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## The Chinese overseas students: An overview of the flows change

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### Abstract

The first Chinese overseas student is Rong Hong, who went to America to study in 1847. After that China gradually opened its gate to western education. The first surge of studying abroad appeared in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and was stopped by the Sino-Japan war. The People's Republic of China sent students studying abroad as soon as it inaugurated. However the scale of China's overseas students was small and their destinations were mostly limited to socialist countries or Chinese-friendly developing countries before Chinese economical reform. China started the new policies to its international education program that Chinese people got more chance going overseas to study. Along with China's economical development, studying abroad becomes affordable to some Chinese families, so the new surge of studying abroad comes. The total population of Chinese overseas students is about 700 thousand between 1978 and 2003, and about 173 thousand have returned back China among them. China is the largest source country of overseas students in the world now. The main destinations of Chinese overseas students are UK, America, Australia, Germany, Canada, French, Japan and Russia. Australia successfully exports its education products to China. The population of Chinese students have been the top over the international students in Australia since 2001.

The paper reviews the development of Chinese overseas students; comprehensive looks at the Chinese overseas students' population, destinations and compositions; analyses changes of the policies, the trends of the flows, the decisions of the destination, the structure of Chinese overseas students; compares the data between countries and lays emphasis on the issue of Chinese students in Australia

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## **The review of Studying abroad before 1949**

For over one hundred years, driven by an urge for social and political change, the desire for new knowledge, and a longing for more personal freedom and a better life, generations of educated Chinese have left home to study in almost every major country in the world. There have been both active and inactive periods in the foreign-study moment, in response to the fluctuations in modern Chinese history.<sup>12</sup>

### **1. In late of Qing Dynasty Period**

The first Chinese student to study in America is regarded as Rong Hong, who was born in 1828 in Macao in China. He entered Morrison school, a missionary school in 1841. When the master of the school Rev. Samuel R. Brown returned to America from China, Rong Hong was asked to go with him in 1847. He graduated from Yale University and went back China in 1854.

During time of his studying in America, Rong Hong had the idea to promote Chinese government to accept western education. Because he believed deeply that the way to strengthen China was to acquire western science and technical knowledge, he endeavored to that as soon as he came back China. He made a plan of sending young Chinese to study abroad and succeeded convincing the senior officers of Qing government to his plan. Under the strong support of senior officers, such as Zeng Guofan, Ding Richang and Li Hongzhang, the education plan was approved in 1871, that 30 young Chinese of 12 to 16 years old would be sent to America to study each year in the first four years, then the work would continued if it got good effort. Under this program, the first Qing-government-sponsored overseas educational mission was sent out in 1872. The action met strong opposition from conservative Chinese officials, additional the anti-Chinese sentiments and actions were rising at the same time in America, so Qing government withdrew all the Chinese overseas students from America in 1881, which means the education plan failed at the end, but it pioneered the fresh way and opened the new era to the old Chinese education system.

In the early twentieth century, western culture and education was advocated by enlightened Chinese people, and more and more young persons were able to be educated in a new way consonant with China's need to survive in the modern world. Chinese people began to embrace not only Western technical knowledge, but Western culture, and in fact, amazingly receive Western influences.

In 1908 American parliament approved a decree that it gave up part of Boxer Indemnity from China, which was about \$12 million. Then an agreement was made by Chinese and

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American government that the large amount of refund money should be used in Chinese students to accept west education, which included three aspects: first, to found Tsing Hua School, a preparatory school for Chinese overseas students<sup>2</sup>; the second, to make a schedule to regularly send Chinese students to America for studying; the last, to set up an organization to charge and supervise the practical affairs of Chinese overseas students in Washington. The Boxer Indemnity Scholarship Program was the most important scheme for educating Chinese students in America and arguably the most consequential and successful in the entire foreign-study movement of twentieth-century China. There were more than 800 members in the American Chinese Students Association organization in 1911, and the next year Qing government sent another more than one hundred students to America<sup>3</sup>. The exact number of Chinese overseas students in America and Europe during the late of Qing Dynasty can not be found, but it was estimated about 10 thousands.

Qing government also sent Chinese students to other countries to study. Send students to Europe was originated from the need of shipbuilding. The Fujian shipyard that built ships by advanced western technics was set up in 1867, and an affiliated school also was found for training Chinese people by western technical knowledge, in order to offer professional labour for the shipyard. Because of the deep need of the advanced technical knowledge for Chinese owned shipbuilding, Shen Baozheng, the top official of the Shipbuilding industry endeavoured to advocate the policy of sending Chinese going England and France to study mechanical techniques. In 1876, 18 students from Fujian shipyard were sent to France and 12 to England to study ship driving, ship manufacture and military use of ships. In the same year, Qing government dispatched 7 persons to Germany for acquiring military mechanical techniques from its military colleges. A temporary regulation of study abroad was worked out in 1899, which shows England, France, Russia and Germany were the main destinations of Chinese overseas students, besides America and Japan. Qing government also sent some Chinese students to Belgium to study from 1903, because of its cheaper tuition and advanced techniques.

Studying abroad was becoming fashionable and its scale was growing gradually after 1890s. The files of Qing's Education Department recorded that 124 government-sponsored Chinese students were sent to in England to study in 1910<sup>4</sup>. In fact, this figure is not the exact total number of government-sponsored students in England, as the provinces also spent money to send out their own students abroad, but it was not showed on that files. Additionally, there were also some self-supported Chinese students studying in England, so the actual size of the group of Chinese students in England at that time was larger than the record.

Because of perceiving the Japan's rapid development, and realizing the major reason of it that Japanese had learned advanced technology from western countries, Qing government began speeding up its step to learn from advanced countries. Since Japan is the neighbour of China, and Japanese language was thought to be easy to learn for Chinese as character of Japanese writing is similar to Chinese, and Japan was regarded as powerful after it won the war with Russia, and the cost was cheaper than to America and Europe, both the officials and civilians considered Japan as a suitable country for Chinese to study in. The first group of 13 Chinese young students arrived in Japan in 1896. After it, the number expanded rapidly. In 1901, there were more than 600 Chinese students in Japan. In the peak year of 1906, the number in Tokyo alone amounted to over eight thousands.<sup>5</sup>

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The total population of Chinese overseas students in the world was about 20 thousands between 1900 and 1911, among which 90% studied in Japan.<sup>6</sup> The popular fields for Chinese were politics, law and military during that time. It can be found that more than half of the Chinese students in Japan studied in the fields of politics and law, military, police affairs, etc.<sup>7</sup> It was estimated that there were about 5,000 Chinese overseas students studying in politics and law during the last ten years of Qing Dynasty.

In late Qing Dynasty, the aims and systemic and holistic regulations and schedules for sending students to overseas were not clear. Even though the population of Chinese overseas student were going up, there were disparity in their qualities and degree in different areas. The people studying in Japan had relatively worse reputation than in other countries, because most them studied in low level sectors. For example, among the over ten thousand Chinese students studying in Japan in 1907, 60% took part in simple and quick courses just for the certifications, 30% did the regular schooling study, 5.6% was flunked out from school, 3.4% entered the technological academy and higher education institutions, and only about 1% acquired the qualification studying in universities.<sup>8</sup>

## **2. In the Republic Period**

The history of the Republic of China was only lasting 38 years in mainland of China, but it was estimated that there were about 100 thousand Chinese going abroad to study during that period.<sup>9</sup> In the early stage of the Republic Period, China's politics, economics, society, culture and education system all changed drastically, but Qing Dynasty's polices and regulations of sending students abroad were continued. Because of lack of finance, the number of government-sponsored students dropped in 1912. However the number rose again the next year, and the increase tendency was maintained until 1938, the year of the Sina-Japan war broke out.

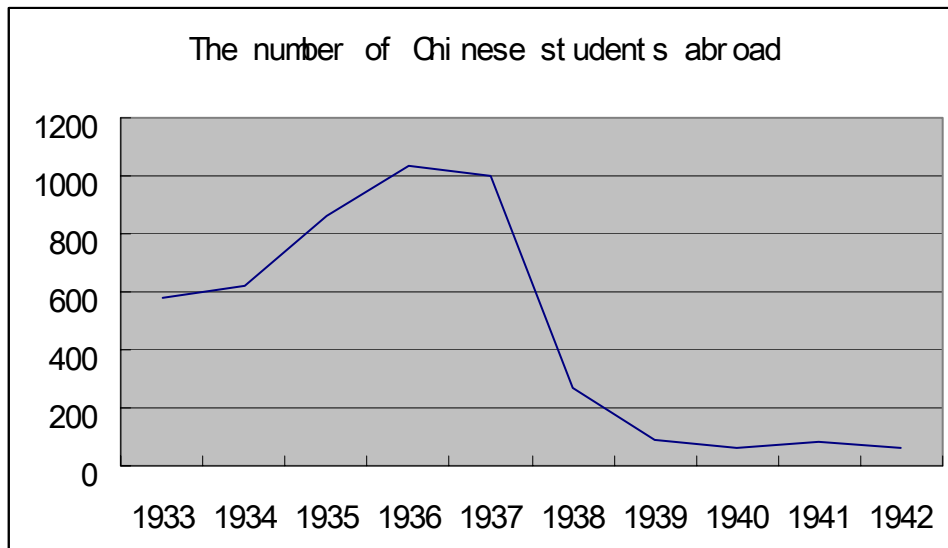
The reasons of arousing the enthusiasm to study abroad were mainly from three aspects:

- Japan, Russia, England, Belgium, France and Germany followed the lead of America one after another to refund some of the Boxer Indemnity to China, which offered more financial support to Chinese overseas students in those countries
- The cost of studying in France and Germany was relatively low, and the 'work-study' program was launched in the mid 1910s in France, so many Chinese students chose France and Germany as their destination for study. There were over 600 Chinese youths being attracted to France between 1919 to 1921<sup>10</sup>
- There was a big income and treatment gap between western educated Chinese and domestic educated Chinese after they worked. For example, the salary per month was about 200 to 250 Yuan for people who had got PHD from famous American or British universities, and 100 to 150 Yuan for those who got PHD in Japan, and only 60 to 90 Yuan for people who came from domestic universities,<sup>11</sup> which promoted more students going overseas.

The first surge of studying abroad appeared in this period. During 1927 to 1937, about a thousand Chinese students went overseas for studying every year, and America absorbed about one fourth of them. The increase of students abroad was gradual and steady at that period. The increasing trend was kept until 1937 (see Chart 1). The data was from the statistics of the Education Department of the Republic China. Though it only presented parts of students abroad because of the reasons stated above, it still can represent the tendency of students abroad. The chart shows that the peak appeared in 1936 (1033), and the number dropped drastically in 1938, the year of Sino-Japan war broke out, when China put almost all its energy to fight against the invasion of Japan. The low level continued until 1942 when there were only 59 persons going overseas to study.

Along with the meliorating of the situation of the war, the government began to expand the scale of Chinese students abroad again for meeting the need of constructing the country. The first test for selecting self-supported students abroad by the Education Department was organised in 1943 and more than 300 students got the qualification of going overseas studying through this way. At the same year, about 1,200 elitists from government institutions dispatched to America for a short term training. It was estimated there were nearly 4,000 Chinese students in America during 1948 to 1949.<sup>12</sup> In this period, most of the students abroad were studying in America.

<Chart1>: The number of Chinese students going overseas by year



Source: Liu Zhen , 1964, Liu Xue Jiao Yu(5)-----Zhong Guo Liu Xue Jiao Yu Shi Liao, page 2563, Publisher: Guo Li Bian Yi Guan, Taiwan

### 3. The contribution of western education to China

The purpose of accepting the western education was to strengthen China and to develop its own modernization. Western education expanded Chinese people's views and

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accelerated the process of China to approach the modern society. China began to send students overseas during the era of the 'Self-Strengthening Movement', when China was in its most difficult time that there were domestic rebellion and foreign oppression. Modernization for the Chinese people has not been a 'natural' development, but a turbulent and painful process that involves the search for a modern yet still Chinese identity.<sup>13</sup>

Many Chinese elites went to foreign countries to be trained under the western education, and brought about a wide range of changes to modern China after they were back. Western countries of the early twentieth century offered the Chinese students the version of modernity, when China was at the threshold of a modern age and in a particularly stressful transitional period from the late Qing Dynasty to the early republic, which left its mark on the students' adaptation to modern ways. Chinese overseas students experienced a modern mode of life and comprehended the western politics, society, and culture and studied advance technical knowledge, that all of them were kept in student's mind and returned to China after they finished their studies abroad. Western educated Chinese people influenced greatly on the way of modernization of China. They introduced new customs, new kinds of interpersonal relationships, and new ways of life to China. Most Prominent leaders in diplomacy, industry, and finance came from this group in the first half of twentieth-century China.

On the political issues, they brought modern concept back to China, and aroused Chinese people's wake to establish a republic country together. Among them, the Japanese educated Chinese people contributed more. In early twentieth-century, many senior leaders, both in Chinese Communist party and in Kuomintang government, had overseas studying background, such as Song Zhongshan, Chiang Kai-shek, Zhou Enlai, and Deng Xiao Ping. The first generation of the highest Chinese Communist Party's leaders, Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, Zhu De, Liu Shaoqi and Ren Bishi all had gone overseas studying except Mao Zedong.<sup>14</sup> Their influence changed China's destiny.

On the issues of education and research, foreign-educated Chinese people became China's major modern educators and scholars, who set the tone and style of modern education system for China, so Chinese people could enjoy modern knowledge easily from that and got enormous benefit on their education. Among the high achieved savants and scholars, the proportion of west educated is very high. In 1981, there were 400 members in the Fourth Academic Committee of Science Institute of China, among which 391 members had studied abroad.

On the issues of science and technology, western educated Chinese elites brought modern science and technology back to China, and put them into China's construction and used them to educate new generation. Without them, the modern industries of China would not exist at that period.

Sending students overseas was like opening a window to see the outside world, or building a bridge to connect the outside world to China. From the window Chinese people could find the difference between China and west countries, and from the bridge Chinese people could get the things they needed from those countries. Western educated Chinese people made significant contribution to China's transition to modern society.

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# **The situation of study abroad under the regime of the People's Republic China**

## **1. The situation of studying abroad before 1978**

When the news of the success of Russia's October Revolution was passed to China, many Chinese people were inspired. The slogan of 'go to Russia' was as popular as 'go to America', 'go to Japan' and 'go to Europe'.<sup>15</sup> The ambition of building a socialistic new China's inspired China idealists, Soviet Russia became a holy place for some Chinese people. They aspired to there to study the theories of Marxism and Leninism and fetch the experience of revolution. Soviet Russia became Chinese Communist Party's home front, and many high and middle level cadres of the party went there to study during the war age. After communist party succeeded in China, the situation continued in 1950s.

Under the lead of communist party, the People's Republic of China started its entirely different policies for studying abroad from the old government. For the need of construction and communication, the new government began the exchange students program as soon as the People's Republic of China was inaugurated. Because the capitalist countries were China's enemies at that time, the destinations of Chinese students abroad were socialistic countries, such as Soviet Russia and East Europe. Soviet was called the old brother of China by Chinese, thus it absorbed most of Chinese overseas students in 1950s.

The first group of students supported by new government was sent to Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Bulgaria and Hungary in 1950. It was because the student exchange program that 35 Chinese students went to those foreign countries and 35 foreign students from those countries came to China studying as a exchange. At this time, the program paid more attention to culture communication, so that 72% Chinese students studied in language and history and geology, and only 28% studied engineering. The first time to dispatch Chinese youths to Soviet Russia to study happened in the next year, 1951. There were 375 Chinese students, including 136 graduate students be sent to Soviet Russia. Then Chinese government co-operated with Soviet Russian government on education tightly that Soviet Russian had trained a large amount of Chinese intellectuals for China until the relationships were broken off.

There were 10,678 Chinese people together who went overseas to study between 1950 and 1960. The destinations were 29 countries. Most of them were socialist countries, but some capitalist countries could also be found in the list, such as UK, France, Denmark, Canada, etc.<sup>16</sup> The Chinese Culture Revolution broke out in 1969 that stoped all the international communication in education until the legal seat of UNESCO of the People's Republic of China was resumed in 1971. The number of Chinese students abroad was 1,548 between 1972 and 1978. Even though the population was declined, the destination countries were expanded to 32 and Australia was among them.<sup>17</sup> During this period, language study dominated the studying field of students abroad, accounting 93.7%, and only 6.3% was left on the field of science.

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## **2. The policy changes after 1978**

China began its economic reform from 1978, and the policies of Studying abroad have also been changed since then. Deng Xiaoping is the key person for the policy changes who believed that the most important and efficient way of development for a country was enhancing national science and technology level. He had the background of study in France in 1920. Though his own overseas studying experience was not satisfying, the sagacious statesman fully recognized how important the abroad students were to China's future construction. He delivered a speech in 1978, stressing that China should expand the academic communication with foreign countries, and send more students to study abroad. Under his command, the new policy for studying abroad was worked out soon. It is the turning point that the student abroad was suddenly expanded.

A loose policy was released by Chinese government in the end of 1986, which reduced the limitation for self-supported students studying overseas. Then in 1993, a clear and confirmed basic policy was promulgated, which made it clear that the Chinese government supports students to study abroad, encourages them to come back, and guarantees their freedom of coming back and leaving. To fulfil this policy, the government set up relevant organizations and worked out regulations to supervise and serve overseas students. Up to now, 55 education offices aimed to manage Chinese overseas educational affairs have been established in Chinese embassies of 38 countries, and more than 2000 Chinese overseas scholars and students associations set up with the help of the education offices of Chinese embassies worldwide.<sup>18</sup> For the domestic affairs of studying abroad, Ministry of Education set up two organizations affiliated to take charge of their service and management, the Chinese Service Centre for Scholarly Exchange (CSCSE) and the China Scholarship Council (CSC).

In order to meet the increasing need of Chinese people studying abroad, CSCSE cooperated with International Exhibition Services Co., Ltd, to start the first series of China International Education Exhibition Tour (CIEET) in March 1999. So far, CIEET has been organized for nine times, which received tremendous support and endorsement from the Chinese Ministry of Education, and also was responded positively by other countries. It has been endorsed by eleven foreign embassies, and over ten foreign government bodies have shown up at the fair.

Because of the boom of self-supported students studying abroad, Chinese Ministry of Education started to offer scholarship for the excellent ones in 2003. The work is still in the experiment stage, so it is just available to those studying in America, Japan, UK, France and Germany at this moment.

All of these made Chinese overseas students contact advanced western education system easily.

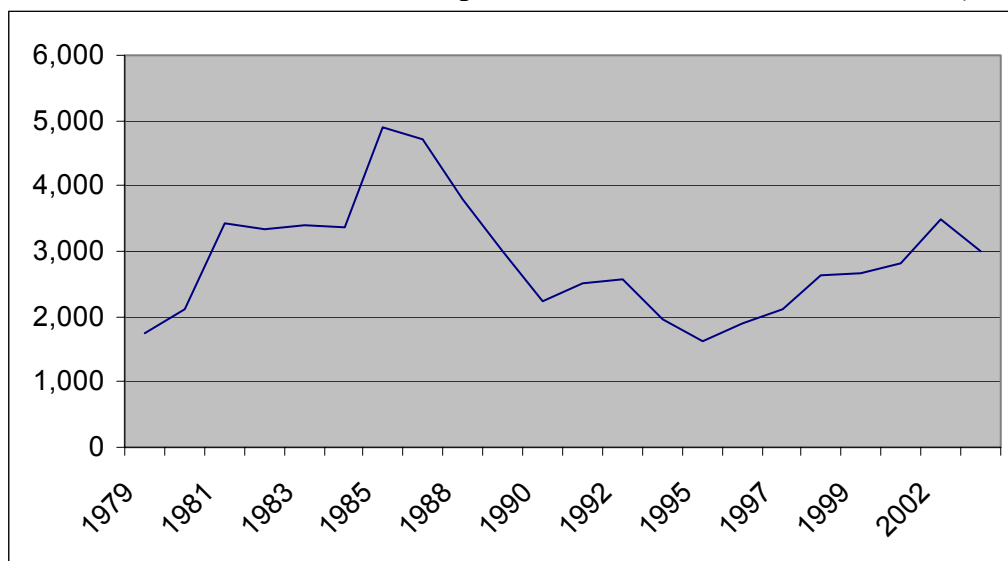
## **3. The trend of studying abroad**

According to the financial source, the Chinese overseas students were sorted into two categories: supported by organizations and self-supported. The first category is

continually divided into two groups depending the property of the organization: state sponsored overseas students who is sent overseas by China Scholarship Council, a non-profit institution affiliated with the Ministry of Education of China; and the other organizations supported students, such as by ministries, provincial governments or other organs and companies.

Along with Deng Xiaoping's direction, the Education Ministry of China quickly organized a English test in 1978, through which 3,348 people were selected as candidate students sent overseas to study. There were 1,750 state sponsored people sent overseas to study the next year, which is larger than the total number of previous 5 years (1972 to 1978). The flow of Chinese student abroad is generally keeping an increase tendency from then. The amount of Chinese students abroad was over 50 thousands between 1978 and 1987, the first ten years after Chinese economic reform, which is about three times the number between 1949 and 1977. From 1978 to the end of 2003, the total number of Chinese overseas student reached to over 700 thousand, among them, about 173 thousand went back China after they finished studying. Now China has become the leading source of overseas students in the world.

**<Chart 2>: The number of state-sponsored Chinese overseas students (scholars)**



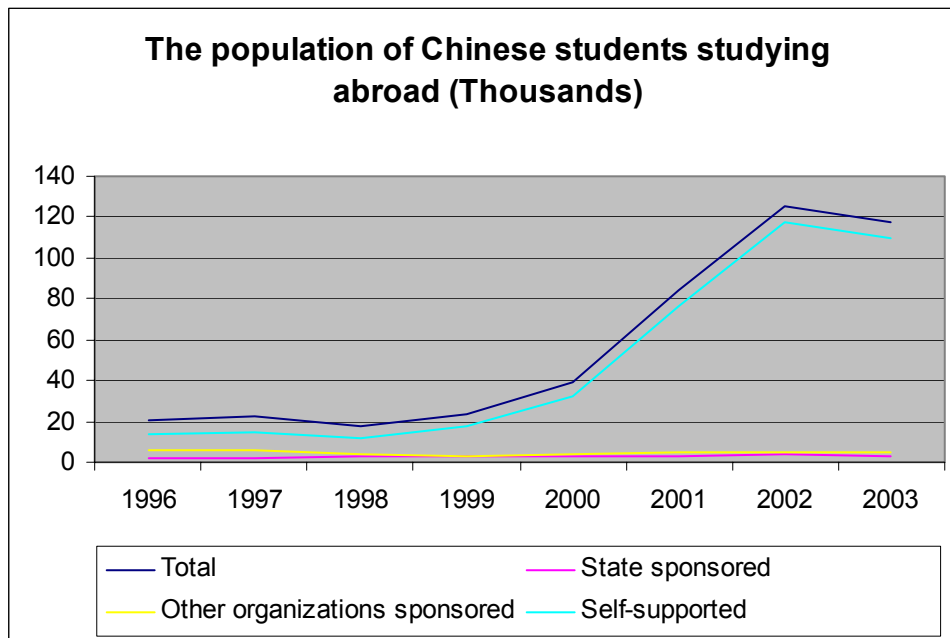
*Source: China Education Yearbook*

There are two parts in the state sponsored Chinese people: visiting scholar and students. For the visiting scholar, they do some research and study abroad for a certain time, usually 3 months, 6 months or one year, but the longest time has been prolonged to two years since 2003. The purpose for them to study abroad is to improve their academic ability on their field, not for any academic degree. The students were referred to those who aim to get some kinds of degree certification, i.e. Bachelors, Masters or PHD. Since the visiting scholar's situation is similar to students to some extent, they are accounted into the category of Chinese students studying abroad in Chinese statistics. So the visiting scholars studying abroad are also considered as students here. Among all the organizations sponsored people, the dominating part is always visiting scholars. For

example, even on the peak in 1983, students (study for degrees) occupied only 47.7%, less than half. By contrast, the proportion of visiting scholars (study not for degrees) has kept going up since then, and it is over 90% now. It indicates that government would like to spend more money on training experienced people, which is thought more efficient.

The number of state sponsored Chinese overseas students (scholars) varied every year, but it did not undulate drastically (to see Chart 2). The biggest number (4,888) appeared in 1985 and the smallest one (1,616) in 1995 between 1979 and 2003. Even though there exists great difference between years, it is not so important and can be neglected compared with the total amount of Chinese overseas students (about 700 thousands between 1978 and 2003). In <chart 3>, the population of state-sponsored shaped nearly horizontal line and the other organization-sponsored shows the same tendency except its figure is slightly higher than state-sponsored. These reveal that Chinese government is still keeping the steady and sustaining steps to sponsor Chinese students studying abroad. Recently China's Ministry of Education is going to sponsor more Chinese learner to study abroad that the number will be more than 5,000 per year after 2007.<sup>19</sup> Even so they will be overwhelmed in the number of self-supported students, the rapid expanding group.

**<Chart 3>: The Population of Chinese Students Studying Abroad (Thousands)**



Source: *China Education Yearbook*

At the early stage of China's economical reform, most of Chinese students studying abroad were organizations sponsored, and self-supported Chinese overseas students were minority. Since Chinese people hardly had enough money to supported themselves studying abroad at that time, most of self-supported students got the financial support from foreign universities and institutes, and a little of them had special background, such as coming from senior official's family or getting foreign relatives' support. Among 50 thousands

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Chinese students going overseas between 1978 and 1987, only one fifth was self-supported students. With the China's booming economy and opening-up policy, some Chinese have got powerful economical ability going overseas to study and the desire of seeing around the world is getting strongly. The number of self-supported students expanded sharply after 1990s, and the peak was in 2002, 117 thousands of them went overseas, make up 94% over the total Chinese students going overseas that year. Self-supported Chinese overseas students is dominating role in the China's international education program. The surge of studying abroad appears.

#### **4. The surge of studying abroad**

The Chinese student population going overseas generally has increased since 1996, although numbers varied within this period and fell substantially in 1998 and 2003.

After entering 21th century, the growing speeded up. There were big jumps in 2000 and 2001 and 2002, by the increase of 65%, 118% and 47% respectively, with a historic height of 125 thousand Chinese students starting their overseas studying life in 2002. It increased fivefold over 1996. As the populations of organizations sponsored maintain the basic balance, the massive contribution to the surge of studying abroad came from self-supported students. Of them, the age distribution spread more widely. In the past time, almost all self-supported students fell in foreign higher education sector. By contrast, now a great number of middle school or college students leave for foreign countries before their graduation, which made the average age of Chinese students become lower. For example, in Shanghai the number of the young students who left China to study abroad in middle or primary school was 30 in 1996, 60 in the next year, over 100 in 1998, more than 1,000 in 1999 and 2000, then over 1,500 after 2001.<sup>20</sup>

In China, studying abroad has become the vogue in the big cities now and attracts young people engaging into the fresh surge.

The causes of forming the huge efflux surge of Chinese overseas students come from several aspects:

- Improved economical states. The Chinese economic development has brought about a certain amount of rich people who have enough economic abilities to send their children studying abroad. Most young children studying in middle school or college were from such families.
- Avoiding the competition of domestic higher education. The Chinese students have to face the drastic competition if they want to go to domestic excellent universities, which forced some students who hardly get the chance to those universities going overseas to receive foreign education. This is why some of the Chinese overseas students' quality is not as good as before. In Chen Tiejuan's book that analysis the problem about Chinese overseas students, he described some Chinese overseas students with low quality as rubbish student. It evoked an argument among Chinese society. On the contrary, some of the self-supported Chinese overseas students got the scholarship from foreign universities at their early stage of study to fulfil Master degree or PhD, who are usually belong to the very excellent group.

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- Avoiding the competition of employment. The huge competition of labour markets makes more Chinese young people to choose higher education when they graduate from domestic universities, in order to strengthen their competitive ability. Studying abroad is one of the best choices.
  - Traditional conception. Traditionally, Chinese people often took knowledge seriously and would like to spend a lot of money and energy on their children's education. Lured by favourable conditions in foreign countries and disappointed to Chinese universities, some families, even though not rich enough, would rather borrow money to send their children overseas to live and study in a better environment in order to make a good future for them.
  - Transferring illegal money. To send their children studying abroad is one of the ways for some corrupt Chinese officials acquiring the illegal money and converting them legally.
  - Government support. The total number of students studying abroad hit 700.2 thousands between 1978 and the end of 2003. Of them, 172.8 thousands have returned China, and 356.6 thousands are still studying or doing research overseas. Corresponding to going overseas, the number of returned Chinese overseas students also increased every year. It is the first time that returned Chinese overseas students over 20 thousands in 2003. China has benefited greatly from them, which makes Chinese government support more overseas students steadily.
  - International education promotion. China is the biggest source of overseas students that attracts international education providers converging in China to promote their education through many ways. So Chinese people can get information of studying abroad easily and makes them closer to the international education market.

In 2003, the number of Chinese students going abroad dropped 6.3 percent from 2002. The reasons for this are: the SARS outbreak made some countries hesitate to receive Chinese students; Ministry of Education tightened the management of substandard intermediary service agencies and prevented some self-supported students from blindly rushing into unqualified and profit-driven overseas schools. This dropping does not mean that the needs of studying abroad of Chinese people decreased, indeed many Chinese people still holding the enthusiasm to it.

## **5. Chinese overseas students wishful destinations.**

The Chinese overseas students are widespread over one hundred countries and regions in the world. Their primary destinations have varied by time. Before the economic reforms, most Chinese students were sent to some socialism countries and developing countries that were in amity with China. After that, when China accelerated its steps to develop, the advanced developed countries became the dominating destinations. For example, Among the state sponsored students, 79.3% went to western countries and Japan in 1989, then it rose up to 80.4% the next year. Of the other organization's sponsored students, the

proportion to western countries and Japan was much higher (94.4%), and only 3.5% to Soviet Russia and Eastern Europe and 2.1% to Asian, African countries.

The prioritized destinations of Chinese students were America, West Germany, Japan, U.K., France and Canada in 1980s. The <Table 1> shows the distribution of Chinese overseas students in the end of 1981. America gathered 45.7% Chinese overseas students alone, West Germany and Japan held about tenth of them respectively, U.K. got 6%, and France and Canada had twentieth respectively.

**<Table 1> The distribution of Chinese overseas students in the end of 1981**

	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>America</b>	3,726	45.7
<b>West Germany</b>	856	10.5
<b>Japan</b>	830	10.2
<b>U.K.</b>	486	6.0
<b>France</b>	427	5.2
<b>Canada</b>	413	5.1
<b>Others</b>	1,413	17.3
<b>Total</b>	8,151	100.0

*Source: China Education Yearbook*

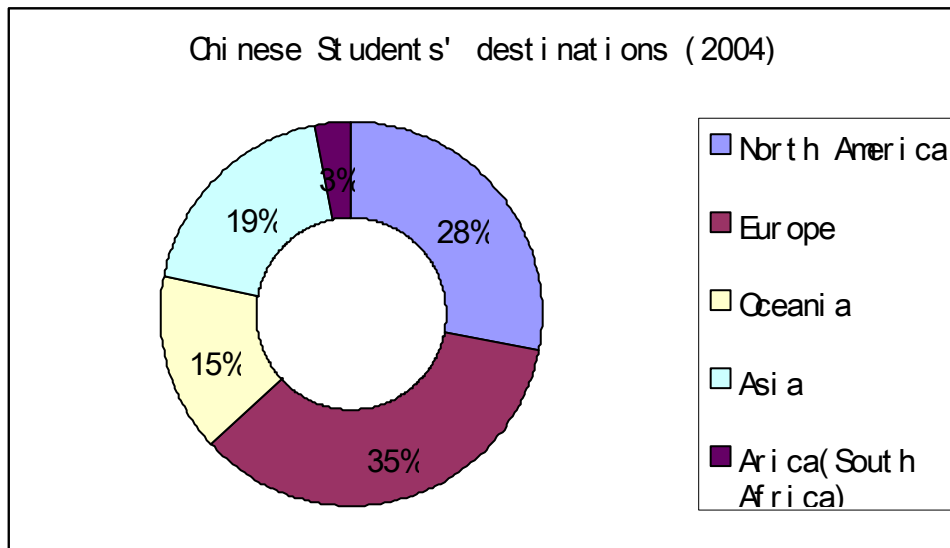
Along with Chinese educational market boosting, many other countries joined the competing procession to share the market after 1990s, and some new countries are on the list of main Chinese overseas students' destinations, such as Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, South Korea, etc. The America's share of Chinese students reduced, even the number is still high. America tightened the policy to issue students visa after 11/9, which makes it more and more complex and trouble for foreign students to get visa to U.S for studying, thus many Chinese students have to give up going there even though America still is the most wishful for many Chinese people. According to the China Press (a newspaper based in U.S.), a report given by 'meeting of postgraduate schools' said 90% of the US universities' research institutes have reported a drop of foreign students, especially those from China and India, applicants of which for admission to US universities' research institutes decreased by 32% in 2004.<sup>21</sup>The Japan's share of Chinese overseas students also shrank significantly. In 1980s and 1990s, Japan was most welcome destination for Chinese self-supported students. However, the falling off Japanese economy diminished Chinese students' passion to be there to some extent. The language is another reason of the reduction. English is in the most popular period, and English study for the second language prevails everywhere in China. Japanese studying is fading for Chinese people recently. The third reason is there are more countries to be chosen for Chinese self-supported students, which dispersed their destinations. The population of Chinese students grew up by 70% in U.K, and 50% in Australia and Canada in 2002.

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The factors considered by Chinese people when selecting the destination are manifold. The organization-sponsored people have few choices because the countries they were going to study in were generally decided by the organizations instead of by themselves. Self-supported students have much freedom to choose the destination countries. The main factors influence the decision of destinations are: the reputation of the destination countries and their universities; the languages and their standards demanded by the destinations' countries; the cost of studying and living; the information about education provider available; the quality of courses; the procedure of getting visa; the scholarship situation, and so on.

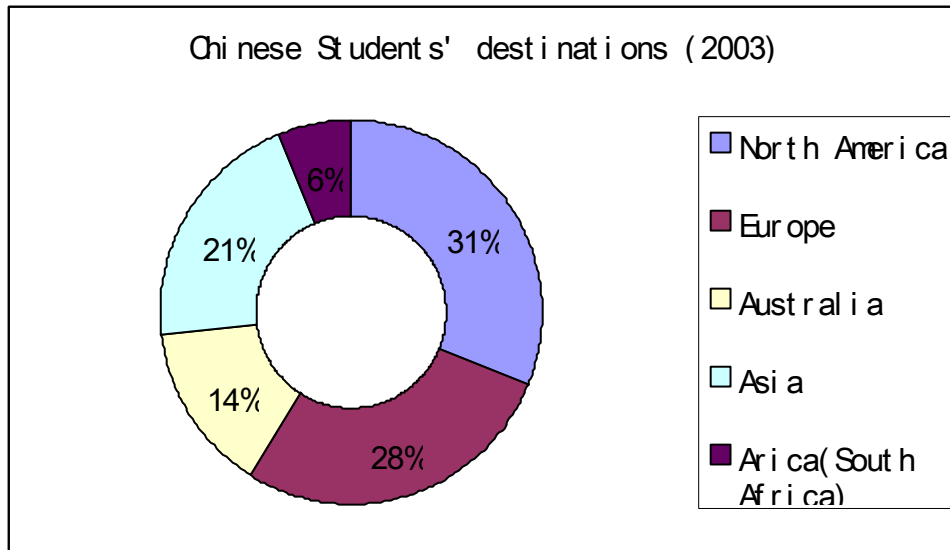
The Post-show report for CIEET has statistical information about the destination of study (see chart 4 and chart 5), which data derived from the audience.

**<Chart 4> A survey of Chinese student's wishful destinations (2004)**



The surveys show that English-speaking countries dominated China's international education market. A significant proportion of Chinese students desire to North America and Europe studying. To compare the data between 2003 and 2004, Europe got the top position instead of North America, with an increase of 7%. By contrast, America dropped about 3%. Because the statistical section was changed from Australia to Oceania, the data of 2004 cannot be fully comparable with that from previous year. Asia countries (which were primary Japan and South Korea) reduced 2 percent for students' wishful destinations, and Africa (South Africa) reduced 3%.

<Chart 5>: The survey of Chinese student's wishful destinations (2003)



## Australia's attraction to Chinese students

### 1. Competition in international education market

The concept of having foreign students studying in Australia was virtually unknown prior to the Second World War. Up until then, there had been a one-way flow of students out of Australia, mainly bound for the 'dreaming spires' of Oxford and Cambridge.<sup>22</sup> Now Australia becomes a top five provider of international education services, behind the US, UK, Germany and France.

Along with the development of economic globalization, the international education market is booming. More and more students go overseas to seek the good education environment. The international educational market is prospered unprecedented. The huge benefit contained in the market was perceived so that many countries have promoted their education services to international students corresponding to the needs.

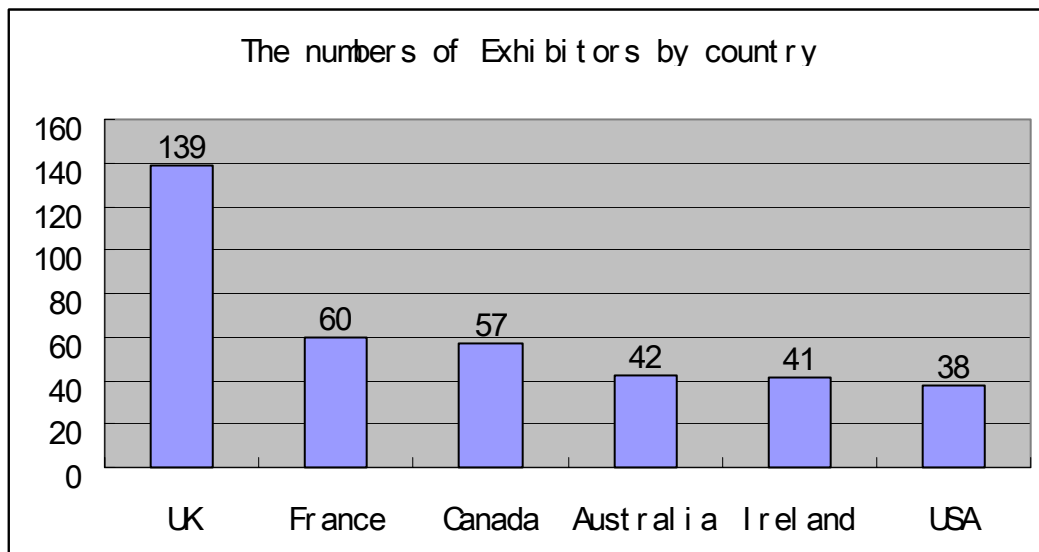
In 2000, British ministers launched a campaign aimed to make Britain a more attractive place to study and to recruit extra 50,000 students from outside the European Union by 2005. The campaign is success so far and the target has met ahead of time. 31,930 students alone came from China between 2002 and 2003.<sup>23</sup>

Canadian government policymakers, educational institutions and other key stakeholders have long recognised the important contribution that foreign students make to Canada's economic and social wellbeing. So efforts have been intensified to attract a growing number of foreign students to choose Canada as a study destination in recent years. For

example, the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act enacted that explicitly acknowledges the benefits of a temporary study period in Canada for prospective independent immigrant applicants: persons who have studied or who have a spouse that has studied for two years in Canada can obtain an extra five points under the new selection criteria.

Australian government enhance the ability to track and respond to the significant changes in the international education market. More attraction to overseas students was endeavoured to make by Australian government. A\$113 million international education package<sup>24</sup> is offered in the 2003/2004 Budget that finance Australia to be a competitive international education provider. Australia now leads the world in producing accurate statistics on overseas enrolments, which is provided by AEI, the Australian Government's International Education Network. In the processing of issuing student visa, greater transparency in the requirements and consistency in decision-making and the integrity of the student visa program are promised. The overseas students can be granted a student visa with permission to work and family members of students who have commenced a Masters or Doctorate degree may apply for unrestricted permission to work. For attracting young overseas students, Student Guardian visa acted out for one of the student's parents or relatives, if the student is under 18 years of age. These major improvements reflect on the Australian Government's commitment to improving services to the international education industry.

**<Chart 6>: The numbers of Exhibitors of top six countries in 9<sup>th</sup> CIEET**



*Source: Post-show report of 9<sup>th</sup> CIEET*

Competition in international education market is hotting up with the more countries paying efforts to up their share and the more traditional old universities now entering. The degree of competition can be sensed from the strength of promotion by every country. In the 9<sup>th</sup> China International Education Exhibition Tour held in February/March in 2004, there were 660 exhibitors from 35 countries and regions. The numbers of exhibitors of

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every country represent their strength of promotion their education export to China. The <Chart 6> shows the six top countries, from which the biggest numbers of educational organizations took part in the exhibition. 139 educational organizations from UK participated this activity, topping over all countries, followed by France, Canada, Australia, Ireland and USA. There were 42 Australian exhibitors together ranking 4<sup>th</sup> in the exhibition to promote Australian international education industry to Chinese people.

Australia has succeeded to export its education industry. For example, in the early 1980s, Malaysia was a important source country of Canadian overseas students, it followed Hong Kong and the USA leading the flows of overseas students. Because of the fierce competition from Australia, by 2001 Malaysia flows in Canada dropped to 37<sup>th</sup>, in contrast, Australia gains Malaysia overseas students number, to being the third largest source of Australia's overseas students. Australia become more widely recognised in the arena of international education after 1990s. It is regarded as a safe, friendly study destination.

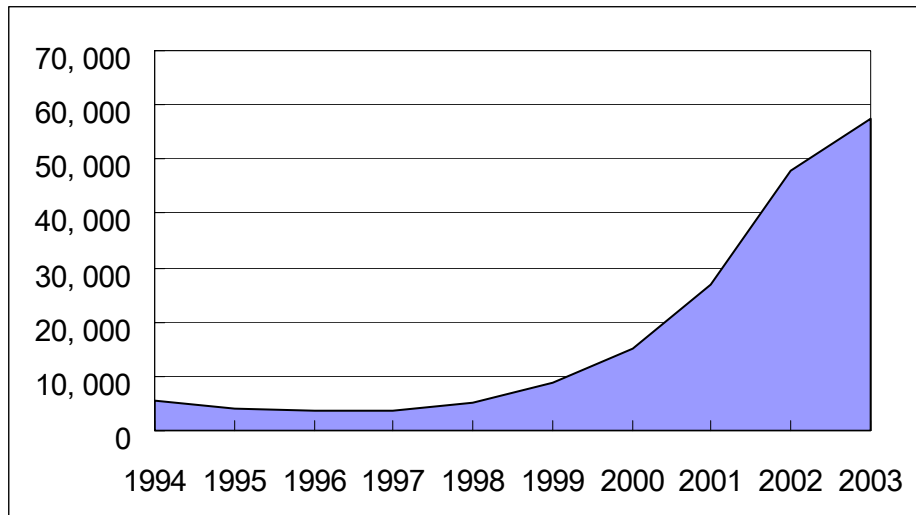
Australia has gained continually benefits from its education exports. Overseas students continue to be a major source of revenues for Australian educational institutions, with their expenditure on fees increasing from A\$883m to A\$2.7b between 1994 and 2002. Overseas students also contribute to the Australian economy more generally. For example, in 2002 they spent A\$2.5b on goods and services while in Australia. This expenditure and the resulting economic activity had an employment impact of around 42,650 jobs. The impact of this activity on real consumption expenditure is around A\$2.0b, while the impact on real GDP is around A\$2.0b or about 0.268 per cent of GDP.<sup>25</sup>

## **2. The growth of Chinese overseas students in Australia**

The Chinese learners are now the fastest growing group of international students in many countries. Huge population and rapid economic growth and strong aspiration of studying make the upsurge of studying abroad in China. China has become the primary source country of overseas students in the world.

China has been the biggest source of Australia's international students since 2001. Before that although China was in the top ten source countries, it continued decline between 1994 and 1996, and its rank also relevant dropped at that period. After China has kept growing tendency, especially in recent years (1999 – 2003) the flows of Chinese students gear up sharply. By an increase 68%, the flows of Chinese students jumped from 5,273 in 1998 to 8,859 in 1999, ranked 8<sup>th</sup> of all source countries. China accelerated its growing speed, with the increase 69%, 80% and 79% respectively in the three years after 1999 to expand its student population in Australia (see Chart 6 and Table 2). The growth rate went down to 20% in 2003 over 2002, with 57,579 Chinese students enrolment in Australia, which accounted 19% of all international students in Australia. The number of 2003 is more than tenfold from 1994. China has been the number one source country for international students in Australia since 2001 (see Table 2).

**<Chart 7>: The population of Chinese students enrolments in Australia**



*Source: AEI – International Education Network*

It should be noticed that the efflux of the total Chinese overseas students was reduced in 1998 and 2003, by the decrease rate 21% and 6% respectively according to the data of China Education Statistics. However, the flows of Chinese students to Australia still increased significantly (by the rate of 38% and 20% respectively). It demonstrates that the attractability of Australia for Chinese students is growing and Australia has become one of the most welcomed destinations to Chinese people.

**<Table 2>: Time Series of Chinese students Enrolments in Australia and Its Change**

	<b>Student Number</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>% Change to compare with the previous year</b>
<b>1994</b>	5,533	8	-24.2
<b>1995</b>	3,879	9	-29.9
<b>1996</b>	3,527	10	-9.1
<b>1997</b>	3,828	10	8.5
<b>1998</b>	5,273	10	37.7
<b>1999</b>	8,859	8	68.0
<b>2000</b>	14,948	5	68.7
<b>2001</b>	26,844	1	79.6
<b>2002</b>	47,931	1	78.6
<b>2003</b>	57,579	1	20.1

*Source: AEI – International Education Network*

### 3. The composition of Chinese students in Australia

The composition of Chinese student by sectors in Australia is varied by time. It can be found from <Table 3> that most Chinese students were studying in ELICOS (English Language Intensive Courses For Overseas Students) in 2001, with 10,902 persons, occupied 40.6% of all enrolment Chinese students in Australia. This proportion is much higher than 21.2%, the one of all overseas students in Australia. Another sector in which Chinese students made up higher proportion than all overseas students is the School Education. The parts of Chinese students in High Education and Vocational Education are significant lower than all overseas students.

Compare with the data of Canada, it can be found some commonness between two countries. In Canada, the division of education sectors is different from Australia (see Table 4), University vs. High Education, Trade vs. Vocational Education, Secondary or Less vs. School Education, Other Post-Secondary (in which, most Chinese students were study in language institutes) vs. ELICOS. Even though the data still can be used to analysis the difference and commonness in students composition between two countries. In Canada, in 2001 the level of University captured about 40% Chinese overseas students, less than 44%, the one of all international students in Canada. In the level of Other Post-Secondary, the proportion of Chinese students is much higher than the one of all overseas students (36% vs. 13%). To compare with all overseas students composition, there are some commonness in Chinese students between Australia and Canada: the proportions of high level (High Education or University) are lower; the proportions of vocational education (Vocational Education or Trade) are also lower; the proportions of language study ( ELICOS or Other Post-Secondary) are much higher. The level of school education is different, higher in Australia and lower in Canada.

**<Table 3>: The composition of overseas students by major sector in Australia, 2001**

	Chinese Students		All Overseas Students	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<b>High Education</b>	9,098	33.9	129,071	55.3
<b>Vocational Education</b>	2,542	9.5	39,845	17.1
<b>School Education</b>	4,282	16.0	15,112	6.5
<b>ELICOS</b>	10,902	40.6	49,380	21.2
<b>Total</b>	26,824	100.0	233,408	100.0

*Source: AEI – International Education Network*

**<Table 4>: The composition of overseas students by the levels of study in Canada, The composition of Australia's overseas students by major sectors (%)2001**

	Secondary or Less	Trade	University	Other Post-Secondary	Other	Total
<b>Chinese Students</b>	11.1	8.3	40.1	36.4	4.1	100
<b>All Overseas Students</b>	23.7	13	44.3	12.8	6.1	100

*Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada*

The population of Chinese overseas students in Australia goes up rapidly. Along with the expanding flows, the composition of Chinese students by sectors also changed. The population of Chinese students in High Education, by an increase 37% from 16,311 in 2002 to 22,394 in 2003 (Table 5), was the top on all education sectors, captured 39% (see Table 6) of Chinese overseas students in Australia. The numbers in Vocational Education and School Education also went up by a significant rate 33% and 21% to 7,659 and 11,778 respectively in 2003. By contrast, the number in ELICOS decreased slightly by the rate 0.6% to 14,546.

**<Table 5>: Chinese students enrolment in Australia by major sectors and its change**

	2002	2003	% change 2003 to 2002
High Education	16,311	22,394	37.3
Vocational Education	5,742	7,659	33.4
School Education	9,712	11,778	21.3
ELICOS	14,887	14,546	-2.3
Others	1,279	1,202	-0.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>47,931</b>	<b>57,579</b>	<b>20.1</b>

*Source: AEI – International Education Network*

**<Table 6>: The composition of Australia’s overseas students by major sectors (%)**

	China's overseas students		All overseas students	
	2002	2003	2002	2003
<b>High Education</b>	34.0	38.9	42.7	44.9
<b>Vocational Education</b>	12.0	13.3	20.1	18.9
<b>School Education</b>	20.3	20.5	8.5	8.8
<b>ELICOS</b>	31.1	25.3	21.3	20.1
<b>Others</b>	2.7	2.1	7.4	7.3
<b>Total</b>	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

*Source: AEI – International Education Network*

In 2003, even though the proportions of Chinese students in High Education and Vocational Education were still lower than those of all overseas students in Australia, they went up fast. On contrast, the proportion of Chinese students in ELICOS went down slightly (0.6%). So Chinese students in the three sectors are corresponding the trend of all overseas students in Australia getting close to them( see Table 6). There was a contrary tendency in School Education. Although 20.3% Chinese students studied in this sector, which is much higher than the proportion of all overseas students (8.5%), the it still grew up to 21.5%.

Most Chinese students prefer to study in America. Many excellent Chinese students chose America to perform their high level study before. Because US tightened up its student visa process to prevent abuse after 11/9, many high level Chinese students alter their choice to Australia. This is one primary reason why Chinese students were rose up its proportion in High Education and Vocational Education. Another reason is the reputation of Australian high education system improved that attracts more Chinese students coming. The third one is that more Chinese young people can afford the studying and living cost in Australia.

Chinese students hold a distinctive proportion in School Education in Australia. Younger Chinese students preferred to Australia to study, where had more flexible learning pathways. They are usual financed by their parents, so their situation reveals the growing of the Chinese rich class. Chinese people always focus on education, which traditional custom has kept for thousands years up today. Chinese parents would like to spend big money on their Children’s education when they have economical abilities. Australia is a

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more accessible and affordable study destination for young age Chinese students than the US and UK and Canada, so it gather big group of them.

Language skill is very important for Chinese people after economical reform. English studying prevails among Chinese people, so it is no wonder why the proportions of language study in Chinese overseas student both in Australia and Canada are large. Most learners were doing preparation for study in university or up level. Even the Chinese students in Australia ELICOS shrank a little bit, it still occupied big part among all Chinese students. Several years before in China, people could get good job if their English were perfect, that caused many people going overseas to study English. Now there are large amount of people who know English very well in China, so if people want a good job, they have to have other skill beside English language, but English is still important for Chinese people. The decrease of Chinese students in ELICOS demonstrates the change happened in China.

#### **4. The attractive areas of Australia**

Australia become Chinese students wishful destination country recent years. The population of Chinese students in Australia has kept the increase tendency since 1996. This is resulted by many factors. The main reasons are:

- Australia is an English speaking country.

According to a survey to Chinese overseas students, many Chinese students decided their destination countries upon the second language they had studied.<sup>26</sup> Most Chinese prefer English as their second language so that English study dominates in primary school, middle school and university. English speaking countries have advantage to attract Chinese overseas students. Indeed many Chinese go overseas for studying professional knowledge, and at the same time they also intend to practice and improve their English skill.

- Flexible learning pathways are offered to Chinese students.

Australia developes its education industry by offering flexible learning pathways that give overseas students more choice. For example, Australia and China plan to carry out a series of cooperative programs, including giving preparatory lessons recognized by Australian universities, and setting up lessons that enable Chinese students to transfer to any Australian universities at any stage of their education. In fact, agreements about educational exchange are an important element of Australia's foreign relations policies with China.

- The courses are affordable and accessible compared with the competitors, the US and UK.

More and more Chinese people can afford the spending on overseas study along with the Chinese economical development, but they have not been rich enough to be insensitive to the cost. To compare with the US and UK, the tuition fee is low and the living cost is also cheap, that droved the Chinese students flowing in Australia. Because of promoting the education export by Australian government, the process of student visa is easier to access than other two countries. This also rose Chinese people's interesting to be there.

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- The Australian education system has good reputation in China.

Many Australian institutions and graduates are highly regarded by world standards. The quality courses, good facilities, excellent researchers and teachers have won the reputation for Australian education in China. This is the critical need to maintain and build on the share in market.

- The promotion of Australia education products is effective in China.

Australia engaged to attract Chinese students by powerful promotion, such as Advertising, education exhibition or fair, websites information, etc. Chinese people can easily get information about Australia education, and know how to arrange studying in Australia. It seems Australian schools are very close to Chinese.

- Many Chinese enjoy Australian nature and social Environment

The beautiful sceneries and good nature environment make Chinese people longing for experiencing the different life. The safe and stable society and multicultural diversity also attract Chinese to Australia.

Additional some other reasons, such as non-discrimination, comfortable climate, relaxed life style, good recreational facilities, etc, those all contributed to the growing of Chinese students in Australia.

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<sup>1</sup> Weili Ye, *Seeking Modernity in China's Name*, page 8, 2001, California: Stanford University Press

<sup>2</sup> Tsing Hua School dispatched students to America from 1911, and stopped in 1929 when it was changed into Tsing Hua University, see Liu Zhen, 1964, *Liu Xue Jiao Yu*(3)-----*Zhong Guo Liu Xue Jiao Yu Shi Liao*, page 1045, Taiwan: Guo Li Bian Yi Guan

<sup>3</sup> Liu Mei Zhong Guo Xue Sheng Hui Xiao Shi, page 223, )-----<*Zhong Guo Liu Xue Jiao Yu Shi Liao*>, Liu Zhen, 1964, Publisher: Guo Li Bian Yi Guan, Taiwan

<sup>4</sup> Liu Zhen, 1964, *Liu Xue Jiao Yu*(1)-----*Zhong Guo Liu Xue Jiao Yu Shi Liao*, page 612-622, Taiwan: Guo Li Bian Yi Guan

<sup>5</sup> Huang Fu-ch'ing, *Chinese Students in Japan in the Late Ch'ing Period*, and Saneto Keishu, *Zhong Guo Ren Liu Xue Ri Ben Shi*

<sup>6</sup> Wang Qisheng,, *Zhong Guo Liu Xie Shi Shang De 'Liu Dai' Liu Xue Sheng*, 1994 10, Journal: Sheng Zhou Xue Ren

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<sup>7</sup> Yao Qi, Qing Mo Fu Ri Fa Zheng Liu Xue Jiao Yu Ji Qi Ying Xiang, 2003 3, Journal: Xin Jiang Da Xue Xue Bao

<sup>8</sup> Liu Zhen, 1964, Liu Xue Jiao Yu(5)-----Zhong Guo Liu Xue Jiao Yu Shi Liao, page 2585, Taiwan: Guo Li Bian Yi Guan

<sup>9</sup> Wang Qisheng, Min Guo Shi Qi Gui Guo Liu Xue Sheng De Chu Lu, March 1994 , Journal: Min Guo Chun Qiu

<sup>10</sup> Weili Ye, Seeking Modernity in China's Name, page 9, 2001, California: Stanford University Press. Wei Heng, pointed there were 1600 Chinese students in France between 1919 and 1920 in the paper of Shi lun Mao Zedong Yu Zhong Guo Liu Xue Jiao Yu, April 1994, Journal: Su Zhong Da Xue Xue Bao,

<sup>11</sup> Wang Qisheng, Min Guo Shi Qi Gui Guo Liu Xue Sheng De Chu Lu, March 1994 , Journal: Min Guo Chun Qiu

<sup>12</sup> Liu Zhen, 1964, Liu Xue Jiao Yu(5)-----Zhong Guo Liu Xue Jiao Yu Shi Liao, page 2793, Taiwan: Guo Li Bian Yi Guan

<sup>13</sup> Weili Ye, Seeking Modernity in China's Name, page 8, 2001, California: Stanford University Press

<sup>14</sup> Wei Heng, Shi lun Mao Zedong Yu Zhong Guo Liu Xue Jiao Yu, April 1994, Journal: Su Zhong Da Xue Xue Bao

<sup>15</sup> Wei Heng, Shi lun Mao Zedong Yu Zhong Guo Liu Xue Jiao Yu, April 1994, Journal: Su Zhong Da Xue Xue Bao

<sup>16</sup> China's Educational Yearbook, 1949 to 1982

<sup>17</sup> China's Educational Yearbook, 1983 to 1985

<sup>18</sup> Data from Chinese service centre for scholar exchange

<sup>19</sup> Data from <http://www.chinaembassy.org.au/eng/jy/t69937.htm>

<sup>20</sup> Date from <http://www.cscse.edu.cn/newnews/2003newnews/20030827002.jsp>

<sup>21</sup> Chinese students applying for US university drastically decreased, People's Daily, [Http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200403/16/eng20040316\\_137636.shtml](http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200403/16/eng20040316_137636.shtml)

<sup>22</sup> Christine Savage and Tony Mckittrick, Australian/Canadian State/Provincial International Education Consortia: A Comparative Study, Paper presented to the 16<sup>th</sup> Australian International Education Conference, Hobart, Australia, 30 September – 4 October, 2002

<sup>23</sup> Data Source: the British Council

<sup>24</sup> More choose to study in Australia, <http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2004/3/14/education/7476007&sec=education>

<sup>25</sup> The Economic Benefits to Australia from International Education, [Http://aei.detya.gov.au/ASC/Products/items/Econbenefit\\_Fin.htm](Http://aei.detya.gov.au/ASC/Products/items/Econbenefit_Fin.htm)

<sup>26</sup> Wang Bichang and Zhu Guoliang, Liu Xue Ren Yuan Zui Xin Dong Xiang Diao Cha, May 2003, Journal: Shen Zhou Xue Ren

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