36
6.3	Scholarship Explanation .....	36
6.4	Student Support and Cooperation with Chinese Embassy .....	37
7	CONCLUSION.....	38
7.1	Summary of Study.....	38
7.2	Open Discussion – COVID-19 and Study Abroad.....	39
7.3	Limitations and Advice .....	39
	REFERENCES .....	41

## Appendices

- Appendix 1 Interview Guide for Head of the Education Section of the Chinese Embassy in Finland
- Appendix 2 Questionnaire to Chinese students and scholars

# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background

In recent years, the international awareness of Finland has seen significant improvement in the Finnish education system's growing global image. Other than this, Finland has been crowned the "World Happiest Country" for the third consecutive year, as is shown in the annual United Nations World Happiness Report, 2020 (F. Helliwell, Layard, D. Sachs & De Neve, 2020). There is no doubt that Finland, the country that has been keeping a low profile, is now being exposed to the rest of the world due to its extraordinary performances in some specific areas.

On 5th April 2017, Mr. Xi Jinping, the President of the People's Republic of China, made his state visit to Finland. It was the second state visit from China to Finland since 1995 when president Jiang Zemin made the first state visit (Yle, 2017). Mass media described it as a "hand-shake" between Santa Clause and Panda, which strengthened Sino-Finnish international relations on multiple levels. On 14th January 2019, Finland President Sauli Väinämö Niinistö was hosted by Xi Jinping at the Great Hall of the People, Beijing (Office of the President of the Republic of Finland, 2019). The close interactions between leaders of both countries have passed a message of possible future communication and cooperation. Meanwhile, Xi's state visit has raised the profile of Finland in China as well as aroused Chinese curiosity about Finland. Whether it is the improvement of Finland's international image or the increase of Sino-Finland global interaction, in theory, it is undoubtedly beneficial to the promotion of Finnish higher education to the Chinese market.

However, it is worth noting that, as reported by Xinhuanet, Finnish decision-makers have been puzzled about the declining interest shown by Chinese students towards Finland (Xuequan, 2019). This information is very different from the current common sense of the public. Thus, it is exciting and valuable to study recent years' data, analyze the possible factors that influence Chinese students' inflow, and then compare the different research results.

## 1.2 Purpose of the Thesis

This thesis aims to study and analyze the factors that influence Chinese students to come to Finland to study. The author hopes that by summarizing all research data, the commissioning company HAMK will be able to figure its way of attracting a steadily rising number of Chinese students year by year.

To promote HAMK brand to China market, educators and marketers need to figure out both the influencing factors and the appropriate marketing strategies. Universities in the past tend to attract and select students based on their existing social reputation. However, this may work within expectation only to world-class old and prestigious universities which are known by the public via word of mouth, when the promotion is targeted overseas. Moreover, this method has shown to be lagging to some extent under a fast-changing world. As most Finnish universities that offer English teaching Bachelor's degrees are not as well-known as world-class universities, a series of suitable marketing strategies can help Finnish institutions, including HAMK, adjust themselves to the more and more globalized higher education market. (Montull, 2016)

### 1.3 Commissioning Company

The commissioning company is Häme University of Applied Science (henceforth HAMK, "University of Applied Science" referred to as UAS), a Finnish multi-disciplinary higher education institution. It has seven campuses distributed in the south of Finland, headquartering in Hämeenlinna, a city of the historical province Häme.(coming from Lahti I would say that Hämeenlinna isn't the heart of Häme, Lahti is! The total amount of students studying at HAMK is 7500, 8% of which is composed of students from all over the world. Most of the international students in HAMK choose to go to English-teaching degree programs. Bachelor's degree contains eight international programs: Bio-economy Engineering, Computer Applications, Construction Engineering, Electrical and Automation Engineering, Mechanical Engineering and Production Technology, International Business, Smart and Sustainable Design and the newly introduced program: Smart Organic Farming. Since 2017, all the Finnish universities started to charge tuition fees to Non-EU/EEA students who enroll in English teaching programs, HAMK is not the exception. The detailed information will be disclosed, and its impact will be discussed later in the following chapters.

### 1.4 Research Method

Both quantitative and qualitative methods are taken into use in this report.

As one kind of quantitative research, a survey (questionnaire) is made aiming to gather data from targeted groups, for instance, current Chinese students studying in HAMK, Chinese students and scholars living in Finland. The purpose of doing survey research is that it efficiently helps to collect certain sorts of opinions and answers, which can be relatively easier categorized into several options. It can cover as many issues and questions as the author wants. Also, it ensures enough time for the respondents to think over the questions accurately, and it is more likely to be answered with high quality (The Economics Network, n.d.).

When it comes to qualitative methods, the author chooses to use secondary data and interviews. This report is not only merely addressing the issue and then doing research alone, but also seeking differences among this research and the other researchers' findings. Due to the different points of departure, different values of references, or maybe different focal points, various researches might reach different results. So, it is necessary to be critical, and thus, we know the areas that make the difference. Besides, interviews are usually conducted towards specific persons, mostly are the experienced ones or experts in the education or cross-culture area. (The Economics Network, n.d.)

## **2 SOCIAL BACKGROUND OF THE RESEARCH**

### **2.1 China's Overseas Study Industry**

The group of Chinese students who come to Finland is categorized to be a branch of the Chinese students studying abroad since the motivation drivers of them are akin to what Chinese students consider in general. To research the Chinese students incoming to Finland, we need to first understand China's overseas study industry as a knowledge background. The primary source of data comes from the "White paper of Chinese Students' Overseas Study 2020" (henceforth White Paper). It is annually published by New Oriental Vision Overseas, the leading private education institution brand in China and Kantar Millward Brown company, the global leader of market research. The survey-based White Paper was generated by online and offline questionnaires issued from January to March 2020. The White Paper collected 6,673 valid samples from 34 provinces and also some overseas administrative regions. Three main groups of people are covered in the sample: students and parents who intend to study abroad, people who are experienced in studying abroad, and social persons participating in unit recruitment. The year 2020 has been the sixth year for New Oriental Education to conduct such surveys so that the viewers can see more evident changes. It is easier to observe the future development trend of Chinese students' overseas choices too. (New Oriental, 2020)

#### **2.1.1 Industry overview**

China is the largest country of origin for international students all over the world. The number of Chinese students going abroad for the study has seen a steady increase for years. On the year 2008, there were only 179.8 thousand Chinese students left China for their education destination. However, this number has nearly quadrupled by 2018, reaching 662.1 thousand (CHINA STATISTICAL YEARBOOK 2019, 2019). The considerable number of Chinese students outflow each year has brought not only a

more diverse country of origin of international students but also considerable income to the host universities, especially to the popular mainstream study destinations such as the United States and the United Kingdom. However, according to Zhiwen Chen, editor-in-chief of the largest education website in China--eol.cn, the number of Chinese students studying abroad is almost reaching the ceiling, and the turning point is about to come. He discusses reasons from various perspectives. These are: (1) the decline in the willingness to study abroad due to the narrowing of the social development gap between China and foreign countries; (2) return on investment of studying abroad has decreased; (3) the “gold content” of studying abroad is no longer as attractive as before. Researching these elements can help us understand the driving forces for Chinese students to come to Finland to study. (Chen, 2019)

### 2.1.2 Status quo and trend

#### **Scattered and diversified destinations**

In recent years, the Chinese study-abroad industry has seen visible changes based on the existing macro environment. In general, the population of out-bounding Chinese students is steadily rising year by year, whereas a noticeable slower growth has shown. Chinese students and parents seem gradual no longer pursue the United States anymore but pay more attention to the United Kingdom instead. This phenomenon may due to up-to-date stricter immigration and study policies towards international students in the United States. British universities place 4 out of the world's top 10 universities and 9 out of the top 50 on 2020 QS World University Rankings (QS World University Rankings 2020, 2020). Also, the United Kingdom is showing an open mind to non-EU students amidst worrying about losing EU students due to updated complicated enrollments.

Even if the study of the United States is not the focus point of this research, we can still reflect on where the Chinese students choose and go to replace the United States.

According to White Paper (2020), the percentage of Chinese who tend to choose the United States has dropped eight percentage points to 43% in the year 2019, compared to 51% in 2015. Meanwhile, the ideal destinations for the study-abroad intent crowd show to be more diverse. Despite the tradition that the United Kingdom has been standing in second place for an extended period, the popularity of study-abroad destinations such as Japan, Singapore continues to rise. Finland has not shown on the Top 10 hot destinations since it is not the mainstream international study destination; however, Finland owns excellent education sources, an equal and free education atmosphere, and is a very open-minded society. The educators in Finland should catch the delicate preference switch of Chinese students and parents, give full play to its self advantages to create opportunities in the Chinese market. (New Oriental Education, 2020)

## Tendency of popularization

Studying abroad in the traditional concept occurs only in financially wealthy families who are mostly in the upper class of Chinese society. However, this situation has gradually changed as the proportion of ordinary family group has boosted continuously since the first survey was launched in 2015.

A stable, rising number of Chinese students with white-collar parents are opting to study abroad. In 2015, only 29% of the student parents who were in the position of “normal employee” in the society sent their children abroad to study. Corresponding to this, the proportion of students with “middle-level leaders” parents used to be 48% in 2015 and has kept the highest ratio until 2017. The proportion of international students whose parents’ positions are “unit leader or executive” has fluctuated slightly between 20% and 23% and is the most stable group of the research. (New Oriental Education, 2020)

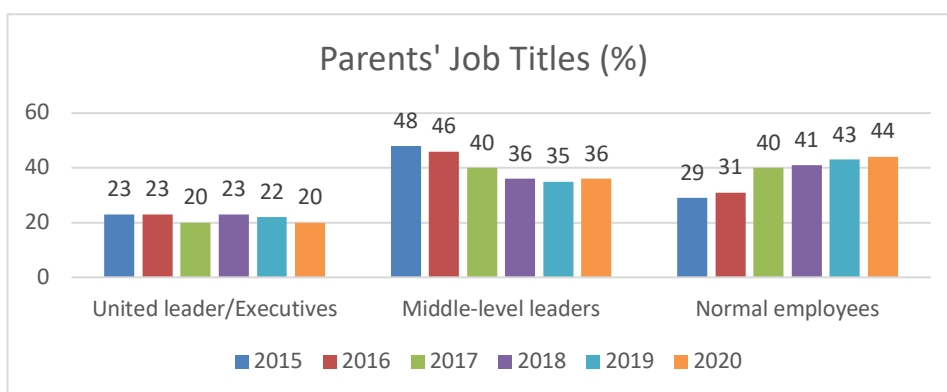


Figure 1. Parents’ Job Titles

Many drivers cause more and more popularized international study trends. From the macro perspective, enhanced China’s overall national strength has resulted in the improvement of people’s livelihood. At the same time, Chinese parents are paying more attention to their children’s education since studying abroad provides a higher degree in foreign languages and helps Chinese young people gain an international perspective when coping with things. The intention of going abroad from an expanded number of families might result from the increasing domestic tense of employment pressure as well. Moreover, closer economic and cultural integration among all countries, more open educational resources worldwide, and the ripen domestic education service industry have given various options to Chinese families and provide more convenience for middle-class families. (New Oriental Education, 2020)

## 2.2 Häme University of Applied Science

### 2.2.1 Goals of Chinese students' admission

After talking with HAMK's international marketing coordinator, Veera Sciacca, the author understands that the university's goal for Chinese student admission is to gain a steady and sustainable growth each year. In 2016, there were 3 Chinese students joined HAMK; in 2017, it became 6 Chinese; there was a slight decrease in 2018 when there were only 5; and when it came to 2019, 7 Chinese students got admitted. There is no such specific marketing goal and plan for HAMK to the Chinese market. However, the university wishes to have at least one or two students increase compared to the previous year.

### 2.2.2 Tuition fee and scholarship policy

The cost of investment is one of the most critical factors considered by students and their families. Finland has been providing free higher education for students from all over the world for years.

HAMK has been applying tuition fees and scholarship policy since 2017. The policy was updated in 2019, targeting the new non-EU/EEA students intaking from 2020 January, leaving the students who start their study in 2019 September or before remain following the first version of policy as what they have been doing from the beginning.

First of all, let us (don't use us!) look at how the initial version of the tuition fee and scholarship policy works. In terms of Bachelor's degree English-teaching programs, each non-European-Union/European-Economic-Area (henceforth non-EU/EEA) student is charged 8,700 euros per academic year. Non-EU/EEA students who meet the following conditions can enjoy tuition fee exemption:

- Have started their studies before tuition fee policy releasing
- Have accepted their study places in the 2016 joint application but did not register as present
- Have an EU blue card
- Have type A, P or P-EU residence permit in Finland
- Have an EU family member's residence permit in Finland

Most of the terms above are meaningless for most Chinese students in Finland since most of them who come to Finland for university are fresh graduates of high school. This means there is no way to own a long-term residence permit or have an existing EU family member for those populations. Students who earn at least 27 ECTS credits in the first academic semester (August to December) and 55 ECTS credits in each

academic year (August to July) are eligible for scholarship – 45% of the tuition fee paid (HAMK, 2020).

The latest version of the tuition fee policy has been changed due to the 2020 global public health emergency of the Covid-19 pandemic. Finland declared a state of emergency on the 16th of March until the 15th of June when the pandemic can be managed under regular power (Finnish government, 2020). The ensuing issues that have the most significant impact on international students are visa and border entry issues. Applications submitted by applicants from Finland's missions during the Covid-19 pandemic were suspended starting on March 19th by Finnish Immigration Service (2020). By the time this paper is conducted, Finnish missions accept student visa applications only when students can approve that it will be held offline in the university (Finland Abroad, 2020). To adjust to this situation and provide more convenience to international students, HAMK has offered a more flexible tuition fee payment approach. Based on increasing the annual tuition fee of 1,000 euros to 9,700 euros, new coming students from 2020 can pay the tuition fee in three installments. The first two installments refer to the two learning modules of the autumn semester, respectively, with 2425 euros. The third installment refers to the following spring semester in 2021, for which student needs to pay 4850 euros once without any more divided installments (HAMK, 2020).

Accordingly, the scholarship policy has changed along with the new tuition fee policy. From the 1st of January, 2020, a scholarship issued based on students' Finnish language level will be launched facing to the new intake students. HAMK (2020) categorizes two classes of scholarship. Students who pass Finnish level A2 are awarded 3,200 euros right after the first academic year; those who already gained level B1 can get 6,500 euros after the first academic year. However, students can only receive scholarships at most twice during their studies with the additional condition of completing 60 ECTS per academic year (HAMK, 2020).

### **Competitor research**

While HAMK is raising its tuition fee standard and modifying scholarship distribution, it is rather critical to take a look at how its competitors are performing. Whether these modified versions benefit HAMK or make it less attractive among all Finnish universities from a cost perspective? Please continue reading the updated policies as follow. A detailed analysis will be discussed in the following chapter.

In this part, several mainstream famous universities are picked and compared in terms of their tuition fee and scholarship policies. The majority of the listed universities have been modifying and adjusting the policies year by year. Therefore, the author only selected the latest version of policies from various institutions for reference and analysis.

**Metropolia UAS:** Altogether, six Bachelor's degree programs taught in English are offered by Metropolia UAS. It charges each Non-EU/EEA student from 10,000 euros to 12,000 euros per academic year, depending on the programs. Meanwhile, it also grants tuition payers with scholarships of 3,000 euros per academic year based on the Finnish language level. (Metropolia, 2020)

**Laurea UAS:** Laurea University of Applied Science offers nine English-teaching degree programs. It charges Non-EU/EEA students with 8,000 euros as annual tuition fees, regardless of study programs. According to the school's official page, the maximum size of the study grant is 10% of tuition fee paid, providing the student completes 60 ECTS credits during the past academic year. (Laurea, 2020)

**Haaga-Helia UAS:** At Haaga-Helia University of Applied Science, three Bachelor's programs are taught in English. Students are subject to 8,500 euros of tuition fee for the Business Administration program, and 9,500 euros for Hospitality Management and Sports Studies. Its scholarship system is slightly different from other UAS since it contains incentives for fast graduates. The scholarship is available for neither regular graduates nor fast graduates in their first year unless the student is going to finish his or her study in two semesters or even earlier. Since the second academic year begins, students can get a 20% refund of tuition fees as scholarship, as long as 55 ECTS credits are collected within the academic year. Students eligible for the scholarship can receive it annually since then. A fast graduate can receive 50% of the tuition fees when it goes to the final year. (Haaga-Helia, 2020)

**Tampere University:** At Tampere University (2020), the three Bachelor's programs taught in English all charge students 10,000 euros. Its scholarship program is categorized into three sectors: early-bird scholarship, tuition fee scholarships, and global student award for excellent students. This system is the most hierarchical, covering all stages of university stages and taking care of students with different study abilities. (Tampere University, 2020)

Early-bird scholarship: 50% of the first year's tuition fee for all tuition fee payers, if the applicant accepts the study place and pays 50% of the tuition fee within two weeks of receiving the letter of acceptance.

Tuition fee scholarship: cover 100% of the tuition fee for a three-year bachelor's degree program. It is assessed at the first-year admission of new coming students and automatically assumes the student will get the scholarship every following year. However, an annual appraisal is needed to assess if the student is eligible to be continuously awarded. Thus, to retain the full scholarship, the student needs to complete at least 55 ECTS within one academic year; conducting 50 to 54 ECTS ensures 50% of

scholarship; if one fails to conduct 50 ECTS, it will be canceled. (Tampere University, 2020)

Academic excellence scholarship: It not only covers 100% of the tuition fee in a three-year bachelor's degree program but also awards 7,000 euros to the student as a living expense bonus. The living expense bonus is only awarded once over the whole study period. It is worth noting that this kind of scholarship is rather difficult to gain. Usually, it is issued to the top student in each grade, plus two hard indexes: no less than 55 ECTS per academic year and Grade Point Average (henceforth GPA) no lower than 4 out of 5. (Tampere University, 2020)

Meantime, fee-paying students, referring to those who fail to get any scholarship at admission, still have a chance to apply for 50% of tuition fee scholarship. The criteria are that the students earn at least 60 ECTS within one academic year, and his or her GPA is no lower than 3 out of 5. All in all, the tuition fee and scholarship system of Tampere University has made a good effort to stimulate students' enthusiasm not only to gain more credits from a quantity's perspective but also to achieve better grades from quality's perspective. (Tampere University, 2020)

**Tampere UAS:** Even though Tampere University and the Tampere University of Applied Science (henceforth TAMK) now belong to the same group, but they do not share the same tuition fee and scholarship system.

TAMK's tuition fee and scholarship mechanism seem to be much simplified. The tuition fee paid by Bachelor students is 9,800 euros per academic year (Tampere University, 2020). Applicants accept the study place within one week after receiving acceptance letter receive "Early bird scholarship" to offset 50% of first year's tuition fee. From the second academic year to graduation, students who earn 60 ECTS per academic year can receive a 20%-50% Academic Award Scholarship. (Tampere University of Applied Sciences, 2020)

**LAB UAS:** The tuition fee of LAB UAS is 5,400 euros per academic year. Newcomers are not able to receive a scholarship. Students who earn at least 55 ECTS during the previous year are eligible for a 50% tuition fee reduction for the following year. (LAB University of Applied Science, 2020)

### 3 THEORY

#### 3.1 International Student Migration

International student migration (henceforth ISM) refers to the movement of students who seek education over one calendar year outside of their country of birth or residence (King, R. & Raghuram, P. 2013, p. 127-137).

Dominating international students receiving countries include the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Australia. In contrast, new faces emerge on the international mobility education market, such as India and China (UNESCO, n.d.). A change taking place is that most countries on the data recorded level are receiving more international students these years than in the past decades, which means it has undoubtedly become a global phenomenon.

International students are usually taken as short-term visitors instead of migrants. As a matter of fact, international mobility students should be categorized as “migrants” since they face similar problems and situations as immigrants face. Building brand new social networks, facing problems of cultural adaptations, as well as the stress caused by cultural differences, apply to both international student groups and immigrant groups. It contributes to a better understanding of the concept proposed by Elizabeth Murphy-Lejeun in the book “Student Mobility and Narrative in Europe: The New Strangers” that European mobility students should be a part of migratory elites (Murphy-Lejeun, 2002). The restriction of this theory is that it limits the target group within European students only; therefore, whether it is applicable throughout the world remains to be proved.

Another argument to explain why international students is one kind of migrant is that quite a few international students are ready to and have equipped themselves to the local employment market. International students tend to have more crisis awareness of being foreigners in a country other than their homeland; thus, they devote more time and effort to their study life or working life. (D. Hazen & C. Alberts, 2006)

Until now, un abundant research and analysis have been done to theorize ISM. Other than the hypothesis mentioned above, other theories have been investigated by different scholars as well. For instance, in Professor Allan Mackay Findlay’s theory of supply and demand-side of the international mobility student education market, he considers ISM a complicated interaction between international students and higher education institutions. Higher education institutions gain financially supported by international students and their families. Meanwhile, international students show great interest and motivation to get schooling from the other side. The defect of this theory keeps the same as above, limited to the geographical location of the higher education institutions, which are only in the United Kingdom. (Riaño & Piguet, 2016)

### 3.2 Push and Pull Hypothesis

Push and pull migration theory is also known as Lee's Theory of Migration. It was first introduced in 1965 by Everett Spurgeon Lee, professor of Sociology at the University of Georgia. However, this was not Lee's solo contribution to this topic. As a matter of fact, Push and Pull migration

theory took shape since the 19th century and was connected to Ravenstein's well-known "Laws of migration" (Ravenstein, 1889). In "Laws of Migration", Ravenstein proposed that there are two elements – two opposing forces at the same time – lead people to leave their country of origin for a new destination. One of them is the force that "pushes" potential migrants to feel like leaving their home country; the other force "pulls" migrants to the potential destination country. In Ravenstein's Law, an external influencing factor, the pulling factor, is stressed as the principal reason to cause migration (Ravenstein, 1889).

In the 1960s, Everett Spurgeon Lee enriched Ravenstein's Law of Migration theory and made it more comprehensive. He stated that the internal factor – pushing factor – is also critical during the migration decision making process. Generally speaking, push factors are unfavorable and adverse factors which, in a way, drive people, migrants, away to a new place for a better or only fresh new living condition. Pull factors tend to be more positive, and positive factors embrace people from leaving or attract people from other places. (Lee, 1966)

International students have similar attributes with migrants, from deciding to leave the country of origin to choose a host country to continue life or further education. Leaving for a brand new and strange cultural environment must be uncomfortable for the majority of people. It means people have to jump out of the comfort zone and be confronted with all sorts of challenges: a language barrier, homesickness, losing a sense of belonging, and possible discrimination. Nevertheless, people are still willing to move, so it means some reasons make students ready to adapt to a new education system. On the other hand, the decision-maker will not be that determined and decisive if there are not enough positive factors related to the destination country that is pulling him or her to visit.

According to Tim Mazzarol and Geoffrey Soutar, it takes three steps for an international student to conduct a study-abroad decision (Mazzarol, 1997). However, the specific steps vary in some details when they appeared in Mazzarol's essays in different years. In his 1997 theory, he pointed out that the three stages are respectively:

1. A decision made to continue higher education;
2. Accept overseas study rather than domestic study;
3. The choice made on the host country (Mazzarol, 1997).

One year later, in his statement of "the process when international students choose a final study destination", it declared that there should be at least three distinct steps (Mazzarol, 1998). The first step then explained was to choose overseas study rather than domestic study, which is the same as step two before, but the statement finishes by choosing an institution. To sum up, the author considers four stages that exist in the process of study abroad decision making: decide to continue education >>

decide to study abroad >> choose study destination >> choose study institution. Among all four steps, the first step is least important since our hypothesis is based on the study of international students as a group, that is to say, migrating to study can be seen as a condition. In the fourth stage, if a place can have an ideal institution for the student, it is a plus point. In other words, the school's outstanding advantages are adding more "pulling power" to the migrant destination (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002).

Everett Spurgeon Lee established four categories of factors which may impact on the decision-making process. The first two factors associated with the area of origin and the area of destination, respectively. Lee thinks there are both positive and negative factors in each place that are shaking the decisions. Usually, people have a better knowledge of their original place but not the destination place. If it is under the condition of migrants being unfamiliar with the destination place, likely, migration will not happen, at least not yet. Other than the above two factors, the intervening obstacle is another real issue that needs to be considered before a migration occurs. The financial issue, distance issue, and many other issues can be intervening obstacles between blueprint and reality. (Lee, 1966)

Last but not least, everything in the world varies from the person due to different personalities and personal life experiences. Some people can quickly adapt to the changing living environment, relying on the outgoing characteristic; some might feel it difficult to switch into another lifestyle all of a sudden. A few personal factors come with one throughout their lives, while another few might fade or be changed by the time goes and by the lessons gained. (Lee, 1966)

### 3.3 Cultural Theory

According to the White Paper (2020), the importance of national culture ranks fourth among factors that influence the Chinese students' and families' decision-making process. In the multiple-answer questionnaire, 47% of respondents in the study-abroad intended group showed that they consider the general cultural background of the destination and whether it meets the development requirement of the student's particular personalities and preferences (New Oriental Education, 2020).

One explanation of culture is that, it is the way of life insisted of common characteristics and traditions of a particular collective group of people at a particular time (Cambridge Dictionary, 2020). At the same time, culture can also mean the specific traditions, beliefs, ways of living, social organizations of a particular group or nation. Cultural shock is caused by the phenomenon in the second explanation of "culture" and is one thing everyone who comes to a new country face. It shows up and impacts on student migrants' lives profoundly. This section will explain the significant dimensions of cultural shock while trying to do some comparisons between Chinese and Finnish cultures.

### 3.3.1 Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions

Geert Hofstede has studied culture for years and classified national culture differences into mainly six dimensions: Power distance, Individualism, Masculinity, Uncertainty Avoidance, Long-term Orientation and Indulgence (See figure 2).

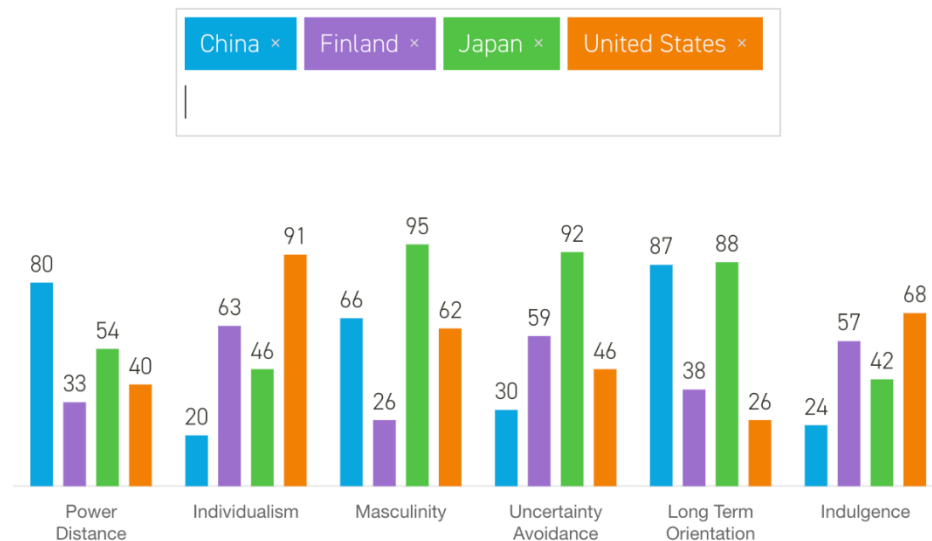


Figure 2. Hofstede's cultural dimensions

#### Power Distance Index (PDI)

The power distance index refers to the degree in which the less powerful people accept the power is distributed unequally in society (Hofstede, 2011). It reveals the inequality from the downside of organizations, and even family can be counted. In high PDI cultures, younger people and juniors of the workplace are expected to respect the older ones and those with higher positions. China scores 80 in this dimension, so it presents high power distance culture well. With everyone following the implicit rules of respecting seniors in the matter of age or qualifications. With the concentrated central power control, people have been educated to observe the existed order. As a result, people choose to adjust themselves to it instead of overthrowing the status quo. These characteristics of Chinese culture are profoundly affected by Confucianism, which initially proposed the ideology of social order two thousand years ago: children respect parents, students respect teachers, courtiers respect the emperor. By following this value, Confucius believes that all the society members shall be willing to learn from the person of virtue and talent.

On the other hand, Finland gets only 33 on PDI, and it means Finnish society has realized equality and its people pursue it at the same time (Hofstede, 2011). In Finnish organizations, we rarely see tremendous

hierarchy centralized powers, information is delivered horizontally, and each one has their voice.

### **Individualism vs Collectivism Index (IDV)**

The individualism and collectivism index measures how heavily the individuals in the society identify themselves as independent rather than members of a particular group. The rationale of identifying this is the extent of interdependence among the different social members that the society can retain (Hofstede Insights, n.d.). Individualists tend to express their feelings and putting forward their needs ahead of group benefits and needs. In contrast, the principal of a collectivistic culture tends to be valuing group benefits over individual benefits. In individualistic cultures, people are educated to get over problems more independently than collectivists are told to be since collectivists carry out production and living activities more collaboratively in the form of a group or as a family.

As is shown on the bar chart, Finland scores 63 in terms of individualism while China scores only 20 (Hofstede Insights, n.d.). It means that China is a high collectivist country. The definition of "family" and "in-group" differs from both cultures, and it may influence the students' and families' minds when considering study destinations. A narrower family concept is widely accepted in Finland. According to the immigration legislation, it is officially stated that the only spouse, registered or cohabiting partner, child, and a guarded child under 18 years old are family members (Finnish Immigration Service, 2020). However, what Chinese always seen as "family" consists of at least grandparents, sometimes other relatives such as cousins, aunts, and uncles. An "in-group" indicates the unit, which includes members who share similar values, convey loyalty, pride, and cohesiveness (Grove, n.d.). This is why while individualists are responsible only for taking care of themselves plus their direct family. Collectivists have more responsibilities on other members who are in the same "in-group" with them.

### **Masculinity vs Femininity (MAS)**

The index of masculinity does not equal to the assessment of man's power or gender equality. In fact, it reflects more whether society is an achievement-driven society, while the gender issue is also considered. In masculine cultures, strong and outstanding people are admired; in feminine cultures, knowing how to enjoy life is more important than high achievements in career. (Hofstede Insights, n.d.)

China is considered a masculine society with a score of 66 (Hofstede Insight, n.d.). It means success could be the thing which brings one the right the speak. At the workplace, employees are asked to be efficient and devoted to the work and the company; at school, students are told, "Grades speak louder than anything else". In China, the general atmosphere encourages novices in the workplace to learn to adapt to pressure such as overtime

work, to think of pressure as the energy that can be turned into motivation, and to see overwork as a potential treasure for the future career.

On the contrary, Finland can be seen as a representative of feminine culture since it gets a shallow score – 26, in this index (Hofstede Insights, n.d.). In reality, Finnish people pursue the purpose of work serving life – work to earn money and then improve life quality. In this kind of society, a good leader ought to always support everyone and appreciate good teamwork. Also, employee wellbeing is paid attention to because a feminine society tends to create a comfortable working climate.

### **Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI)**

This dimension describes the degree in which the people belonged to a particular culture are comfortable with uncertainty elements in their lives. Anything like changes and ambiguity in the society or personal life can be called uncertainty, yet uncertainty does not equal to risks (Hofstede, 2011). Representatives of countries with high uncertainty avoidance are Japan and France, which have strict and clear rules and structure of social functions to ensure the majority of the situations happened are under control and within the structure as declared.

Finland scores 59 on UAI, which shows relatively high uncertainty avoidance tendency. The traits of high uncertainty countries are: strictly following rules and show intolerance of unusual behaviors, the clear dividing line between absolute "truth" and "false" and punctuality (Hofstede, 2011). These attributes highly comply with the social situation in Finland (Hofstede, 2011).

According to Hofstede's research, Chinese culture countries get a lower score on the UAI score list (Hofstede, 2010). Chinese show to feel comfortable with ambiguous on either implicit expression of language or flexible practice of regulations. At the same time, trust and honesty depend on the situation, context, and timing.

### **Long-term vs Short-term Orientation (LTO)**

A long-term orientation culture is willing to give up short-term interests when preparing for the future. In this kind of culture, persistence and firmness are highly pursued. Also, flexibility to adapt to the environment is common to see. Another phenomenon is that education is encouraged heavily in long-term orientated cultures, being seen as one of the best ways to earn one's future (Hofstede Insights, n.d.).

As is shown in the chart, China is a representative of a long-term orientated country with a score of 87, meaning that it is rather pragmatic. Like China's attribute of low uncertainty avoidance, this kind of culture does not usually believe in absolute truth; instead, context and the actual situation are

highly considered when making judgments. People with long-term orientation are ready to do savings or investments for a protracted war. (Hofstede Insights, n.d.)

According to Hofstede's study, Finland gets a score of 38, which shows that Finnish people are performing hugely in a normative way in each aspect of their life. For instance, people from a short-term orientated culture tend to focus on short-term benefits and achievement. They are less possibly willing to save for things to happen in the far future. When the author worked part-time as a restaurant worker in Finland, it was interesting to see that the end of each month is always the peak when the number of restaurant customers who fail to pay due to zero balance at the bank. Even if running out of money at the end of payment month, however, the situation of no balance left is not common to see. Meanwhile, employees can be likely to switch work types and workplaces easier in short-term oriented working culture. (Hofstede Insights, n.d.)

### **Indulgence vs Restraint**

This index reflects the degree a society allows free expression of natural human desires associated with having fun in life. It is a new index added in 2010 to Hofstede's theory somehow as a complementary to the Long-Term Orientation Index. In an indulgent society, people tend to have more freedom to enjoy life without caring too much about social restrictions. But in a restraint society, people's natural desires and needs are controlled by regulations or unwritten social rules. In general, Asian and Eastern European countries are more restraint while American, Western European and some African countries are more likely to be indulgent (Hofstede, 2011)

China is a restraint country, which can be seen from its low score of 24 (Hofstede Insight, n.d.). Some characteristics of restraint culture are lower importance of leisure activities, more likely to remember negative emotions, and having a less happy population (Hofstede, 2011). Traditional Chinese culture is based on Confucianism, of which the most core opinion is to practice abstinence. It advocates to regulate human desires with etiquette and justice and to regulate human desires within reasonable limits so that human desires can be coordinated between society and individuals. For instance, being full meets the normal human desire, but overeating is seen as losing the balance between desire and regulation. Thus, there are fewer obese people, stricter sexual norms and lower birthrate at developed restraint areas (Hofstede, 2011).

Finland is much more indulgent compared to China. Finnish people tend to be more willing to enjoy life at their wish. In such a kind of country, freedom of speech is highly valued too. Unlike restraint countries, maintaining social order is not the most prior thing. Linked to the short-term orientation attribute, most Finnish people spend money without too much consideration. A very intuitive culture shock international students

might face on this topic is that Chinese students would be surprised about the Finnish party culture. Many Chinese who come to Finland first consider it a waste of time and energy to go to a bar only to get drunk. (Hofstede, 2011)

### 3.3.2 Controversy and limitations

Interestingly, the research from Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness (henceforth GLOBE) project 2004, shows the total opposite result from Hofstede's research. The UAI of China from GLOBE points out that China is a highly uncertain avoidant society since Chinese leaders and managers exhibit strong control over their employees by establishing various rules and delivering less trust interpersonally. The argumentation that "Guanxi (relationship)" culture in China is critical in every aspect is proposed to prove the less trust of inter-group relationships likewise (GLOBE, 2004).

What is more, Hofstede classified Chinese culture, English-speaking, and Nordic countries as to lower uncertainty avoidant countries. However, in the GLOBE research, China, German-speaking, and Scandinavian countries tend to highly avoid uncertainty (J. House, J. Hanges, Javidan, W. Dorfman & Gupta, 2004). This contradiction between different researches means that the criteria and starting point of each might differ. In addition, the different approaches of sampling and conducting research or questionnaires result in such kinds of disagreements. From modern cultural integration's perspective, Hofstede's theory does not acknowledge cultural diversity. All the data was collected only from the employees of one company -- IBM, which makes the sample size too small and incomprehensive (Hofstede & Minkov, 2010).

## 4 RESEARCH METHOD

Finland has not been a mainstream study destination for Chinese students. There is not sufficient data from all sorts of previous Chinese students' overseas study reports and Chinese students' situation in Finland reports. In this study, the author firstly investigates what the considerations Chinese students and their families take in real life are and what factors prompt or, to some extent, make them hesitate to decide to study in Finland.

After getting information from the micro perspective, an interview was conducted to provide a bigger picture of Sino-Finland's higher education interaction situation and future blueprint.

## 4.1 Qualitative Research

Qualitative research allows in-depth and comprehensive understand of the context of events and topics. This paper has adopted interview as qualitative research technique.

### 4.1.1 Introduction of interviewee

In this research, the author interviewed Mr. Gao Yuhang, head of the Education Section of Chinese Embassy in Finland. The Education Section of Chinese Embassy mainly takes care of education related affairs, at the same time provide support to Chinese overseas students. The busiest section in the Chinese Embassy might be Education Section. The first reason is the steep rise of Chinese students studying abroad. Secondly, the proportion of government-sponsored students is high due to China's urgent need of nation construction talents. These government-sponsored students are under Embassy Education Section's responsibility. Also, the Education Section is the contact agency between overseas Chinese and hometown news and development.

### 4.1.2 Objectives of the interview

The interview was organized aiming at giving opinions on Sino-Finland education exchange and communication from a macro perspective. Specifically, the author wishes to unearth some phenomena and issues that the general public cannot observe.

Through the interview, the author would like to achieve several sub-objectives. These are:

1. To learn about the international activities that promote educational exchanges and study abroad activities between China and Finland;
2. To learn about the actual of tuition fee policy;
3. The future trend of Finnish higher education in the Chinese market at post-COVID-19 era;
4. To specify the function and responsibilities of Education Office of the Chinese Embassy in Finland.

### 4.1.3 Interview process

To get in touch with Mr. Gao, the author firstly found his contact information via official website of Chinese Embassy in Finland. In the invitation email, the author introduced research purpose and question proposals. Later on, we have agreed that the interview would be conducted online via WeChat voice call since the interviewee was on holiday. At the beginning of the interview, Mr. Gao was informed that the whole process would be recorded through audio recording. The language

used in the interview process was in Chinese but all the content has been translated into an English version.

## 4.2 Quantitative Research

Quantitative research is a mean to test hypotheses and explain phenomena by gathering, analyzing, and classifying data. In this study, a quantitative research method of conducting surveys is used to figure out more precisely what the influencers are for Chinese students from deciding to leave their homeland to choose Finland as the destination.

### 4.2.1 Research objectives

By issuing questionnaires, this research aims to analyze the characteristics of Chinese students studying in Finland, explore the factors that push Chinese students to leave the home country, and the factors that Finland attracts them to come. In the end, the questionnaire collected feedback on whether there was any compromise due to failure to meet expectations.

### 4.2.2 Sampling and data collection

The sample population refers to all Chinese who were and are experiencing higher education in Finland. All degree program students, exchange students, researchers with Ph.D. degrees and above, as well as other scholars, are all included in the sample population. The survey was set to last for five days, started from 8th August to 13th August.

Since the sample population is Chinese students and scholars, the author opted for WeChat as the leading platform to spread questionnaires. On WeChat, there are various regional sub-branches of Chinese Students and Scholars Association groups. The author created two forms with the same content. However, via different platforms, one of them was bilingual form from Google Form for participants outside of mainland China, and the other was a Chinese form from Fan-Qie Form to provide convenience to participants in Mainland China. Since the data was collected from two different platforms, the final data sorting and verification were done manually. Meanwhile, this survey also adopted a cash reward mechanism to achieve the broadest possible penetration rate.

An online survey is the most suitable way at the moment, as it is efficient and wide-reached via hyperlink forwarding. It can also avoid face-to-face meetings under the Covid-19 pandemic situation. Another consideration in choosing the online questionnaire is that our respondents include Chinese who have completed or will continue their education. Some people may have returned to China after graduation, which will cause jet lag. With the online questionnaires, respondents can fill in the form at any time when they are available.

By 13<sup>th</sup> of August, altogether 91 valid questionnaires were collected. The number of samples is not very big but fortunately it has covered comprehensive stages of degrees, genders, majors and so forth.

#### 4.2.3 Measurements

To get more details from Chinese students who come to study in Finland, the author required questionnaire respondents to fill in gender, age, education stage they had or are currently having, education field, university, and tuition payment situation as background information. When dividing the age group, the author abandoned the traditional Chinese way of age calculation, which is usually one or two years more than one's international age to unify and clarify. The target group is divided into five age groups: under 18, 19~22, 23~25, 26~30, and over 30 years old. There are three categories of gender: male, female, and prefer not to say. The degree of higher education was treated under four stages: exchange program, Bachelor's degree, Master's degree, and Ph.D. and above. The respondents could add according to the reality that if they join from other programs or projects. In the "major" column, respondents can answer freely in a short text format.

The second part contains several checkbox questions. All questions refer to the previous literature review and the White Paper (2020). By analyzing answers to the questions in section two, we can somehow understand more about Chinese students' mental activities – that is to say – their considerations affect their decisions of choosing Finland as their next education destination.

#### 4.3 Limitations

While planning the interview, the author was concerned about whether the invitation could be viewed and answered by the head of the Education Section. It did not go as smoothly as always, especially in the beginning, since Mr. Gao was on holiday. With the author's continuous effort and Mr. Gao's kind understanding, we agreed to have a short call even if he was wholly occupied during vacation. If there will be another similar research in the future, the author will send an invitation letter at least one month ahead to ensure that the interview is conducted smoothly without affecting the personal life of the interviewee.

Besides, the survey might not cover enough respondents, so that it has limitations too. Several elements can explain the reasons.

First of all, the questionnaire spreading platform WeChat itself is a very closed social media community. Unlike Facebook groups, people can find certain themed groups by searching for names. However, on WeChat,

groups are only available to people who are shared group contact cards or invited by in-group members. This situation has resulted from the attribute of WeChat and somehow is linked to Chinese culture's collectivism.

Secondly, the number of exchange students takes a considerable proportion of the whole population of Chinese students in Finland. This group of students is not 100% of our target respondents since they do not necessarily have to "choose not to continue study in home country".

Moreover, the fact shows that the questionnaire's answer rate depends on whether the respondents see the benefits of doing a thing. In the beginning, the author shared the hyperlink without "red packet money" as a bonus, and the answer rate was shallow. The rate tripled when the author started giving out bonuses. Even if the amount of money was minimal, participants still gain a sense of engagement and begin to be willing to help.

## 5 SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

Mazzarol & Soutar (2002) categorized five influences which motivate students to study overseas:

1. Local education level is lower than overseas in a particular area;
2. Students cannot quickly get a study place domestically;
3. The wanted study program is not available in the home country;
4. Students would like to get to know the western world;
5. Intention to migrate.

Mazzarol and Soutar's theory has been two decades away from us so that it is lack of modern knowledge and elements. The five factors are not divided into "push" and "pull" sections, but only general descriptions related to the educational field. Integrated with research results, the situation in reality, and the author's own experience, in this chapter, we will discuss the factors that influence students to make the decision of studying abroad.

	<b>Factors</b>	<b>Rate</b>
<b>Push factors</b>	Experience new culture	50.55%
	High level of competition/pressure	32.97%
	Language practice	24.18%
	Chinese education system is not suitable	18.68%
	Avoid Chinese university entrance examinations	17.58%
	Environmental issue	13.19%
	I will still continue study in China after exchange	23.08%
	Family gathering	3.3%
	Other	12.9%
<b>Pull factors</b>	Educational level	62.64%
	Tuition fee & scholarship policy	50.55%
	Security issue	49.45%
	Advantages of profession	23.08%
	National culture	19.78%
	Natural Environment	18.68%
	Future employment recognition	15.38%
	Language environment	13.19%
	Living expenses	12.09%
	National comprehensive power	5.49%
	International political situation	2.2%

Table 1. Summary of push and pull factors influence Chinese students' decisions to study in Finland

## 5.1 Push Factors

### 5.1.1 Curiosity of foreign culture

Over 50% of the research participants reflected that one of the three most essential factors drive them not to continue higher education in China is the curiosity of a new culture. This is the trend of Chinese young generations since they grow up in a globalized culture background. Western cultures, south-east cultures, or other exotic cultures have integrated with local cultures firmly and also adapted themselves to Chinese citizens. When people are familiar with the popular parts of a culture, they will want to understand the deeper cultural roots and connotations.

Chinese inhabitants have less international mobility compared to Europeans. Two influences result in this kind of situation. Objectively speaking, Chinese nationals are required to have travel permission from most of the travel destinations. This has added more time costs and money cost for international traveling. Chinese are more internally mobile than internationally mobile because the size of the country is almost equal to that of Continental Europe. Due to this reason, traveling abroad is something that is not very usual to happen in daily life, and this has stimulated Chinese people's curiosity about foreign cultures at the very beginning. Nowadays, the first stage of sightseeing in foreign culture exploration has almost passed. The second stage of in-depth knowledge and insights prompted Chinese people to study abroad, receive education, and even integrate into the local culture.

### 5.1.2 High level of competition and pressure

China is well-known for its harsh competition of the University Entrance Exam, which is called "Gaokao" in Chinese. The full name of Gaokao is the National College Entrance Examination, the most crucial selective examination in students' study life. In the mainstream mindset, Gaokao is an event that can determine a student's whole life. Regardless of whether the students play an average level during the exams, their future education or career is closely associated with the exam result. The process of preparing entrance exams is a painful memory for all Chinese who experienced it. As shown in Table 1, 32.97% of the participants stopped the further study in China due to the excessive competition, and 17.58% wanted to avoid university entrance exams or postgraduate entrance exams.

The core contradiction of Chinese higher education is the contradiction between supply and demand. This results in a high level of competition and study pressure for Chinese high school students. Chinese college admission rate is rather low every year. According to the Ministry of

Education of People's Republic of China (2020), the total registered number of national college entrance examination applicants is 10.71 million, 400 thousand more than the number of 2019. It has exceeded the historical record of 10.5 million created in 2008. In 2019, 9.15 million students were accepted and enrolled nationwide, so the actual admission rate of university and college was 88.75% (eol.cn, 2019). However, this number includes both undergraduate and junior college institutions. The actual undergraduate admission rate was only 41.83% (eol.cn, 2019). Unlike Finland, junior college education or so-called vocational education has much less reputation than undergraduate education in Chinese society. Only the students with inferior grades have no choice but to choose vocational education. Combined with what we discussed in the previous chapters of "cultural dimensions", China's social attributes of "long-term orientation" and "masculinity" reflect that it is a culture that highly values education and academic achievements (Hofstede, 2011).

### 5.1.3 Language practice

Even if Finland is a non-English speaking country, English is very popular among Finns. Finnish people's English proficiency ranks number 7<sup>th</sup> among over 100 countries in the world, according to the English Proficiency Index held by EF Education (2019). Besides, Finland offers numerous of international student friendly English-teaching programs. English is the lingua franca in nowadays world, so in Finland, Chinese students do not have to worry that they have to face language barrier between Chinese and the local language.

Finnish institutions offer numerous English teaching programs, especially universities of applied sciences. Generally speaking, Chinese students will participate in language training such as IELTS or TOEFL before studying abroad. Not having to learn a new language can be said to be an advantage of Finnish education.

Another opportunity to provide a language environment for Chinese students is the Chinese group size in Finland is not as big as them in other countries. In some small cities or towns in Finland, there might be only few Chinese students. Without outside support, Chinese students naturally can only communicate with their foreign classmates in English. Those who are self-motivated and ambitious would like to come to Finland to challenge themselves.

### 5.1.4 Employment pressure

Entering an ideal university does not guarantee students an ideal and easy career path. After entering the junior or senior year, Chinese students will have to face fierce employment competition. According to 199IT.com (2019), "2019 Employment Report of Chinese College Students" published

by Mycos – a third-party authoritative data organization (2019) revealed that there were 7.53 million fresh graduates altogether on 2018, 73.6% of them failed to find any jobs, including part-time jobs. Since it is nearly impossible to count the actual employment rate, this figure came from students' internship registration, which means the actual rate may be even lower.

In addition, due to a large number of job applicants, their academic qualifications have become the default option for competition. Bachelor's degree has been popularized and is not a plus point anymore. In 2020, 3.41 million graduates registered to apply for the Master's Degree, but only 30% of them can be admitted (The State Council of the People's Republic of China, 2020). Hence, all these factors have made the path to high education more challenging to go, in China. Under this situation, some Chinese students tend to try other ways to continue education and temporarily relieve employment pressure.

#### 5.1.5 Environmental issue

China has been experiencing severe environmental challenges in recent decades. In previous centuries, China did not have enough conditions to drive industrial revolutions. Therefore, Chinese national leaders of the 21st century aimed to catch up with developed countries in the shortest time. Within twenty years, China is completing three industrial revolutions and the most advanced technological revolutions. Due to the vast gap between the wealthy and impoverished regions, the progress and quality of the industrial revolution are very uneven. The most significant impact of unbalanced and low-quality development on society is excessive use of resources and pollution to the environment. Because of the rapid development speed, manufacturers have not been educated about how to produce environmental-friendly, and the public have not established a sound environmental awareness. Over 13% of the research participants expressed their worries to hometown's environment and wanted to go abroad.

#### 5.1.6 Education level at home country

The level of Chinese education at all stages has developed at a fast pace during the past 20 years. China has taken 26 seats out of the world's top 500 universities in the QS World University Rankings (2020). In Shanghai Rankings (Academic Ranking of World Universities, 2020), Chinese higher education institutions occupied 58 seats out of the top 500. Nevertheless, the domestic higher education is still relatively less developed compared with developed countries, considering there is no advantage in the number of top academic universities. The United States remains top in terms of the higher education area, and it owns more than half of the top 10 universities in the world.

Suppose a student is gifted at art and interested in classic painting. In that case, he or she might be willing to go to Accademia Delle Belle Arti di Firenze in Italy, the birthplace of the Renaissance rather than China Academy of Art, which is also one of the top 3 art academies in China. Specific to other majors, such as Artificial Intelligence and modern manufacturing, China is not in the first place. Going outside of the existed familiar operation environment can help students change the way of thinking, jump out of the box, and learn more advanced knowledge and skills. Not being able to get the most original and the best sources of education is pushing students out of their home country and chasing their dreams at the most suitable places.

## 5.2 Pull factors

### 5.2.1 Education level at host country

Finland is well-known as an education powerhouse. Even if Finnish higher education is not as well-known as its basic education (especially early childhood education), it still delivers the core spirit of Finnish education to the world: freedom, equality, respect, and trust. This is a standard that China has not yet reached.

Actually, no matter how much one researches about the destination country, there has always been knowledge bias caused by information asymmetry. Chinese people hear the word "Finnish education" almost as frequently as "Finnish basic education" on Chinese social media. Most people do not care about the slight quality difference between each education stage. They are still willing to come to Finland's high reputation for education as a whole package. Besides, anyone who knows a little about Finnish education is deeply attracted by its flexible and thorough system that allows free and open and access between research-based institutions and practice-based institutions. For international students who do not speak Finnish and have minimal choices among research universities, the university of applied sciences can also offer proper education for both Bachelor's and Master's Degree studies, whose degrees are fully recognized worldwide.

While being asked "what is the most attractive point of Finnish higher education", the answers given by questionnaire respondents were very impressive. The answers somehow reflected the core spirits of Finnish education. It is noted that one-fourth of the Chinese students appreciate the free and open academic atmosphere in Finland. Some respondents mentioned the teaching content and format are designed in a humanized and student-friendly way instead of forced-feeding to follow up on the schedule. Meanwhile, Finnish education is excellent because it takes care

of all the details, from teaching methods to learning feedback. It takes into consideration students' feeling of studying and put feedback into practice.

### 5.2.2 Tuition fee and scholarship environment

Nearly half of the questionnaire respondents considered tuition and scholarship policy as one of the most influential elements of choosing a destination. The study's cost is associated with the financial situation of a family and is always influential in the study abroad decision-making process. In the Survey of Education Situation for Chinese Students Study in Finland, the tuition fee is highly valued by respondents. One of Finland's most significant advantages as a study destination was, its undergraduate education was free of charge until 2017. Since 2017, all the universities and universities of Applied Science have started to charge a fee of thousands of euros as annual tuition fees. Regardless of other factors, the amount itself is pretty acceptable and low among western countries.

The target group of students attracted by Finland is significantly different from those of classic English-speaking study destinations. Countries like the United States and the United Kingdom charge prohibitive tuition fees; their living expenses such as accommodation are higher than Finland too. Families who send their children to English-speaking countries most likely come from the wealthiest class in China. Their mindset when measuring countries can be classified into the following categories:

1. To gild oneself – to get a diploma from an overseas well-known institution
2. To let their children receive an elite education
3. To improve the level of their children's social circle
4. For immigration purpose
5. Follow the crowd blindly to reduce the cost of time and energy

On the contrary, the most direct reason why Finland attracted Chinese was straightforward: free and high-quality education. From the author's knowledge, Chinese students who came to Finland at the beginning of the 21st century could hardly receive family support. Finland is more popular among the middle class in Chinese social wealth classes than the rich. However, the range is still very board. People who came earlier than 2017 (the year when all universities started to charge tuition fees) did not necessarily need financial aid from their family since some of them earned their pocket money by doing a part-time job. Students who come after 2017 cannot afford entirely by work-study. In this case, the family needs to support the student in tuition fees or living expenses. Nevertheless, the rate of Chinese students doing a part-time job is still much lower than in other international student groups.

What came together with tuition fee policy was the scholarship policy towards tuition fee payers. The scholarship was meant to act as a buffer in

the newly implemented tuition policy in Finland. Additionally, it actively stimulated Chinese students' motivation to study since they would like to reduce the tuition burden. In general, the amount of scholarship Finnish universities offer is substantial and Chinese students are willing to work hard for it.

### 5.2.3 Security issue

Whether in the White Paper survey (2020) for the entire Chinese student group or in the author's questionnaire for the Chinese student group in Finland, the security issue is always ranked second most important among all elements that influence Chinese students while choosing study. Over 70% of the Chinese respondents in the survey view the security factor as the top three most important factors within consideration. Security has been a fundamental concern for all international students, and it is now treated equally critical for both male and female students (Tekle & Vanessa & Ruth, 2006, p. 53).

Being exposed to a dangerous environment is risky and not cost-effective. The safety and security problems international students will face include the crime rate, the possibility of natural disasters, racial discrimination, and other issues. As Chinese students and many other Asian-face students have shared experience of being targets of criminals abroad, together with the rising cases of discrimination towards Asian-face people, Chinese families are weighing national security level as one of the core criteria. Fortunately, Finland owns blessed geographical conditions where there are almost no significant natural disasters. In the World Risk Index (IRDR, 2016), Finland belongs to the least risky country group due to exposure and vulnerability. Meanwhile, Finland's crime rate has one of the lowest in the world (NUMBEO, 2020).

### 5.2.4 Advantages of profession

There are several high-level education fields in Finland and they are attracting students from all over the world to learn the most advanced knowledge, skills and concepts. Among all questionnaire respondents, 23% expressed that the profession's advantage is one of the three most important factors that pull them here. Edunation (n.d.) has analyzed the top 5 most popular jobs and the top 5 most promising study fields in Finland. After combining the two, it is not difficult to find the majors that Finland is powered on and employment friendly. Most Chinese students in Finland study in the Engineering and Technical Science related fields such as Information Technology, Computer Science, Automation Engineering, and Environmental Engineering. The second most popular major among Chinese is Business Administration. Interdisciplinary majors like Business Information Technology and Information System appear to be frequent on the questionnaire analysis list. What matches the prosperity of the

particular education fields mentioned above is Finland's strong industrial support. Information Technology industry is one of the advantages of Finland and its innovative startup eco-system has been world-famous. This kind of inspiring entrepreneurship also pulls international students to come to Finland to study business and realize their startup dream.

#### 5.2.5 National culture

In recent years, Finland has shown up frequently on the Hot Search List of Chinese social media for different national cultural characteristics. The youth generation living in the city's hustle and bustle life is feeling lonely due to the fast-paced modern society and a more self-centered independent life. Also, social phobia is emerging since people are tired of dealing with human relationships. It caught everybody's eyes when Finland appeared on the Internet with an image of Finnish people keeping two meters away from each other outside of the bus station under heavy snow. People who are not social yearn for the Finnish style life in which one only needs to take care of themselves. The Finnish culture element of "allowing people to do things alone" has become well-known and popular in China. "Jing Fen" – the latest Chinese internet language related to Finland – means a person who is spiritually a Finn, generally refers to a group of people who do not like to socialize and value personal space remarkably as Finns do. More importantly, this word is always used joyfully.

Finland is a new study-abroad destination that remains to be developed further. In fact, some of the Chinese students picked Finland for its pure local cultural environment. Corresponding to the push factor of "curiosity of foreign culture", some students are willing to come to avoid sticking together only with people with the same cultural background since the Chinese people group is rather small. In this way, they can involve in local culture better and faster.

#### 5.2.6 Natural environment

An excellent natural environment somehow influences the residents' living standards. One out of six participants think fresh air and a beautiful natural environment are essential for them to choose the study destination. According to the "International Students Migration" theory, international students are more like migrants than short-term visitors. People living long-term in a country usually appreciate more a good surrounding environment. Finland owns hundreds of thousands of lakes and a 75% forest coverage rate (Ministry of Agriculture and Forest, 2019). It also has lakes everywhere and the air is one of the freshest in the world. An enjoyable natural environment can enhance people's goodwill towards a country.

### 5.3 Other Factors to be Considered

Some factors seem to belong to neither direct "Push" nor "pull" factors. However, they imperceptibly influence and drive the mindset and behavior of people who need to make decisions about where to conduct further education. In this chapter, we are going to discuss the possibilities that might increase students' desire to study abroad.

#### 5.3.1 International experience

White Paper (2020) study shows that 42% of the potential study-abroad Chinese students have international study experience beforehand. This trend is rising year after year as Chinese parents start to have the consciousness to let their children go abroad, broaden their horizons, and gain global vision (see figure 3 & 4).

There are several kinds of international experience that Chinese students can try before they officially start their journey to a new study destination which can get students involved in local study life: (1) summer camps (2) study tour (3) short-term exchange and (4) summer courses from overseas institutions. Typically, summer camps and study tours last from five days to two weeks, and the schedule is tight. However, throughout the trip, students have enough time to know the best points of a country, including environment, price, sightseeing, and they have a chance to join local schools, learn local curriculum together with local students, and experience real Finnish education atmosphere themselves.

Short-term exchange programs and summer schools can provide Chinese students with more engaging interactions and a deeper understanding of Finnish education content and pedagogy. Students and parents highly value cultural diversity involvement abroad. An exchange period or summer school program offers students with not only places of study, but also the opportunity to know how local society works. Suppose they have the chance to see and know what the study abroad life looks like and can pre-evaluate the feasibility and cost performance, it to some degree, reduces the target group's concern and misgivings to the new environment of study destination. In this case, there is a higher likelihood that they will consider studying abroad for a further degree program.

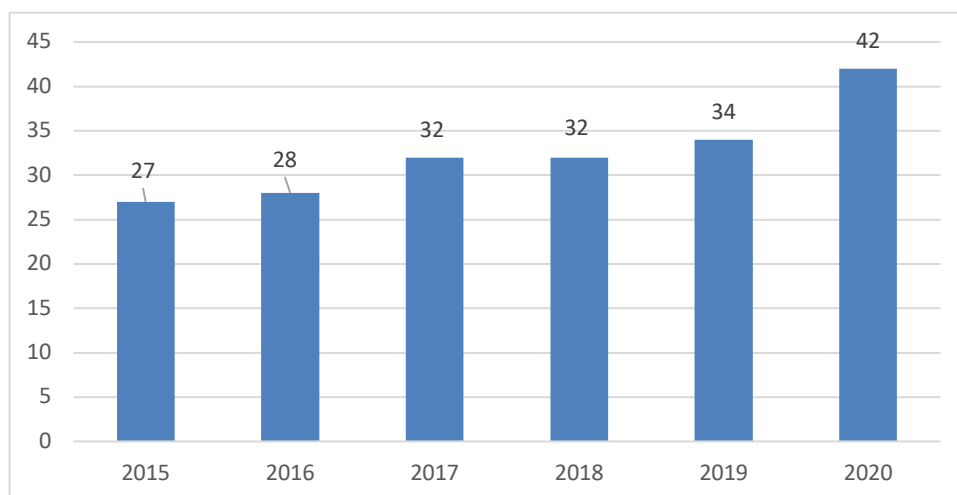


Figure 3. Percentage of potential overseas students who have overseas study experience (%)

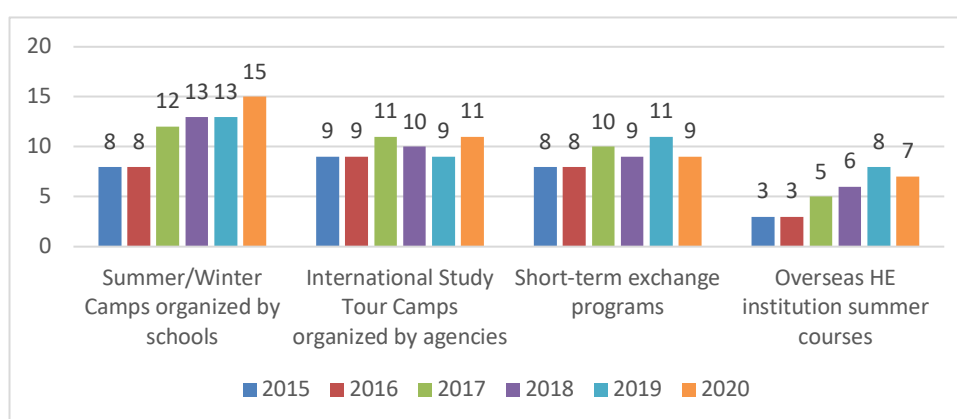


Figure 4. Percentage of types of international experience

### 5.3.2 Family influence

As is explained in the “Culture Dimensions Theory”, China society is collectivistic and has high power distance. It means that (1) the decision to study abroad influences not only the student but also the whole family group; (2) the number of people involved in the decision-making process can be more than one, sometimes the decision-maker is not the students themselves.

In qualitative research, it shows that only 53% of the students made a choice to study in Finland individually. 28% of the answers shows it has been a family discussion result. 8% of people listened to their friends’ and relatives’ experiences and recommendations. Near 7% reflected that it was their parents who took care of the study thing.

For a Chinese family, it is not easy to let children go far away from the family so that there are many factors for parents to consider. In the traditional Chinese mindset, the purpose of keeping children home is to

prevent the situation that nobody takes care of parents' elderly hood. Also, the Chinese have the "in-group" culture, which means there is always a tight invisible tie within a collective group where group members rely on each other a lot. Leaving the group might need courage and will cause the other members' worries. This is why family seniors' opinions are of great importance.

Chinese people usually give more trust to their in-group members. So even if the process of determining whether to study abroad has become more democratic than the past, acquaintances' referrals can be reliable sources.

#### 5.4 Findings From the Head of Education Section Interview

During the interview with Mr. Gao, the author gained precious and unique insights into the situation of Chinese students incoming to Finland. As the head of the Education Section in the Chinese Embassy, Mr. Gao expressed that the research on exploring the factors that influence Chinese students to come to study in Finland should also be considered from a Finnish macro perspective.

##### 5.4.1 Policy of future employment

Although the Chinese education market has great potential and opportunities, it is only Finland's third-largest source of international students. The first two most common nationalities in Finnish higher education institutions remain to be Russia and Vietnam. Until 2017, there were altogether 1609 Chinese students in the Finnish higher education system, following 2560 Russians and 2447 Vietnamese. This figure is much smaller than that of other international study destinations. For instance, in 2019, merely the city of Stockholm accepted over 800 new incoming Chinese students (University World News, 2019). Thus, Chinese students became the most extensive international students' source in Sweden. Overloaded international students may indirectly cause the immigration problem. Finland is not a typical migrant country, and it only has 5 million population. From the author's point of view, the capacity of accepting international students in Finland is still limited.

However, the Finnish government seems to be active in encouraging non-EU students to stay in Finland and seek jobs. The length of students' and researchers' extended residence permits has been double extended to two years, as long as they provide sufficient material proof (Finnish Immigration Service, n.d.). Undoubtedly this is an encouragement mechanism and a new pull power of Finland as the destination. Corresponding to this trend, the White Paper (2020) statistics about "Chinese students' employment tendency after finishing overseas study" shows that an increasing number of them prefer gaining working experience abroad first. Meanwhile, in the study of "Background of

international students favored by employers", the top three elements are (1) having related working experience; (2) matched major; (3) rich internship experience. The new Finnish policy happens to cater to the demand of Chinese students.

#### 5.4.2 Policy of tuition fee

When asked about whether the tuition fee policy has a significant effect on Chinese students' admission, Mr. Gao expressed that a short-term decrease is inevitable; nevertheless, it will return to normal after years. 2017 was the year when Finland officially introduced the tuition fee policy to non-EU students. Referring to the Finnish National Agency of Education (2018) data, compared with 2016, the number of new students entering universities in 2017 has reduced by nearly half; the number of new students entering universities of applied sciences has also reduced by 40%. Chinese students are not strange about paying tuition fees for higher education. What makes the difference is their wait-and-see attitude to the new policy. At the same time, they measure whether the education provided by Finnish universities is worth the amount of tuition. As most European countries began to charge tuition in recent years, Chinese students will gradually be more involved in the new system.

## 6 DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In the previous chapters, we have finished theory review, quantitative and qualitative researches, and statistical analysis. "Push" factors help students to make up their mind to change a country to study. "Pull" factors raise people's interest and promote college admissions. Another critical but easily overlooked point is that appealing to international students and getting them enrolled is not a one-time job. Many follow-ups work needed to be done as well as a continuous quality inspection to avoid student outflow. Based on these bits of knowledge, the author is going to initiate a feasible action plan which Finnish higher education institutions, especially HAMK, can refer to and take into consideration for its further promotion plan in China market.

### 6.1 Propaganda

#### 6.1.1 Branding

When searching the question of "How is the Häme University of Applied Science in Finland" online in Chinese, the number of quality answers seems far from abundant, and most of them were not up-to-date information. Chinese consumers do not have the habit of going to the official website

to search for information. Instead, they read and rely on articles written by bloggers or field professionals on social media platforms. As a higher education institution that keeps pace with the times, HAMK could take advantage of online branding.

There are many ways to do branding online. If HAMK can find a suitable method, online promotion is cost-effective in the early stage. WeChat, the top one most frequent and wide-used application, has gathered millions of official accounts on this single platform. WeChat Official Account is where authorities, institutions, mass media, and self-media can create a public space to display their products, service, opinions, and culture. HAMK already has an official account on WeChat; however, it has not formed a benign and iconic public account ecology. Firstly, it lacks a regular article publication schedule. On the "publication history" page, the first article was released in July 2019; then, the second was half a year later than the previous. In addition, WeChat has updated the article displaying order algorithm, so it is no longer based on the publication timeline, but mostly relying on account-follower interaction situation. The more active the account is, the more possible it can reach more readers. Secondly, the content itself on the HAMK official account is not attractive enough. Even if WeChat is the most useful platform for online marketing, the "golden time" has passed. The time people can use for fragmented reading is almost saturated. Two elements can make the account visible and durable to Chinese readers: informative and high-quality content, plus eye-catching selling point.

Details make a difference. According to the HAMK account's current situation, there has not been a strict writing format and design style. A uniform format and style can convey a professional and serious brand image and attitude.

Considering the capacity of Finland to accept Chinese students and the priority of international markets for HAMK, it is unnecessary to put too much effort into WeChat management. However, a regular promoting plan is necessary to be implemented to reach particular goals.

The WeChat platform remains market leadership but has passed its golden development period. It is because more platforms supporting "self-media" appear in the Chinese market now vying to attract traffic. Opening Zhihu (知乎 in Chinese), a Chinese domestic platform has similar functions as Quora, users can view professional answers from authorities or institutions in addition to normal users' experience sharing. On this kind of platform, it is recommended to (1) create the organization's account, find Finnish education-related questions, and answer; (2) invite HAMK alumni to share the real-time experience, it can be combined with incentives.

The above are two major types of online brand promotion platforms. Similar and popular channels such as Jianshu (简书 in Chinese) and

TopBuzz (头条新闻 in Chinese) do not require extra effort to create content. The account operator only needs to forward the same content created on WeChat Official Account to the other channels while achieving multi-channel traffic and build the HAMK brand image more wide-seen and influential.

### 6.1.2 Cross-cultural Interaction

In recent years, Finland has been accepting many delegations and tour groups who come for sightseeing, learning and training. Activities like this can enable Chinese audiences to implement their knowledge of Finland from the Internet or word of mouth to actual and personal experience. As is explained in the Push-pull factors analysis, pre-university international experience has a very positive influence on Chinese students' decision-making process.

The author has experience working as a student camp and teachers training program assistant, thus proposing several suggestions to HAMK based on feedback from Chinese customers:

- (1) Make the program schedule substantial and keep participants busy with doing something;
- (2) Spending a long time on quiet activity may cause impatience for Chinese;
- (3) Avoid the situation that Chinese customers have to share program resources with other delegations. For instance: sharing the same lecture with a group from another country when half of the time is wasted on unrelated interpretation.

By implementing the above points, Chinese students and teachers can fully understand Finnish culture and education. With a good impression of this country and the host university, they are more likely to consider carrying study forward in Finland.

## 6.2 Quality Control

### 6.2.1 Source of students

Enhancing marketing and enlarging admission channels first helps build HAMK an active and positive brand image, then it provides the university with a larger scale of student sources. With a broader range of applicants, HAMK will be able to select more capable students at the university entrance test. Since 2017 when the University of Applied Sciences canceled the IELTS requirement, many people reflected that the quality of admitted Chinese students has decreased. Some of the new students could not complete an English conversation, which has raised people's worries that the brand image and school quality will decline if it continues.

Whether the school can attract excellent students is the traditional criteria for Chinese to evaluate the institution's quality. So, it is suggested that HAMK should integrate this part with marketing events and check applicants' qualifications strictly.

### 6.2.2 Education

HAMK charges expensive tuition fees, which follows TAMK tightly, but this is a tactic of understanding consumer psychology. It is understood that HAMK tries to connect the high tuition fee with a high quality of education, to some extent, it matches the old Chinese slang: "You get what you paid for."

To follow up with the increase in tuition fees, actions need to be done to increase teaching quality effect. In Finland, university teachers all have an excellent educational background. Nevertheless, the ways teachers teach students and evaluate study results have vast differences. It is expressed that the same courses taught by different teachers have different evaluation standards. This results in the sense of unequal treatment to students when they gather and talk about their studies. In the Finnish education system, it is well-known that teachers have high autonomy in choosing the way they prefer to teach. However, from the perspective of pursuing equal evaluation standards to students, the institutions can research establishing a common framework of standards. Teachers still have flexible and free rights to decide pedagogical methods, but the framework can help the institution's general education level be stable and sustainable.

### 6.3 Scholarship Explanation

After comparing the different scholarship policies from several HAMK competitors, the author thinks HAMK is very competitive. If a student majoring in International Business finishes his studies within 3,5 years and is eligible to get both types of scholarship, the scholarship/tuition proportion is  $(3200+6500)/(3.5*9700)=28.6\%$ . Under comparison, very few schools of the same type give better offers than HAMK, except that TAMK provides students with the highest 50% tuition fee return as scholarship; VAMK students have the possibility to get a full scholarship to cover the tuition.

When Chinese students search about Finnish higher education's scholarship policy, let them feel that significant benefits can be obtained by sufficient effort. The new scholarship program raised the entry threshold for scholarships, but it can effectively urge students to study harder with the bottom line always in mind. Even if the difficulty level has risen, the tiered reward can make students feel challenging and stimulate their sense of achievement. When declaring and explaining, the school can

give some sample models of HAMK alumni, attached with their contacts, to give a closer picture and communication channel to the applicants.

Merely describing plainly what HAMK offers can hardly draw Chinese people's attention. Nowadays, the trend of writing an extraordinary title is to use vivid and significant phrases about a particular topic instead of writing down the project's formal name. For instance, the HAMK scholarship introduction article on WeChat with a subheading of "Earning scholarship by learning a language? Come and check!" makes more sense than a long paragraph of policy description.

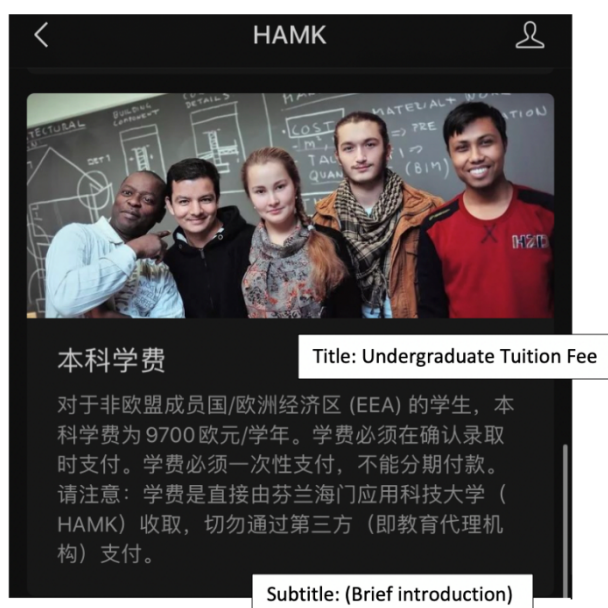


Figure 5. Showcase of WeChat Official Account Tweet Cover

#### 6.4 Student Support and Cooperation with Chinese Embassy

During the interview with Mr. Gao, he expressed that a small percentage of Chinese students are repatriated to China. The most common cause is that those students are not familiar and sensitive enough to Finnish schools and society's rules and regulations. The Education Section of the Chinese Embassy holds regular events such as Consular Protection Speech, Protection of Chinese Students' Overseas Rights and Interests, as well as an introduction to local rules and regulations. Upon new Chinese students' entrance, it would be good if HAMK can contact the Embassy and then inform students of the events.

The other role of the Education Section is to bridge between Finnish education and Chinese education, helping each other with cultural and educational communication and integration. There have been many successful cases of Sino-Finland cooperation projects. For instance, the completion of the Chinese Culture Center in SAMK cooperated with Beijing City University; the China-Finland education communication model project

– Sino-Finnish Center co-established by Aalto University and Tongji University and many other projects. Building this kind of relations with the Chinese institution needs a long-term plan so that it is impossible to put it into practice immediately. However, it is essential to be aware that intercultural cooperation can make Chinese students feel cultural identity even abroad; for Finnish students, it is an excellent chance to break stereotypes into a foreign culture. It also helps students from both countries to establish a more profound friendship.

## 7 CONCLUSION

### 7.1 Summary of Study

This study is mainly based on two theories: Push and pull theory and Hofstede's culture dimensions theory. By interviewing the head of the Education Section of the Chinese Embassy and questionnaire survey to Chinese students, the author analyzed several vital factors that affect Chinese students' choices of choosing Finland as a study destination from both push and pull perspectives.

Push factors (in order of importance), Chinese students leave home:

1. To experience a new culture
2. Due to the high level of stress and competition
3. To seek a suitable language-learning environment
4. Due to domestic employment pressure
5. Due to the unsatisfying domestic environment
6. Because they cannot easily find suitable or satisfying study fields

Pull factors (in order of importance), Chinese students choose Finland:

1. Because of admiration of the education level of Finland
2. Because Finland had free education/charges a low tuition fee
3. Because it is very safe and secure
4. Because of the advantages of the profession
5. Because of its national culture
6. Because of the pleasant natural environment

Besides the two categories of factors, two equally essential influences affect students' mindsets and choices: a previous international experience which gives the students a more profound understanding of the host country and the influence of in-group, which refers to family, friends, and relatives.

The purpose of this study is to determine the factors that influence Chinese students to study in Finland. Some part of the research refers to the

statistics and analysis of the "White paper of Chinese Students' Overseas Study 2020", which is the most authoritative and comprehensive study of Chinese students studying abroad. However, Finland is a niche study destination, so some of the information might be inaccurate in this research. Fortunately, the limitation is compensated by a questionnaire sent to the specific groups targeting Chinese students in Finland. In the end, the author put forward some suggestions to the commissioning company – HAMK, in order to help it understand Chinese students' psychology and behavior and successfully reach its annual goal of admitting Chinese students.

## **7.2 Open Discussion – COVID-19 and Study Abroad**

This research was conducted in the middle of the COVID-19 world pandemic. The pandemic has caused a chaotic situation in the international study industry due to the pandemic situation and travel restrictions in different countries. Finland used to suspend issuing residence permits to foreigners for a period. However, luckily, the application channel has reopened by the time the thesis is done, and the new incoming students have arrived in Finland. Within the chaos, China's situation is more complicated when it comes to its international relations with the mainstream study destination – the United States. The United States Government has published several regulations to restrict Chinese students and scholars from entering in 2020 so that now the bilateral relationship is volatile. Whether the enormous changes in Sino-US international relations reflect in the education market? Is it possible that Finland can attract some of the traffic from the United States to Finland? These remain to be further studied. Statistics show that the United Kingdom has exceeded the United States and has become the most popular destination. As of the second question, the author holds a suspicious attitude on the possibility for Finland to draw attention from those students. As explained in the previous chapter, students who choose the United States and Finland do not belong to the same group (please refer to chapter 5.2.2). When there are few shared attributes in two target groups, it is less likely to complete traffic conversion.

## **7.3 Limitations and Advice**

If qualitative research also consists of interviews with university students and employees, the research results can be more enriched and well-documented. Students and school employees usually focus more on the practical elements, while Embassy leaders or educational experts might take care of superstructure influences. Combining the two methods can give more accurate and specific explanations from multiple angles. The way of spreading questionnaires remains to be considered too. In the future, questionnaires can be sent out by using "snowball". It means to let the first reached respondents help with spreading the survey. In this

procedure, communication is rather crucial since most people feel it awkward to bother others to complete a questionnaire.

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## Appendix 1

## Interview Guide for Head of the Education Section of the Chinese Embassy in Finland

1. **Interviewee:** Head of the Education Section of the Chinese Embassy in Finland: Teacher Gao Yuhang
  2. **Thesis title:** Explore the factors affecting Chinese students studying in Finland
  3. **Interview instructions:** This interview will record all conversations through audio recording, and all information will be kept strictly confidential. The interview will last about half an hour.
- 
- a. As the head of the Education Section of the Embassy, what are your main responsibilities?
  - b. Finnish basic education is world-renowned, but what do you think of the situation of Finnish higher education?
  - c. From a macro perspective, what measures are there to promote educational exchanges and study abroad activities between China and Finland?
  - d. In your opinion, how much influence the tuition policy of Finnish universities has on attracting Chinese students in recent years?
  - e. Under the global epidemic situation, mainstream study abroad destinations have restricted the entry of foreign students and discriminated against Chinese. Do you think it is possible for Finland to attract the attention of some studying abroad groups and to achieve resource drainage for international students?
  - f. What are the advantages or disadvantages of Chinese students coming to Finland? Do you have any suggestions for what international students should pay attention to?

## Appendix 2

## Questionnaire to Chinese students and scholars

1. Survey name: Survey of Education Situation for Chinese Students Study in Finland
2. Introduction: Hi everyone! This is a survey for my Bachelor thesis of "Exploring the factors that influence Chinese students to study in Finland". In this questionnaire there are a few questions you can easily answer simply by your own experience. Please spend few minutes to fill in. Appreciate it a lot!
3. Content

## a. How old are you?

- ~ 18
- 19~22
- 23~25
- 26~30
- 30+

## b. What is your gender?

- Female
- Male
- Prefer not to say

## c. What kind of education you are having/used to have in Finland? (multiple choices)

- Bachelor's Degree
- Master's Degree
- Ph.D. and above
- Exchange
- Other

## d. What is your major? \_\_\_\_\_

## e. Which university you are/were in? (multiple choices)

- University of Tampere
- University of Helsinki
- Aalto University
- University of Oulu
- University of Turku
- TUT
- HAMK
- TAMK
- Haaga-Helia UAS
- Aorea UAS
- Metropolia UAS

- LAB UAS
  - Other
- f. Are/were you a tuition fee payer?
- Yes
  - No
- g. What were the reasons you decided not to continue higher education in China? (choose at most three elements)
- I do not want to take the university/postgraduate entrance exams
  - I would like to experience a new culture
  - I thought the original education system didn't suit me
  - For family gathering purpose
  - I wanted to practice foreign language
  - The competition/pressure was too harsh in China
  - I didn't like the environment in my home country
  - I am an exchange student and I will continue the rest of the study in China
  - Other
- h. How did you make up your mind to study in Finland?
- I chose it myself
  - My family chose it for me
  - I discussed together with my family
  - I was recommended by others
  - Other
- i. What was/were the factors impact on your study-abroad decision? (choose at most three elements)
- Education level
  - Security issue
  - Recognition of future employment
  - Tuition fee and scholarship policy
  - Natural environment
  - Living expense
  - National culture
  - Comprehensive national strength
  - Language environment
  - Advantage of profession
  - International political situation
  - Other
- j. Did you make any compromise when choosing Finland, considering the influences you choose above? (multiples choices)

- No, I think Finland lives up to all my expectations.
- Yes, I did not find an ideal institution.
- Yes, the language environment was not satisfying enough.
- Yes, the tuition fee was a bit expensive.
- Yes, the lifestyle does not fit mine.
- Other

k. What do you think is the most attractive point of Finnish higher education? (Open question)