

Analysis on the Mechanism of International Students' Enrollment in Local Application-oriented Colleges and Universities from the Perspective of "5Ws" Communication Model

Ni Yang^{1,a,*}, Xuesong Tang^{1,b}, Jianglin Chen^{1,c}, Hongzhi Wang^{2,d}

¹School of Marxism, Chengdu Technological University, Chengdu, Sichuan, China

²Basic Teaching Department, Yibin Campus, Chengdu Technological University, Yibin, Sichuan, China

^ayangni.2010@163.com, ^bzhjtxs66@sohu.com, ^cjlchen00@163.com, ^dw18482184035@163.com

*Corresponding author

Keywords: "5Ws" Communication Model, local application-oriented colleges and universities, international students' enrollment mechanism

Abstract: With the continuous development of China's social economy and the significant improvement of opening-up, the number of international students studying in China is remarkably increasing. To improve the quality and efficiency of Study in China, recruitment publicity has become the first important step to attract high-quality international students. However, in the process of recruiting international students, local application-oriented colleges and universities are faced with a series of problems, such as lack of specific characters in programs, insufficient analysis on student's needs, incomplete working system and mechanism of enrollment and management, and so on. Based on the theory of Harold Lasswell's "5Ws" Communication Model, local application-oriented colleges and universities can improve their international students' recruitment as follows: 1) To integrate all forces to set up communication subjects of recruitment; 2) To enrich communication content with dominant disciplines and programs; 3) To expand communication channels by efficient use of modern information technology; 4) To match accurately with the communication targets on the basis of preliminary market research; 5) To assess the communication effect through international students' cultivation process evaluation. Thus, the local application-oriented universities can optimize international students' recruitment mechanism and improve the quality of international students.

1. Introduction

On September 28, 2010, the Ministry of Education of China announced "Study in China Plan" for the next 10 years at the National Conference on International Students Study in China, aiming to promote the comprehensive, coordinated and sustainable development of Study in China and to build an international brand of Chinese education. Since 2012, China has entered a new era of comprehensively deepening reform and expanding opening-up.^[1] The report to the 20th National

Congress of the CPC points out that we should improve the strategic layout of talents, speed up the building of an important global talent center and an innovation hub, strive to form a comparative advantage in international competition for talents, and gather outstanding talents in various fields to contribute to the career of China. With the optimization of epidemic prevention and control measures as well as the adjustment of entry & exit policies, the work of study in China will continue to normalize. Under this favorable background, the colleges and universities in China are bound to make adequate planning to further promote and develop the “Study in China” project.

2. The main problems in the enrollment of international students in China.

At present, the degree of education opening-up is improving, which can be seen through the steady increase both of the number of international students in China, and of the number of students perusing degrees study. However, we are still faced with some problems, such as the regional distribution of international students is imbalanced, and the education quality of international students still needs to be improved. ^[2] Specifically, it is mainly shown in the following aspects.

2.1 Enrollment channels and forms are simple, and enrollment quality is not high enough.

Currently, the international students’ enrollment in China mainly relies on service agencies. The enrollment attraction mainly depends on government scholarships and universities scholarships at all levels, rather than the educational ability and characteristics of the universities. This highlights that the enrollment promotion channels of the enrollment are relatively simple and blocked, and their enrollment attraction needs to be improved badly. ^[3] At the same time, in the process of enrollment, most colleges and universities do not put the personal statement materials of international students into the scope of examination, or even treat the materials with discursive attitude, so that it is difficult to form a comprehensive understanding of the international students and their academic plans and needs, which is not conducive to strengthening the connection between the supply and demand between universities and international students. Thus, it is easy to lead to the leave of international students. ^[4] Besides, right because of the above reasons, the quality of international student is unsatisfactory, which has hindered the development process of Chinese higher education, and triggered a series of negative public opinions and social conflicts. ^[5]

2.2 The characteristics of disciplines receiving international students are not distinct enough.

In recent years, especially before the outbreak of COVID-19, a considerable number of local colleges and universities have disclosed their existing majors for international students to choose from, aiming to expand the enrollment scale of international students. As a result, when international students choose to study in China, it is difficult to analyze the advantages of the colleges and universities from the enrollment majors. On the other hand, due to ignorance of the foundation of pre-courses and mathematics, physics and chemistry courses, international students’ self-learning efficacy is not high, and they get frustrated during their study, which results in the cultivation efficiency of that major. ^[6] The local colleges and universities set up a wide range of majors to the international students, which to some extent highlights the lack of international brand awareness, which is not conducive to the enrollment of international students in line with the actual development needs of the universities. ^[7]

2.3 Insufficient analysis of student source and inaccurate control of student demand.

Some scholars pointed out that "the recruitment of international students includes three parts:

market promotion, market construction and enrollment service." [8] However, many universities fail to do a good job in the recruitment of international students before the start of the recruitment work, so that their understanding and analysis of the recruitment market is not quite clear. Facts that the international students come from different countries and regions, their background is complicated, and the selection of high school level of international students is hard and so on will undoubtedly bring a series of adverse effects on the enrollment of international students. [9] On the one hand, colleges and universities cannot accurately connect their own advantages of frontier disciplines and majors to the right international students who have such demand for study, and cannot carry out targeted and personalized marketing promotion, which will lose some potential international students to a certain extent. On the other hand, in the process of enrollment publicity, it is easy to cause a large degree of waste and inefficiency in human, material and financial resources. [10]

2.4 The working mechanism of enrollment and management is not sound enough, and the enrollment ability is not strong enough.

In terms of enrollment, most colleges and universities in China have entrusted the International Exchange and Cooperation Department (short for "IECD") to take the lead in the enrollment of international students, and even set it as the sole responsible unit. Because the recruitment process takes a long time and IECD is tied hand and foot to their business, which lead to insufficient match and advice for the international students. In terms of management, the Academic Affairs Office is generally responsible for coordinating international students' academic affairs, but it fails in targeted communication and guidance to colleges on the cultivation and management of international students. As a result, colleges cannot accurately understand the regulations on the cultivation and management of international students. They also fail in individualized teaching guidance for international students is insufficient to some extent. [11] All of these will produce a certain negative impact on the source group of international students, [12] which will influence the international enrollment in turn.

3. The significance of "5W" Communication Mode in the enrollment of international students in local application-oriented colleges and universities.

3.1 Overview of "5W" Communication Mode.

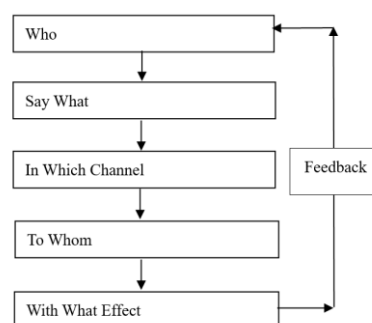


Figure 1: "5W" Communication Mode

In 1948, Harold Lasswell, an American political scientist and communication scholar, published a research paper on communication entitled "Structure and Function of Social Communication", in which he gave a relatively comprehensive description of the process, structure and its function of social communication and proposed for the first time five basic elements constituting the process of communication. Figure 1 is the "5W" Communication Mode of mentioned in this article. According

to Lasswell, the communication process consists of five links, namely, Who, Say What, In Which Channel, To Whom and With What Effect. As shown in the picture. Lasswell believes that the communication process under the "5W" Mode is a behavior process with a clear purpose and a process of persuasion, whose essence lies in how to make the five links interact with each other to maximize the effectiveness of communication activities. ^[13]

3.2 The feasibility of "5W" Communication Mode running through local application-oriented colleges and universities to recruit international students.

3.2.1 National policies provide policy basis.

As an important part of China's international educational exchanges and cooperation, the work of studying in China plays a very important role in building world-class universities and improving the internationalization of higher education. To ensure the development of the work of international students, the relative government has issued a series of policy documents, which are constantly revised and improved with the changes of social economy. The policy documents cover daily management, scholarship student management, visa management and social management, etc. It provides the basis and guidance for the work of international students in colleges and universities, and provides the necessary premise for the introduction of "5W" Model theory to the recruitment of international students.

3.2.2 The mission of local application-oriented colleges and universities provide with favorable conditions.

In China, we have designated international exchange and cooperation as the fifth function of modern universities. Under this function, as universities in the new era, it is imperative to train international talents and send talents cultivated by Chinese education to the world. At the same time, it is an important content of the structural reform of talent supply side in Chinese education industry for local application-oriented colleges and universities transformation. Currently, how local application-oriented colleges and universities make efficient use of their own advantages to attract international students and to train a batch of high quality applied technical talents with strong social adaptability and international competition ability for the international community have become an important task^[14]. This provides favorable opportunities for "5W" Mode to be integrated into international students' recruitment in local application-oriented colleges and universities.

3.2.3 The connotative development of local application-oriented colleges and universities provides practical needs

In the background of building China into an education power, our education should shift from the increase in quantity to the enhancement of the quality and the connotative development. In the face of the uneven source countries and quality of international students, improving the recruitment publicity, attracting high-quality students are bound to become a top priority to develop study in China in the new era. The propaganda of international students' recruitment in colleges and universities is essentially a kind of communication activity. Only under the guidance of the theory, put the 5 links of communication subject, communication content, communication channel, communication object and communication effect throughout the recruitment work can clarify the important content and direction of efforts, so as to obtain the enrollment effect, and to improve the quality of students. ^[15]

4. Application of "5W" Communication Mode in the construction of international student enrollment mechanism in local application-oriented colleges and universities.

4.1 Fully mobilize the forces of all aspects, and establish the Communication Subject for the enrollment of international students in China.

The Communication Subject can also be called the Communicator, who undertakes the task of collecting information, processing information and transmitting information in the process of communication. A single individual, as well as a collective or specialized institution, can act as a communicator. The universities should set up special educational management departments for international students to carry out centralized management", which provides policy support and standard requirements to establish and improve relevant working mechanisms and straighten out departmental responsibilities. Local application-oriented colleges and universities should standardize the centralized management of enrollment work during the recruitment process of international students, and on this basis, orderly carry out the formation of communication subjects. On the one hand, the universities should set up a working group which can help to integrate functional departments and colleges, so as to achieve centralized management while maintaining the division of labor. In order to establish a close united and centripetal international student recruitment team as the communication subject. On the other hand, as the main force directly serving international students, colleges should take the initiative to maintain smooth communication and contact with the International Students Affairs working group, timely and efficiently communicate enrollment information with the focal department and formulate enrollment publicity strategies, so as to give full play to their own front-line "main force" propaganda role. In addition, local application-oriented colleges and universities should actively build international student groups as communication subject too, including two teams of on-campus international students and international alumni. These two teams are a large number of foreign students who can tell good stories about China and local application-oriented colleges and universities. They are passed on by word of mouth among the international students, which virtually expands the scope of the communication subject of the enrollment propaganda of international students in China.

4.2 Cultivate application-oriented advantageous disciplines and specialties, and create the communication content of the enrollment propaganda of international students in China.

Communication content refers to the content of information transmitted. It is an information combination composed of a group of meaningful symbols, which is an important link of "5W" communication mode. The key to the publicity effect of international enrollment in China lies in whether the communication content can attract the attention of overseas students and meet their needs for career and further study. Therefore, local application-oriented colleges and universities should pay attention to their own connotation construction, implement the concept of application-oriented talents cultivation, and create and enrich the communication content of international students' enrollment with practical actions. First of all, the local application-oriented colleges and universities should stick to their mission of cultivating suitable talents for the regional economic and social development,^[16] and take the initiative to serve the development of local social economy and industry, actively support the construction of application-oriented disciplines, form disciplines with prominent advantages and distinct characteristics, and to enhance their own school-running characteristics and attractiveness. Secondly, the integration of industry and education is the basic path for the transformation and development of local application-oriented colleges and universities^[17], therefore, the universities should adhere to the application-oriented personnel cultivating mode, deepen the integration of industry and education, build a working

mechanism for industrial enterprises to participate in specialty construction and personnel training, seize and realize the connotation development of application-oriented personnel training, and lay a solid foundation for international students to get employed or to pursue their further study upon graduation.

4.3 Take full use of modern information technology, and expand communication channels multi-dimensionally for international students' enrollment.

The communication channel is one of the basic elements of the communication process. It refers to the way and method for the communicator to send information and the receiver to receive information. It is the intermediary or material carrier that information transmission must go through. According to the differences of communication carriers, it can be divided into interpersonal media such as letters and telephones, and mass media such as newspapers, radio and television. On the one hand, local application-oriented colleges and universities can mobilize the enthusiasm and initiative of various communication subjects, make full use of and play the role of traditional interpersonal communication media to publicize the work of international students recruiting and cultivating in China. On the other hand, with the development of modern information technology, local application-oriented colleges and universities can also fully dig their own characteristics of application-oriented professional advantages, through videos, web pages, and foreign media and other mass media to directly and vividly show their wonderful appearance and school-running situation. This will to a large extent broaden the communication channels of the enrollment propaganda of international students in China, and become a strong complement to the traditional communication channels.

4.4 Do a good job of preliminary research and accurately connect with the communication objects of potential international students.

The communication object is the general term of all the receivers such as readers, listeners, viewers, etc. It is the final object and destination of the communication content. In view of the lack of analysis of the international student market and the lack of control over the international student demand, local application-oriented colleges and universities should make full preliminary research and preparation before carrying out the recruitment, carefully analyze the advantages and specialties of the university, and identify the countries of source markets corresponding to their own brand specialties. After determining the main student source countries, focus on the students from the above countries who are willing to study in China, so as to lock the target of enrollment publicity and to carry out targeted enrollment publicity. At the same time, the universities can also pay attention to the social and industrial development needs of the main student source countries, and combine their positioning and characteristics, as well as the development trend of regional industries to create characteristic and advantageous disciplines that meet the urgent need of social and economic development of the student source countries, so as to form a distinct and internationally well-known school-running brand in the main student source countries. This will help to accurately match the communication objects of enrollment publicity and improve the efficiency of international student's enrollment publicity.

4.5 Pay attention to the process assessment of international students and evaluate the effect of the enrollment publicity.

Communication effect refers to the response caused by cognition, emotion and behavior after the communication content and information are conveyed to the communication object, which is an

important benchmark to test the success of communication activities. In the process of planning and implementation of education and teaching activities, teaching organizers usually adopt process evaluation to understand the effect of dynamic teaching process, timely feedback of teaching information, timely adjustment, so as to improve the teaching plan and scheme, finally to successfully achieve the expected aims. When the international students come to study on campus, it does not mean the end of recruitment propaganda work. Instead, we should conduct a process evaluation on the effect and satisfaction of international students' study, including but not limited to their satisfaction with their major, career, and personal life planning. The process evaluation will help to timely analyze whether there is cognitive bias in the early enrollment publicity work for this batch of international students in China, and predict whether the current teaching really meets the needs of international students, so as to evaluate the effectiveness of enrollment publicity and provide data support for the subsequent enrollment publicity in China.

Acknowledgment

Fund Projects:

1) Research Program of Sichuan International Education Development Research Center “Study on International Enrollment and Management System of Local Application-oriented Colleges and Universities in China” (SCGJ2021-28).

2) Research Program of College of Traditional Chinese Culture of Chengdu Technological University “Research on the Cultivation of International Students from Countries along the Belt and Road” (ZHY202222).

References

- [1] Ministry of Education. *The statistics of international students studying in China in 2018*. [EB/OL]. (2019-04-1) [2021-10-10]. http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_xwfb/gzdt_gzdt/s5987/201904/t20190412_377692.html.
- [2] *How to accelerate and expand the opening of education in the new era*. [EB/OL]. (2020-06-23) [2020-10-28]. http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_xwfb/moe_2082/zl_2020n/2020_zl33/202006/t20200623_467796.html.
- [3] Dawei Y., Shengrong Y., Jian L. (2016) *Research on countermeasures of colleges and universities to develop the education of international students in China in the new era*. *Higher Education Exploration*, (05):97-101.
- [4] Haisheng L., Xiaojuan G. (2017). *An analysis of international students' source of in graduate education in China and its countermeasures*. *Academic Degrees & Graduate Education*, (08):32-37.
- [5] Songyue L., Jin L. (2022). *International Education in China in the 14th Five-year Plan Period: Challenges and Countermeasure*. *Heilongjiang Researches on Higher Education*, 40(08):47-54.
- [6] Jin L. (2020). *Why is the quality of graduate students in China not high? --- In-depth interview research based on structure, function and environment*. *Academic Degrees & Graduate Education*, 337(12):53-60.
- [7] Weihua C. (2016). *A study on the Propaganda Strategy of International Student enrollment in China from a multidisciplinary perspective*. *University Laboratory Work Research*, 135-137.
- [8] Lin X., Wenjie S. (2016). *International student enrollment strategies of local comprehensive colleges and universities*. *Education and Career*, (17):113-114.
- [9] Ying W., Zhanjun W. (2020). *The research and practice of improving the quality of graduate international student enrollment in science and technology*. *Academic Degrees & Graduate Education*, (12):61-66.
- [10] Jingjing P., Xianhua Z., Ahmet Esref Aydogan, Furkan Agil. (2017). *Exploration and practice of recruitment strategies for foreign students in Turkey*. *Journal of World Education*, (9):63-66.
- [11] Luanmin C. (2019). *The recruitment of international students with diverse orientation -- The recruitment strategy, measures and enlightenment of undergraduate international students in University of Albert*. *Journal of World Education*, (2):41-43, 52.
- [12] Zhoujie Y. (2014). *A brief discussion on the problems and solutions of overseas enrollment in higher vocational colleges ---Taking Suzhou Vocational and Technical College of Economy and Trade as an example*. *Business Economy*, (12):128.
- [13] Baocun L., Tingyu W. (2023). *A Discussion on International Communication System of China's Education Based on Harold Lasswell's 5W Communication Theory*. *International and Comparative Education*, 45(01):3-13.
- [14] Department of Development Planning, Ministry of Education. *Work on supporting the development of*

application-oriented undergraduate universities. [EB/OL]. (2019-02-19) [2020-10-10]. http://www.moe.gov.cn/fbh/live/2019/50294/sfcl/201902/t20190219_370019.html.

[15] Shaobo C. (2006). *The communication interpretation of college enrollment propaganda. Journal of Zhejiang University of Media and Communication, (4):40-42.*

[16] Daliang Z. (2015). *Grasp the position of "university as main body, local as main responsibility" and actively guide the transformation and development of some local undergraduate universities. Chinese Higher Education, (10):23-29.*

[17] Qian L. (2019). *Integration of industry and education: The path of transformation and development of local application-oriented undergraduate colleges. Education and Career, 937(9):45-48.*