

Research on Strengthening Management and Service Strategies for International Students in the Context of COVID-19

Taking the Example of Serving International Students Studying in China in the Lancang-Mekong River Basin

Yuanshuai Niu^{1,*}

¹Development Research Center, Yunnan Normal University, Kunming, Yunnan 650500, China

*Corresponding author. Email: 19567574@qq.com

ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the current situation of Lancang-Mekong education and cultural exchanges in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic from the perspective of Chinese studying abroad service and management, then points out some of the problems, and puts forward the countermeasures and suggestions to strengthen the service of studying abroad in China through full-cycle management, including: systematically building the entire cycle — it is necessary to optimize preventive control system, make the mechanism connection unimpeded and upgrade management system; the whole process of connotation improvement — this requires to improve the quality of studying abroad, strengthen connotation construction, and expand the income of studying abroad; the entire cycle of service management — in this part, it is necessary to pay attention to the "temperature" of management, enhance service awareness, and embody humanistic care; the entire cycle of enrollment promotion — this means that it is necessary to expand enrollment channels, innovate the brand of studying abroad, and increase the attractiveness of coming to China. The aim of this article is to promote international education and cultural exchanges in the Lancang-Mekong River Basin by improving the service and management of studying abroad in China.

Keywords: education and cultural exchanges, service for studying aboard, Lancang-Mekong River Basin, COVID-19 epidemic

I. INTRODUCTION

The key to country-to-country friendly exchanges lies in whether the people's friendship is deep, and to establish a deep people's friendship, it is important to connect people with one another. The most effective way to connect people with one another is education, especially higher education. Educational and cultural exchanges, as an important bridge link to enhance mutual understanding between the people of China and the rest of the world, have become an important driving force for realizing people-to-people bond and promoting the progress of human society. China, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, and the Lancang-Mekong Vietnam countries are geographically close;

their relations with people are close, and they are culturally connected. In the context of the global spread of COVID-19 epidemic and the normalization of Chinese epidemic prevention and control in China, providing service for studying abroad, strengthening educational and cultural exchanges between Lancang-Mekong, and promoting people-to-people bond of Lancang-Mekong are not only the reality need to prevent the importation of COVID-19 and the rebound of COVID-19 from within, but also an inevitable choice to steadily set foot in the pace of opening up of education to the outside world, strive to create a new situation of service for studying abroad, promote the people-to-people bond in Lancang-Mekong, and promote the construction of a community with a shared future for mankind.

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II. THE CURRENT SITUATION OF LANCANG-MEKONG EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL EXCHANGES AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF COVID-19 EPIDEMIC — BASED ON THE PERSPECTIVE OF SERVICE FOR STUDYING ABROAD IN CHINA

China is the world's third and Asia's largest study destination country, and an important destination for students from the Lancang-Mekong basin to study in China. Educational and cultural exchanges, as an important bridge link to enhance mutual understanding between the people of China and the rest of the world, have become an important driving force for realizing people-to-people bond and promoting the progress of human society. At present, more than 500,000 overseas students from more than 200 countries and regions have come to study in China. International students in China have become friendly envoys who help to promote the people-to-people bond and tell the story of "the Belt and Road Initiative". They are China's "booster" for cultural exchanges with countries around the world, "displayers" for policy guidelines, and "loudspeakers" for cooperation results. Since the outbreak of COVID-19, China attaches great importance to and pays close attention to all aspects of the study, work and life of international students in China. It gives top priority to ensuring the health, safety of life and property of international students, and has rapidly formed a crisis management mechanism that is linked at all levels and coordinated by various departments. The specific measures are as follows:

A. Unimpeded access to information

Foreign affairs departments at all levels combine the location characteristics and the reality of frequent exchanges with neighboring countries, give full play to the advantages of translation talents, and transmit effective and transparent bilingual epidemic information in a timely manner through various information release mechanisms such as websites, official accounts, and WeChat groups. And the content includes the latest epidemic information, prevention and control measures, policy announcements, prevention and control progress, prevention and control knowledge, etc. In addition, foreign language micro-videos of epidemic prevention and control are recorded, which are widely disseminated through websites, new media and television, to help international students in China understand epidemic prevention and control knowledge and better protect themselves.

B. Being well-coordinated and inter-connected

The foreign affairs departments at all levels combine their actual work and cooperate with education, culture and tourism, transportation, health and medical institutions and other departments to form a joint force. They use cross-border joint prevention

and control mechanisms, and weave dense border control and protection networks and other methods to jointly prevent and control foreign-related epidemics, and help international students in China solve practical difficulties such as visa extensions and traffic coordination combined with actual situations.

C. Grid management

All relevant departments earnestly implement the main responsibilities, find out the basic statistics in time, keep abreast of the basic situation of foreigners in China, implement grid management, adopt methods such as dividing up the work and assigning a part to each individual, and full coverage registration and investigation and so on, comprehensively strengthen the epidemic prevention and control work for foreigners in China, and do a good job in epidemic prevention services, rescue and resettlement work.

D. Policy implementation by classification

All relevant departments focus on deploying the prevention and control of COVID-19 epidemic in schools that recruit foreign students, and do a good job in the management of high-risk groups based on actual conditions. In the process of dropout rehabilitation, the online teaching method is adopted to achieve "stopping classes without stopping teaching, and stopping classes without stopping learning", and various measures should be taken to help international students overcome the problems of time difference, region, technology, basic network, etc., and establish a teaching model of "online course resources + live teaching platform + WeChat group + homework before and after class".

III. THE MAIN PROBLEMS EXISTING IN LANCANG-MEKONG EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL EXCHANGES AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF COVID-19 EPIDEMIC — BASED ON THE PERSPECTIVE OF SERVICE FOR STUDYING ABROAD IN CHINA

The global epidemic situation is severe. Overseas study service departments and institutions, including universities, focus on epidemic prevention and control on the one hand, and dropout rehabilitation on the other. The original pace of service work for studying abroad in China has been disrupted and faced many new challenges.

A. Different problems have emerged at various stages in terms of response to the epidemic

During the outbreak of the epidemic, various plans such as the management of international students in China and the delayed return of teachers and students to school were formulated and implemented intensively. Insufficient and unbalanced information has caused problems in the connection of plans. In the development stage of the epidemic, the problem of low

information sharing is more obvious, and the responsibility for epidemic prevention and control is heavy. In order to achieve zero errors, relevant departments and institutions of studying abroad can't ignore any link and detail. Repeated investigation and verification of data will inevitably lead to duplication and redundancy of statistical work, resulting in improper use and underutilization of precious human and material resources.

B. The life of international students in China has been affected to varying degrees

Some international students are stranded in schools. Although each school has formulated a specific emergency management plan for international students based on a unified working mechanism and combined with the actual situation, the survey shows that compared with before the COVID-19 epidemic, the lives and communication of international students have been affected to a certain extent. In the prevention and control of the epidemic, strict self-isolation, complicated daily reporting procedures, and limited behavior in many aspects have objectively increased tension, fear, and anxiety for overseas students in foreign countries, and even extreme cases of emotional breakdown have occurred.

C. The original service management system for studying abroad has been tested

The education, teaching, enrollment and employment of foreign students are facing new pressures. Affected by the epidemic, schools can't focus on offline teaching. In precision to do a good job of epidemic prevention and control at the same time, how to overcome the problems such as the time difference between countries, implement effective online education and teaching for international students in China scattered around the world, strengthen ideological guidance, improve the enthusiasm of learning and engagement, and guarantee the effect of teaching progress so as to let overseas students study at ease and efficiently are new problems and challenges faced by educational institution. International students are not allowed to return to school together with Chinese students to participate in the study, especially for international students who are about to graduate, their return to school, job hunting and going through the formalities of leaving school are all affected. International students from various countries have different channels for understanding information about the fight against the "epidemic" and different levels of understanding and recognition of China's anti-epidemic stories. Especially in the early stage of the epidemic, many countries evacuated their overseas Chinese from China, which once had a greater impact on the mentality and their future expectations of international students in China, and even caused some negative sentiments to China. With the complex evolution of the

international situation, how to make good use of the situation to tell the Chinese story, highlight the advantages of China's overseas education, and do a good job in the admissions publicity of studying in China urgently need to be solved.

IV. COUNTERMEASURES AND SUGGESTIONS FOR STRENGTHENING THE SERVICE OF STUDYING ABROAD IN CHINA THROUGH FULL-CYCLE MANAGEMENT

Establishing the awareness of "full-cycle management" has important guiding significance for strengthening the service work for studying abroad in China against the background of COVID-19 epidemic and for the improvement of China's study abroad management system in the future. It's important to prevent the importation of COVID-19 as well as the rebound of COVID-19 from within. The current situation of China's epidemic prevention situation not allow carelessness, and the cycle of the epidemic from the outbreak to the end is still unpredictable. However, the education and management of international students in China has its own cycle. The graduation of international students directly affects employment. Failure to carry out the enrollment work as scheduled may lead to long-term losses after the epidemic ends. The "full-cycle management" of the service for studying in China must be based on the status quo, aim at the problem, make overall layout, and carry out the work with focus step by step:

A. The whole cycle of system construction — optimizing the prevention and control system, unblocking mechanism connection, and upgrading the management system

1) Establishing files and filling in cards, and carrying out joint prevention and control: It's necessary to establish a card and file for each foreign student in China, do a good job in the account registration, and report work status and monitoring and investigation on time every day. The cycle of entry management and epidemic prevention and control for international students in China must be fully grasped, and the whole process management before, during and after the event should be realized: for international students entering China and returning to school, it's necessary to make pre-arranged planning and take precautions beforehand; during the event, it's necessary to ensure that all measures are implemented in place without leaving hidden dangers; afterwards, it's necessary to summarize and accumulate experience for future work. For example, in the stage of entering China and returning to school, the small cycle of foreign students' individual entry — isolation-testing-returning to class should be considered together with the big cycle of the

first international student's entering China and returning to school — the last international student's entering China and returning to school. All stages and links in the cycle must be coordinated and arranged in place under the premise of maintaining the overall situation to ensure the stable and orderly progress of work.

2) *Optimizing the epidemic data reporting system for international students in China:* It's needed to connect with foreign affairs offices, cultural and tourism, transportation, education, and medical and health institutions at all levels across the country, establish an information platform for sharing epidemic data of foreign students in China, reduce repeated investigations and submissions, practically achieve precise prevention and control as well as optimal prevention and control, and rely on the platform to establish an efficient and smooth coordination mechanism between departmental systems with different functions.

3) *Upgrading the management system of service for studying abroad for educational institutions:* Each educational institution can independently establish a leading group office for the prevention and control of international students, formulate regulations on the prevention and control of foreign students in China based on school-based conditions, and establish and improve a unified data interface to seamlessly connect with the shared data platform. Focusing on "guaranteeing supply, stabilizing emotions, building bridges, emphasizing interaction, solving problems, and disseminating information", the management system for foreign students in China that focuses on epidemic prevention and control will be upgraded. It's necessary to clarify the health and education administrative departments, epidemic disease prevention center, and designated hospitals for the treatment of COVID-19. Relevant colleges and scientific research institutions of the school must implement the main responsibility, keep the line connected 24 hours a day, and establish a smooth communication mechanism between multiple institutions at different levels through the telephone of the responsible person, WeChat and other contact methods. It's needed to carry out teacher-student "1+N" paired assistance to realize one-to-one or many-to-one information transmission and feedback between the school and international students. It's necessary to further optimize the epidemic publicity and education process and improve the "Guidelines for the Prevention and Control of COVID-19 for International Students in China". Colleges and universities can edit and publish foreign language epidemic progress and publicity materials through the International Office, and each college is responsible for transmitting it to every

international student. At the same time, it's necessary to strengthen public opinion guidance and guide international students not to believe in or spread rumors, scientifically prevent and control, prevent and control according to law, and do a good job of publicity and education in a chain.

B. The whole cycle of connotation improvement — improving the quality of studying abroad, strengthening connotation construction, and expanding the income of studying abroad

1) *Teaching in different groups and different time to improve teaching effect:* It's necessary to implement the requirements of "stopping classes without stopping teaching, and stopping classes without stopping learning", fully consider the time difference of the country where overseas students live, and divide class students into multiple groups according to the time difference and teach in time periods to effectively enhance students' learning enthusiasm and participation; it's needed to ensure that teachers and international students in the teaching class establish one-to-one contact, and strengthen the quality requirements and achievement recognition of the online learning process and multiple evaluations, so as to ensure the teaching progress and teaching effect during the epidemic prevention and control period.

2) *Enriching teaching resources to ensure teaching quality:* It's necessary to make full use of MOOC and high-quality online course teaching resources, aim at the reality of overseas students, meet the diversified language requirements, and select bilingual courses for online education. It's necessary to fully consider the differences in the network conditions of the countries where foreign students are located, try a variety of online teaching methods, and at the same time cooperate with various teaching methods such as voice explanations, live video, online answer, and resource sharing to enrich the learning materials of foreign students and ensure the quality of teaching.

3) *Optimizing graduation management, and implementing online approval and confirmation:* It's needed to explore electronic, contactless remote graduation thesis defenses, graduation review, graduation ceremony and graduation certificate issuance. Through online graduation review and recognition, in the short term, it will help to do a good job in the graduation work of international students during the epidemic period, and in the long run, it will be beneficial to explore the new model of long-distance training for international students studying in China, and greatly expand the connotation and extension of international students studying in China.

C. The whole cycle of service management — paying attention to management "temperature", strengthening service awareness, and embodying humanistic care

1) Paying attention to the interests of international students through multiple channels: It's necessary to guide international students to actively cooperate with prevention and control arrangements, actively participate in management, and help various management affairs to be arranged and deployed accurately. It's also necessary to strengthen the guarantee of logistical services, and provide environmental protection and convenience for international students in China. In view of the characteristics of international students, it is a necessity to innovate psychological construction, strengthen psychological guidance, and cultivate healthy psychology. It's important to enrich cultural life, regularly carry out "five ones" activities (one greeting on WeChat, one heart-to-heart talk in the dormitory, one care for the body, one gift package for health, and one story telling well), and enhance humanistic care through exchange activities. Setting up a volunteer service team for international students is needed. With the dual functions of serving and being served, international student volunteers can become better practitioners of prevention and control rules, communicators of appeals, and disseminators of Chinese spirit.

2) Doing a good job of ideological guidance for international students in China: It's essential to make every service link the main front of ideological education for international students, and integrate Chinese stories into every day of international students' studying and living in China. The current epidemic is spreading globally, and some Western media make false statements about China from time to time. In this complex situation, how to tell the story of China's fighting against the epidemic and do a good job of ideological guidance for international students in China is particularly urgent. One is to use ideological and political courses as well as international student counselors and international student administrators, to vividly explain the current situation through online classrooms and online communication activities, explain from multiple perspectives that the reason why the foreign students stranded overseas can't return to the school temporarily is because the school puts the life safety and health of the international students at the first place, share the typical characters and deeds of China's fighting against the epidemic, tell a good story about China's fighting against the epidemic, and display a true China in a three-dimensional way; the second is to

organize international students in China to advise others by using their own experience, write personal anti-epidemic stories, produce small videos, promote safe life in China, show the orderly resumption of work, production and school in China, and spread true and moving stories of China's anti-epidemic, so as to make more present international students in China understand the real situation and feel the power of China.

D. The whole cycle of enrolling publicity — expanding enrollment channels, innovating the brand of studying abroad, and increasing the attraction of coming to China

1) Integrating resources to create an overall brand for studying in China: The current epidemic is spreading globally, but China has basically controlled the epidemic and has become a "safe island" in the global epidemic. The attractiveness of some traditional study abroad destination countries has decreased, and the situation of studying in China will undergo positive changes. China's advantages in studying abroad education will be demonstrated. It's needed to make full use of favorable opportunities to explore coordinated operations at the provincial level, change the situation of educational institutions' fighting each other, promote complementary advantages, integrate educational advantages, provide policy support, coordinate enrollment standards, implement strict admission conditions, improve the quality of the source of international students in China, build an overall brand for studying in China, and highlight the unique advantages of studying in China from the entrance.

2) Expanding the recruitment channels for overseas Chinese students offline: It's important to overcome the impact of the epidemic, carry out online and offline dual promotion of enrollment publicity, accept consultation online, strengthen information disclosure, timely introduce China's anti-epidemic measures and achievements, propagate China's prevention and control measures and care for international students, and strengthen the application confidence of international students' studying in China; the offline promotion should rely on platforms such as Confucius Institutes, Confucius Classrooms, and alumni associations to strengthen the recruitment and promotion of key time periods, key regions, and key populations; for international students who are unable to attend school as scheduled due to the impact of the epidemic, careful and patient explanations should be carried out to make preparations for their postponement.

3) Innovating the training model for Chinese and foreign students' studying in China: It's necessary to actively develop new enrollment models such as

"project classes", and on the basis of reducing the cost of starting classes and ensuring the quality of the source of students, separate classes according to nationality or major; it's needed to fully share the achievements of Chinese and foreign exchanges and cooperation between universities and sign international student exchange agreements; it's necessary to take the initiative to make full use of the "Silk Roads" Chinese Government Scholarship Program and other individual scholarship applications to expand the enrollment scale of international students in China.

V. CONCLUSION

The key to country-to-country friendly exchanges lies in whether the people's friendship is deep. To jointly build a "community with a shared future for mankind", education should go first. It's needed to strengthen the Lancang-Mekong educational and cultural exchanges, and do a good job in the service for studying abroad in China, which can add some bright color to the people-to-people bond among the six Lancang-Mekong countries. In the context of the COVID-19 epidemic, it's necessary to maintain equal emphasis on studying abroad and studying in China, equal emphasis on up-scaling and quality improvement, and equal emphasis on management by law and improvement of services, establish full-cycle management awareness, achieve the full cycle of system construction, the full cycle of connotation improvement, the full cycle of service management, and the full cycle of enrolling publicity, and improve the entire chain of educational and cultural exchange management service system. And only in this way will it be possible to promote mutual knowledge, mutual trust, mutual learning and mutual reference among the six Lancang-Mekong countries, and create a new chapter in the educational and cultural exchanges of the six Lancang-Mekong countries.

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