

Summary of the Development of and Trends in Chinese Students Studying Overseas

The Report on the Development of Overseas Study in China was published in September 2012. The key points of the report are summarised as follows:

- According to statistics from the Ministry of Education, the total number of Chinese students studying abroad in 2011 reached 339,700, the largest scale in history. Among them, 12,800 were sponsored by the government, 12,100 were sponsored by their employers, and 314,000 were self-funded. From 1978 to the end of 2011, China has sent 2,245,100 students abroad for academic pursuits, distinguishing itself as the world's No. 1 source for overseas students.
- According to UNESCO's statistical information, the number of Chinese students studying abroad accounts for 14% of the total of overseas students of the whole world, and China is the No. 1 source for overseas students.
- Studying abroad has gradually evolved from elite education into mass education. From the 1980s to the end of the 1990s, only several thousand Chinese students went abroad for academic pursuits each year, and most of them were sponsored by the government. Upon entering the 21st Century, the total number of government-sponsored students studying abroad only increased slightly, while the number of those studying abroad at their own expenses has increased by a big margin. 2000-2011, the total of Chinese students studying abroad was 1,911,300, and 1,745,700 or 91.3% of them were self-funded. Since 2001, the percentage of self-funded students studying abroad has never been dropped below 89%. In 2009, 2010 and 2011, this percentage was 91.63%, 91.32% and 92.67% respectively.
- The age of those studying abroad tends to be lower: In 2010, 76,400 Chinese students with no more than a senior middle school education studied abroad, accounting for 19.8% of the total number of Chinese students studying abroad in that year. In 2011, 76,800 Chinese senior middle school students went abroad for academic pursuits, accounting for 22.6% of the total number of Chinese students studying abroad in the same year. In the 2011 "Analysis of the Intention for Studying Abroad of Senior Middle School Students", among the senior middle school students with the intention of studying abroad, 70% of those surveyed planned to go to attend university abroad upon graduation, 24% planned to continue their secondary education abroad, and 6% planned to complete their undergraduate education in China and then pursue graduate studies abroad.
- Let's take those studying in the US for an example. According to the 2009 statistics of Institute of International Education, for many years, the number of undergraduate Chinese students studying abroad in the US has remained at around 9000 each year. In 2009, 26,000 Chinese students pursued their undergraduate studies in the US which was three times the figure of 2008. The Open Doors Report released by the Institute of International Education at the end of 2011 indicated that, during the 2010-2011 academic year, 157,600 Chinese students were studying in the US. Among them, 36.5% were undergraduate students. The number of these students rose by 42.7% over 2010, much higher than the 15.6% year-on-year growth in the number of postgraduate students studying in the US.
- Diversified choices: By the end of 2011, 2,245,100 Chinese students have studied in more than 100 countries around the world. Most of them have studied in developed countries such as the US, the UK, Australia, Canada, Japan, Korea, Singapore,

France, Germany, New Zealand and Russia. In addition, the Netherlands, Ireland, Italy, Spain, Argentina and countries in the ASEAN region have also attracted many Chinese students.

- Diversified choices of majors: 6 out of the 10 most popular majors among Chinese students studying abroad are linguistic majors. Among them, 7.8% students major in French, 7.6% major in German, 4.7% major Russian, and more than 2% major in teaching Chinese as a foreign language, Japanese and Korean respectively. Apart from linguistic majors, finance, information, environment and physics also attract many students. 6.3% students major in financial engineering, 2.2% major in finance, 3.3% major in information security, 1.8% major in information management and information systems, and more than 1.5% students major in environmental engineering and environmental sciences respectively. Students major in computer, economic management and other subjects account for relatively smaller proportions.
- In the past few years, more than 100,000 students studying abroad come home each year, and the annual rate of increase in the number of students returning to China have remained around 30%. In 2011, 186,200 students came home a rise of 37.7% over the 135,200 in 2010.
- The number of students studying abroad who come home and establish their own enterprises or cofound new enterprises has been on the rise, exceeding the number of returning students who engage in teaching and scientific research. Since hi-tech industries, finance, management and other non-traditional sectors enjoy great growth potentials and development prospects, starting new business in these sectors will be the development direction of the returning students in the future.
- The “Tracking Survey of Studying Abroad by Senior Middle School Students” indicates that the US, Canada, Australia and the UK are the popular destinations for senior middle school students. Among the senior middle school students surveyed who intend to study abroad, the US is the favourite destination of 50% of students, and other popular countries are Canada (15.1%), Australia (10%) and the UK (9.5%). Over 85% of the senior middle school students surveyed wish to study in these four countries.

According to survey, family funds constitute the primary financial source for the expense of studying abroad for senior middle school students (88% of the students surveyed). 17% of the students have applied for partial or full funding from overseas universities, 16% study under work-study programs, and 5% have applied for personal loans for studying abroad.

- The senior middle school students get information on studying abroad mostly from within China, including intermediate agencies, relatives, friends and domestic websites.

More than half of the students are “uncertain” about their whereabouts upon finishing their studies abroad which is apparently higher than the proportion of those pursuing postgraduate studies abroad; 33% of the senior middle school students make it clear that they will come home which is similar to the proportion of those pursuing postgraduate studies abroad who wish to come back to China; 15% made it clear that they will stay abroad, and this more than doubles the percentage of those pursuing postgraduate studies abroad.

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