

# THE IMPACT OF POLICIES ON INTERNATIONAL GRADUATE STUDENTS' ADAPTATION IN CHINA

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## ABSTRACT

In China, the number of international students has been increasing. These students are from different parts of the world, with Asians comprising the largest bulk and Americans and Europeans tailing behind. A stratum of the population is composed of those taking up graduate degrees. The present study probes the psychological and socio-cultural adaptation of international graduate students in the cities of Shanghai and Wuhan in China. Specifically, it examines the influence of national and institutional policies on their adaptation. Using mixed methods design, the study had 302 foreign graduate students as survey participants. Fourteen of them participated in the interviews. Correlation results showed that policies have a significant influence on adaptation. The interviews also illuminated insights on how policies have affected their adaptation in different ways. Given these findings, the study implicates the need to review and formulate policies to facilitate the adaptation of international graduate students.

**Keywords:** *policy, international students, adaptation*

In China, the number of international students enrolled in state and private universities is increasing in great strides (Project Atlas, 2015; Pan, 2013). These students are from different parts of the world, with Asians comprising the largest bulk and Americans and Europeans tailing behind. A stratum of the population is composed of those taking up graduate and post-graduate degrees in more than 2,000 higher education institutions.

The number of international students in China is said to be staggering. In obvious terms, what boosted such a remarkable increase is China's economic development, enhanced popularity of the Chinese language among foreigners and internationalization initiatives by the education sector. By 2020, the population of foreign students is expected to increase by 95%, with the government envisioning China as Asia's largest destination of international students (BeBe, 2012; Pan, 2013).

With the growing trend of internationalization of universities, intensified by the mechanisms of globalization, studying abroad is increasingly becoming a common experience. These experiences provide cultural and intellectual nourishment for international students. This prospect appears to be inviting but undeniably, living in another environment is not without challenges. International students need to have the resilience and flexibility for successful adaptation. It becomes imperative then to understand how they adapt, the factors that facilitate or impede their adaptation and the role the latter takes in shaping their daily lifestyle, cultural

backgrounds and academic performance. Despite a very vibrant literature on the adaptation of foreign students, there are still some issues that are limitedly explored and which this proposal would attempt to tackle. One of these issues is the capacity of policies to facilitate or impede students' adaptation.

The present study undertakes the role of policy in adaptation. Such an undertaking is important because broader forces govern the lives of international students. At a national level, international students, like many other foreign students in different Chinese universities, are bounded by a number of government policies that regulate their entry and stay in China. Meanwhile, at an institutional level, they are subjected to various academic policies. It would be interesting to see how encompassing policies are in the adaptation process of international graduate students. At the moment, only a limited number of studies have considered such an undertaking. A study by BeBe (2012) shows that the extent of problems of international students studying in China is not widely addressed in policy. The author draws implications for policy-making if China truly wants to attain its vision of being Asia's melting pot of international students by the year 2020. However, this present study is a departure from BeBe's research in that it is empirically based rather than merely drawing on implications for policy-making. It seeks to extend an understanding of the role of policies by gathering participants' insights on current national and institutional policies and how these policies, in turn, impressed their adaptation in the universities.

All told, the present study probes the psychological and socio-cultural adaptation of international graduate students in the cities of Shanghai and Wuhan in China. Specifically, it examines the influence of national and institutional policies on their adaptation.

Employing a mixed methods design, this research seeks to answer the following questions:

- Do policies significantly influence international graduate students' psychological and socio-cultural adaptation?
- How do students perceive the impacts of national and university policies on the ways they adapt in China?

### **Limitations of the study**

This study investigated the influence of policies on the psychological and socio-cultural adaptation of foreign graduate students in China. By doing so, there is a more nuanced understanding of their perceptions and experiences. However, the findings need to be viewed in light of a few limitations.

First, the present study focuses on the perceptions of international students about various national and institutional policies that guide their academic and daily life in China. This study lacks the direct interaction with policy-makers, who could have offered richer and more direct information and interpretations about the formulation of policies and their impacts on foreign students' adaptation.

Second, the predispositions of the first author as a foreign graduate student might have affected, unintentionally speaking, the interpretations of the findings, especially the qualitative ones. To minimize the effects of this position on the integrity of data, there was a research informant to work with the initial data and minimize biases.

Third, the findings of the present study cannot be made highly conclusive because this study draws on the perceptions and experiences of international students enrolled in universities in Shanghai and Wuhan. Moreover, only a number of participants were selected for the interviews. Thus, the results of the study are not intended to be generalized to the whole population of international students in China, even though the study may reveal some commonalities in the experience.

Lastly, this study did not further investigate the influence of demographic variables (e.g., age, family income, gender, etc.) and other factors (e.g., multicultural personality, social support, etc.) that might have yielded equally interesting findings. Future studies may consider looking at other variables closely for these groups.

## **Literature Review**

The internationalization of higher education institutions has a long history (Nelson, 2003). It started during the mid-twentieth century when American universities dramatically increased the size and scope of their regional collaborations, which basically entailed

cooperation and linkages with universities and colleges across all states. In 1966, the US government passed the International Education Act of 1966. One of the core provisions was to offer aid to new graduate centers with national and international resources for research and training. The earliest programs to secure these grants were in the area of foreign-language instruction. Through this act, a Far Eastern Language Institute was established, which ran summer classes in Chinese and Japanese. Participation grew from 125 students in 1963 to 207 in 1966 (Nelson, 2003). Aside from language institutes, the Act gave rise to other endeavors such as university consortiums, agriculture institutes, study abroad programs and foreign student recruitment. These mechanisms of internationalization enabled American higher education to expand its global reach (Nelson, 2003).

The spirit reached Asian shores in the same year during a conference held at the University of Hong Kong called “University Cooperation and Asian Development.” Funded by the Asia Foundation, the conference was attended by 29 university delegates from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, Korea, Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam, Laos, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Australia and the United States. This conference set the stage for Asian universities to engage in internationalization as all delegates emphasized the ways in which partnerships would enable universities to reposition themselves for new forms of *global* engagement (Nelson, 2003). From then on, internationalization of higher education has been high in the agenda of China.

Internationalization is, of course, not possible without establishing policies. National policies that concern international students in China fall into four categories: (1) organizational system, (2) funding, (3) faculty, and (4) qualification. According to Sun (2001), policies of the organizational system are the basis that impacts the adoption of other policies. Funding policies focus on how to collect, distribute, and use funds. Policies on faculty are concerned with building a team of high-quality professors to serve and support international students. Qualification policies relate to quality standards for recruiting and cultivating international students. Throughout the decades, the government has created and re-created policies in each of the aforementioned categories. There is not enough space to mention them all. For now, it is sufficient to say that the rationale behind national policies with regard to international students is what Knight (2004) calls *strategic alliances*. Strategic alliances are a combination of political and economic rationales. Through policies that increase international education activities, China is aiming to achieve stronger economic and political alliances, which improves their international image, as well as their competitive advantage in the global market. In the light of development of the domestic economy and the involvement of the globalized market, the economic rationale is becoming more emphasized as well. China expects to gain more economic benefits from close political relations with other countries. All of these are the reasons why China is aggressive in recruiting more and more international students.



## Method

### Participants

The participants were 302 international graduate students enrolled in English-taught graduate programs at various universities in Shanghai and Wuhan in mainland China. Most are nationals from the Philippines, Cambodia, Pakistan, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Russia and Vietnam. The majority of them belong to the 26 to 30 years old age bracket. Most of them are single, male, enrolled in master's programs and have been staying in China for more than a year.

### Instruments

To measure the index of adaptation, the present investigation utilized a survey that comprises three parts. The first part is the standardized Brief Psychological Adaptation Scale (BPAS). The second part is the Brief Socio-cultural Adaptation Scale (BSAS) created by Demes & Geeraert (2013). The third section consists of questions that relate to their views about government and university policies.

Focus group interviews were conducted to elicit perceptions on the impacts of policy on adaptation. An interview protocol was designed in order to gather responses specific to each of these categories.

### Data analysis

The first research question demands quantitative analysis. The hypothesis ( $H_1$  = Government and university policies have significant



influence on adaptation.) was tested via Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient.

The second research question, on the other hand, requires qualitative analysis. In analyzing the interview data, patterns of responses were identified. There was a review of the transcripts, refinement of the responses, revisit of transcripts, until stable sets of responses were developed.

## **Findings and Discussion**

### **International Graduate Students' Adaptation**

Before discussing the relationship between policies and adaptation, it is imperative to describe first the psychological and socio-cultural adaptation of the respondents in China. To illustrate the extent of their adaptation, their responses to the adaptation questionnaire are reported in the tables below.

Table 1 shows the mean percentages of each response for negative (-) statements in Part 1 (psychological adaptation) of the questionnaire.

**Table 1**  
*Mean Scores of (-) Statements  
 about Psychological Adaptation (N = 302)*

Item	Never (%)	Almost never (%)	Very rarely (%)	Rarely (%)	Occasionally (%)	Frequently (%)	Very frequently (%)
1. I feel out of place, like I don't fit into Chinese cultures.	12	15	9	28	23	12	1
2. I feel sad to be away from my home country.	8	13	21	21	26	7	4
3. I am nervous about how to behave in certain situations.	4	15	20	24	23	11	3
4. I am lonely w/o my family and friends around me.	8	20	26	22	17	5	2
5. I am homesick when I think of my home country.	15	16	19	22	21	6	1
6. I am becoming frustrated by difficulties adapting to China.	12	20	21	24	14	8	1

7. I have difficulty communicating with the locals using their native language.	7	13	14	16	18	30	12
8. I find it challenging to socialize with the locals because I cannot understand and speak in Mandarin.	4	12	14	18	20	24	8
9. It is difficult to go to public places for I cannot understand & speak in Mandarin.	7	13	13	18	17	22	10
10. I find it challenging to cope with university policies for international students.	12	20	22	16	17	11	2
11. I find it challenging to cope with gov't. policies for international students.	12	19	25	15	18	10	1
x	9.18	16	18.55	20.36	19.45	13.27	4.09

The highest mean ( $x = 20.36$ ) is recorded under 'rarely' response. This is followed by 'occasionally' response at  $x = 19.45$ . The difference between the mean scores of the two responses is modest, indicating that the challenges the respondents encounter in the host country and their universities affect their psychological adaptation from time to time. Meanwhile, 'very frequently' response registers the lowest mean ( $x = 4.09$ ), subsequently followed by 'never' response ( $x = 9.18$ ) and 'very rarely' response ( $x = 16$ ).

Table 2 below shows the mean percentages of each response for positive (+) statements in Part 1 (psychological adaptation) of the questionnaire.

**Table 2**  
*Mean Scores of (+) Statements  
about Psychological Adaptation (N = 302)*

Item	Never (%)	Almost never (%)	Very rarely (%)	Rarely (%)	Occasionally (%)	Frequently (%)	Very frequently (%)
1. I feel excited about being in China.	0	3	5	14	24	37	17
2. I feel a sense of freedom being away from home.	6	6	10	18	20	25	15
3. I feel curious about things that are different in China.	6	12	12	20	23	19	8
4. I am happy with my day-to-day life in China.	1	6	8	11	30	36	8
$x$	3.25	6.75	8.75	15.75	24.25	29.25	12

Obtaining the highest mean ( $x = 29.25$ ) is the 'frequently' response, followed by 'occasionally' ( $x = 24.25$ ), 'rarely' ( $x = 15.75$ ), 'very frequently' ( $x = 12$ ), 'very rarely' ( $x = 8.75$ ), 'almost never' ( $x = 6.75$ ) and 'never' ( $x = 3.25$ ). These results suggest that the respondents are psychologically adjusting in a positive manner. Persistently, they feel a sense of independence, curiosity and happiness in their daily lives in China.

One interesting observation found in the table above is Item 1 (*I feel excited about being in China*). In comparison with other items, no one reported that they never felt any excitement to live and study in China. This nil figure suggests that there is a positive psychological adaptation among the respondents in this study.

Part 2 of the questionnaire illuminates the socio-cultural adaptation of the respondents. The following table gives a picture of the extent of socio-cultural adaptation among the respondents:

**Table 3**  
*Mean Scores of Statements about*  
*Socio-Cultural Adaptation (N = 302)*

Item (How easy or difficult it is for you to adapt to...?)	Extremely hard (%)	Hard (%)	Quite hard (%)	Average (%)	Quite easy (%)	Easy (%)	Very easy (%)
1. Climate	6	9	17	32	19	12	6
2. Natural environment	4	8	19	34	18	12	7
3. Social environment	3	10	21	31	17	13	6
4. Living	5	8	19	33	17	13	6
5. Practicalities	2	7	8	23	26	25	9
6. Food and eating	3	11	13	23	22	18	10

7. Family life	3	12	13	28	29	9	5
8. Social norms	3	8	17	29	21	16	6
9. Values and beliefs	4	8	20	32	20	12	4
10. Local people	5	9	20	24	22	16	5
11. Friends	3	3	10	22	31	27	4
12. Language	6	12	32	18	10	8	4
13. Policies for international students	1	10	16	32	22	17	3
$\bar{x}$	3.69	8.85	17.31	27.77	21.08	15.23	5.77

From the figures above, it seems that the majority of the respondents adapt socio-culturally to an average extent. The highest mean score is recorded in the 'average' response ( $\bar{x} = 27.77$ ). High mean scores are also recorded among positive scales - 'quite easy' ( $\bar{x} = 21.08$ ) and 'easy' ( $\bar{x} = 15.23$ ). The combined scores of 'average' to 'very easy' responses make up 70%, which indicates that in general, the participants have adapted socio-culturally without that much effort.

Conspicuous in the table above is Item 12, which talks about language. Compared to other statements, this item recorded a high 32% under the 'quite hard' response, connoting that socio-cultural adaptation is impeded by the students' lack of ability to catch up with the national language (Mandarin). Validating this particular finding are interview excerpts from the participants, to be illustrated in the subsequent chapter.

All in all, the figures in the foregoing tables indicate that on a periodical basis, the participants have been undergoing difficulties adapting psychologically and socio-culturally. Psychologically, the

majority of the respondents have sentiments that are inimical to their living and studying conditions in the host country. On occasional terms, they feel nervous, homesick, out of place and frustrated. Socio-culturally, a great number of the respondents could adapt but not without challenges. More specifically, they find difficulty in adjusting to Mandarin, the language of wider communication in China.

### **Adaptation and policy correlation**

In the present study, the perceptions of the participations that have been elicited via the questionnaire are divided into two strands: (1) perceptions about government policies, and (2) perceptions about university policies. Table 4 below presents the findings on these two strands.

**Table 4**

*Mean scores of levels of agreement  
toward national and university policies*

Item	To a great extent (%)	To a moderate extent (%)	To a little extent (%)
<b>GOVERNMENT POLICIES</b>			
1. Over-all, to what extent do you agree with the government's policy on international students (Order No. 9 of the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China)?	30	62	8
2a. What is the extent of your over-all agreement with provisions regarding the Administrative System (Chapter 2)?	91	9	0



2b. What is the extent of your over-all agreement with provisions regarding classification, enrolment and admission of foreign students (Chapter 3)?	10	87	3
2c. What is the extent of your over-all agreement with provisions regarding scholarship system (Chapter 4)?	41	30	29
2d. What is the extent of your over-all agreement with provisions regarding teaching management (Chapter 5)?	31	42	27
2e. What is the extent of your over-all agreement with provisions regarding in-campus administration (Chapter 6)?	12	79	9
2f. What is the extent of your over-all agreement with provisions regarding social administration (Chapter 7)?	28	70	12
2g. What is the extent of your over-all agreement with provisions regarding entry, exit and residence-related formalities (Chapter 8)?	10	87	3
<b>x</b>	31.63	58.25	11.38
<b>UNIVERSITY POLICIES</b>			
1. Over-all, to what extent do you agree with university policies regarding academics, accommodation and scholarship review?	18	75	7
2a. What is the extent of your over-all agreement with provisions regarding academics?	9	26	65
2b. What is the extent of your over-all agreement with provisions regarding living administration?	10	80	10
2c. What is the extent of your over-all agreement with provisions regarding scholarship administration?	11	87	2
<b>x</b>	12	67	21

As far as government policies are concerned, the majority of the respondents reported moderate agreement ( $x = 58.21$ ). Next in ranking is 'to a great extent' with a mean score of 31.63. The least mean score ( $x = 11.38$ ) is recorded under 'to a little extent.' Generally, these findings demonstrate that there is an affirmative attitude toward policies crafted by the government as only a sizeable number of the respondents have expressed minor acceptance.

In terms of university policies, it can be seen that moderate agreement generated the highest mean score ( $x = 67$ ). Based on this result, it can be said that the majority of the participants have somewhat tolerable approval of university-based policies. The second highest mean score points to minor agreement toward policies ( $x = 21$ ) while exceptional agreement has the lowest mean score ( $x = 12$ ). These outcomes suggest that a larger number of the respondents have reservations about policies that regulate their academics, accommodation and scholarship. Such sentiments about policies are illuminated in the subsequent section of the present study. It also suggests that there is a more positive attitude toward national policies than university policies. Pertaining to university policies, the response 'to a little extent' produced a higher mean score than that of government policies.

Meanwhile, results on Table 5 below bring to light the correlation between participants' perceptions about government and university policies, and their adaptation. The hypothesis is that policies have a significant relationship with students' adaptation.

**Table 5***Adaptation and policy perception correlation*

Correlation	Policy perceptions
Adaptation	$r = 0.743$ $p < .01$ $N = 302$

The hypothesis is validated, as shown by the positive correlation result above ( $r = 0.743$ ). This indicates that there is a strong and positive relationship between the two variables. This result indicates that when students perceive government and university policies in a positive manner, adaptation becomes more and more manageable.

A closer examination of the relationship between policy and adaptation suggests that the role of policy in the internationalization of universities in China is compelling. As the findings above indicate, policies in both national and university levels either facilitate or impede students' adaptation. In the literature about adaptation of international students, policies have been relegated to the background, suggesting that they are factors of inconsequential use. What the findings above reveal is the opposite: that policies, alongside other factors, are determinants of adaptation.

### **Perceptions about policy and its role in adaptation**

A recurrent response from the interview participants concerns policies. A large number disclosed that policies set by the government and their respective universities have become a

deterrent to their adaptation while a few reported that the policies have aided them in adapting.

In general, the majority of the respondents remarked that policies ought to be stated clearly and in languages that international students understand. One of the respondents, Ally (pseudonym), gives this observation:

*Those policies were never fully clear to me, so I was always asking and asking again. All these policies should be explained in English even before arriving in China. It's like the university management expects that we don't need to be oriented about the policies, but just like any other student, we need a sense of familiarity about each policy so that we'll not be groping in the dark, unsure of what we have been doing.*

One specific academic regulation that the respondents had reservations is about attendance. According to these respondents, it seems that the policy on monitoring the attendance of the students by asking them to affix their signatures at the end of the class is quite trivial. Yuda (pseudonym) explains:

*The attendance policy seems not so clear. Some teachers check our daily attendance while some teachers not even checking the attendance anyway. But is this really needed, that's another question.*

Policies regarding health insurance have also been met with criticisms by the respondents. Richard (pseudonym) commented:

*I think the medical health insurance policies are not well explained, the coverage is too short, hospitals are not good and too few, it is better to have an international health insurance.*

Gino (pseudonym) also narrated the lack of clarity of the health insurance policy, worrying whether it is necessary after all. He said:

*We had insurances, but none of it were really explained in detail. Aside from the fact that they told us that it is required, none of them explained the information after we have registered.*

With these criticisms against the medical insurance policy, the respondents believe that it is not that essential. Because of the gray areas that it brings, it has become a drawback for their adaptation in the host country and university.

Policies pertaining to accommodations are an issue to more than half of the respondents. Luciano (pseudonym) reported:

*I am completely fine with the accommodation arrangements given to me in the university where I studied. We are staying in a dormitory for foreign students, just right across the main campus. But I sense*

*that security is a bit lacking since the guard rarely checks the identification of people who enter the dorm premises.*

Inconsistency in policy implementation is also encountered by Gino (pseudonym). As he observed that selection of students' accommodations was political in nature, he commented about the irregularity of implementing the policy:

*The way they segregate the students based on their class. Some or most of the politically-related students gets to live at the better dorm, and most of the normal students had to live in the old dorm which is not at par compared to the other dorm. They also have some inconsistencies when it comes to regulations. If you know someone from the office, it is most likely that one could get away from an issue that happened.*

Another burning issue for the majority of the respondents is the scholarship policy. Richard (pseudonym) narrates,

*The amount of stipend is still low, not enough for a foreigner to live in China and cities like Shanghai, the country and this city is more expensive than ever. The Chinese government raised the stipend but took off book allowance and electricity allowance, so the students need to spend more in the end. Chinese government should provide Internet access to scholars, since it is a basic tool for academic and personal life.*

The main issue that Richard raised is that of the provisions in the scholarship regarding stipend. As he pointed out, while the stipend has been increased, other benefits have been stripped away such as book and electricity allowance.

While most of the policies have impeded the respondents' adaptation, there are those who responded that they have facilitated their adaptation to some extent. One of these respondents is Rachel (pseudonym) who remarked:

*There weren't much in the policies that gave me concerns. I mean, mostly were just about not smoking in the dormitories, no drinking or parties... all these I actually agree and they helped me because I don't want any problems and I hate it when people party in the middle of the night. So policies are okay. It is the management of these policies, which is more of a problem, at least as far as accommodations are concerned.*

In the extract above, it can be seen that policies can also have positive effects, only when the conditions of clarity and enforcement have been met. In the case of Rachel above, the policies have been favorable for her adaptation. Except on the level of policy implementation, it seems that the policies governing her living and study in the host country have been more of a boon than bane.



## Conclusion and Recommendations

This study aims to identify the correlation between adaptation and policies. It also aims to analyze the perceptions of the participants about the impacts of these factors on their adaptation. Though in no way definitive and generalizable, considering the constraints of the present study, it can be said that policies play an important role in the adaptation of international graduate students in China. The rules and regulations set by the government and university appear to shape their ways of re-constructing their experiences of living and studying in China. Policies that are unclear, inconsistent and insensitive to the needs of the students can be unhealthy for their psychological and socio-cultural adaptation.

Considering the limitations of the study, it becomes noteworthy to address the questions below for further research:

- Will comparable results take place if the number of interview participants is increased?
- Will similar findings be obtained if a larger number of universities were to be included in the study?
- Will there be comparable results if international undergraduate students are taken into account in the analysis?
- Will results be comparable if the impacts of previous policies about international students on adaptation are examined?

- Will the findings be the same or different had there been other variables to be correlated with adaptation?

### **Policy implications**

A number of implications for policy-making and implementation can be drawn from the findings. Language barrier is one of the main issues in the participants' adaptation. From this, the present study recommends that the Chinese government make efforts to popularize the Chinese language and other languages. With this, it becomes sensible to create more inclusive language policies. Doing so has a dual purpose: first, they could help current students who struggle with the language; and second, they could increase prospects for foreign students with limited or no Mandarin proficiency to study in China.

The findings herein also demonstrate concerns with the mental health of the participants. Some of the participants in the study reported levels of distress and anxieties that are linked to their problems related to adaptation. However, due to language barriers, the participants might not be able to access China's health services that specifically cater to mental health problems. If left unaddressed, these difficulties may even lead to more serious health problems. In order to minimize these complications, the present study recommends establishing health policies that cater to different migrant students. These policies may include, but not limited to, provisions for general information about mental health and available

services. This information must be able to give direction on how and where to seek appropriate help and also facilitate migrants' education about Chinese concepts of mental health.

Another implication of the study concerns the issue of work. Generally, the current national policy in China is that migrant students are not allowed to gain part-time employment. More recently, the Chinese government announced new policies that include the work rights for foreign university students in Beijing. Under the new policies, foreign students will be able to pursue internships, part-time employment, and even entrepreneurship in the Zhongguancun area of Beijing (Xinying, 2016). Zhongguancun is a science and technology hub in Beijing's Haidian District, more popularly referred to as China's Silicon Valley. To be fair, this is a remarkable policy. However, it looks like that this employment policy is geographically limited. Elsewhere in the country, there are foreign students who are unable to work, resulting in a restriction of their mobility. Thus, the present study would like to recommend a more geographically inclusive work policy for international graduate students.

Still on employment, should there be policies that allow international students all over China to gain jobs, the study recommends the provision of services by the university for international students to guide and help them find jobs. According to Chen (2016), universities should be able to provide job information for international students and give them the necessary guidance. This

kind of service would make Chinese universities more appealing for international students.

Finally, the present study illuminates the role of higher education institutions in creating and implementing policies for international students. Universities are crucial because they serve as mediators between the government and international students. Stier (2004) states that there should be closer cooperation between policy-makers and students because “there is a mutual lack of familiarity with the other’ expectations, obligations, ideologies and understanding of internationalization” (p. 95). For this reason, the present study recommends that Chinese universities should be given some autonomy in governing the affairs of international students so that they can better understand, guide, and support student expectations and needs, in relation to government rationales (Chen, 2016). With the consideration of both government and international students, Chinese universities could be able to optimize the benefits of internationalization, and minimize potential risks and negative outcomes. With more autonomy, universities could make improvements in their curricula, faculty, activities and other services more responsive to the needs and concerns of international graduate students.

The present study has revealed significant findings about adaptation in light of policies. It is with hope that similar studies be undertaken to gain a wider understanding of the adaptation of international students in China.

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