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INTRODUCTION



Identity and national identity

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ABSTRACT

This article reviews the history of international mobility of students from China to other countries over the century and a half from 1870 to the present day. Different motivations, goals, courses, and knowledge are considered, together with how the purposes of individuals have matched national policy. Implications for the future development in a globalized context are briefly considered.

KEYWORDS

International student mobility; history; China

The issue of identity was originally an issue of traditional philosophy and logic that was transplanted by Freud to the theory of psychology. Later, on the basis of Freud's study, Erikson proposed that 'identity' was actually the clear or obscure answer to the question, 'Who am I?' In Erikson's theory of identity, identity is not only individual, but also collective and social. Identity is the difference, character and sense of belonging found in interpersonal interactions and interactions between groups (Erikson, 1994), and it arises from the self-views that emerge from the reflexive activity of self-categorization or identification in terms of membership in particular groups or roles (Stets & Burke, 2000).

National identity is the product of the development of modern nationalism. Since the French Revolution, modern nationalism is not only an ideology but also a political and social movement based on this ideology. The most direct political product of modern nationalism is the nation-state. Any modern nation-state includes two important aspects. One is the nation-state system and the other is the national identity of the inhabitants in the territory of the state (Zheng, 2004). Cultural identity as a manifestation of social attributes of human beings is also an important medium affecting the identity of individuals and ethnic groups and national identity (Han, 2010). Therefore, national identity refers to the identity of the citizens of a country with their own country's historical and cultural traditions, moral values, ideals, beliefs, national sovereignty, and so on. It is manifested as individuals or groups believe that they belong to a country as a political community (He & Yan, 2008).

China is experiencing the transition from traditional society to modern society. In history, very few countries have ever embarked on such a transition process involving a wide range of social, economic, political, cultural, and other fields. Such a profound transition is bound to bring very acute social pains. The transition from the traditional planned economy system to the market economy system is a profound social change, and it is bound to cause a series of unprecedented changes in political, cultural, social, and other fields. In the wider context of 'social transformation in the context of globalization', the challenges encountered in national identity are more severe.

In a traditional state, individuals and groups are in a relatively stable social environment and a stable living and production space. In those national circumstances, due to the ascribed role arrangement

and the internalization of identity, the identity of individuals and groups does not need construction and choice. However, in the context of globalization, national identity is increasingly becoming a problem, and technological progress extends the defined temporal-spatial boundaries and the fixed network of contacts. As the physical boundaries are constantly changing and being surmounted, a nation-state as the most stable organization carrier is also submerged in the flow of modernity. With the disappearance of determinacy, the mobility of space and the comprehensive relative swapping of the changing concepts of time, space, and culture, national cultural connotation will be emptied, filled, and reproduced, while national identity is encountering obscure anomie at a subjective level and has no objective reference (Jin & Yao, 2014).

Since modern times, China's development has been faced with the two-way interaction promoted by the external forces of the Western civilization and internal social transformation. The flow of education from the end of the Qing Dynasty to present has its own characteristics under different historical conditions at different times and also provides a research perspective for us to understand the evolution of such national identity. In this article, we have studied the waves of sending Chinese students to study over recent history and the impact on national identity at that time based on their social backgrounds and analyzed the development experience of the Chinese government in building national identity against the background of globalization.

Educational mobility as the lens for understanding the evolution of national identity

In 1872, China's first group of international students supported by the government went abroad and they were led by Yung Wing who had gathered them together. This opened the prelude to modern Chinese overseas education. Over the past 100 years, Chinese overseas education has developed from education for elites to education for ordinary people, during which time the transition is a centralized reflection of the changes in national identity in contemporary China.

The beginning: Young children were sent to the United States

Under the pressure of national crisis, the Qing government, for the purpose of cultivating the pillars of society in the future, finally accepted Yung Wing's suggestion. The Qing government believed that it was easier for young children to learn foreign languages and scientific and technical knowledge and they could keep their mind on studying without being dragged down by families, so it finally decided to send children at the age of 12–16 years to study abroad and required that they should only be allowed to return home after 15 years. During the 15 years, the Qing government was not responsible for their illness or death. During the study abroad, apart from learning English and basic courses, these young boys should also learn Chinese: they should go to the Chinese Educational Mission in detachments every three months at that time to learn writing, and the learning contents were permeated with China's cultural traditions.

Regrettably, the attempt to learn from Western progressive countries was not really successful. As the Qing government was afraid that these young children were 'deviant', they were ordered to return home when they had not completed their education as scheduled. After these young children returned home, although the feudal bureaucrats cast doubt on and suppressed these young children, they later had to use the advanced knowledge and skills grasped by these young boys. Therefore, these young boys were repeatedly dispatched by the government to be engaged in various occupations and made great contributions to China's progress even though they were then in trouble (Chen, 2006).

Education in Europe in the early stage

Since 1877, the education of Chinese students in Europe was initiated and organized by the Westernization Group. At that time, the rule of the Qing government was impacted by the Western capitalist powers, so it launched the Self-Strengthening Movement to promote the cause of foreign affairs to consolidate

the feudal rule of the Qing Dynasty. Due to serious shortage of talented people in foreign affairs, it was proposed to send students to study in Europe so that they could receive more comprehensive trainings and acquire the world's most advanced knowledge about ship administration from Europe at that time.

Compared with the first young children to study in the United States, those who were sent to Europe to study ship administration were older and more mature, generally more than 20 years old. They were all outstanding students from Foochow Arsenal Naval College and Tianjin Beiyang Naval Academy, who had good cultural and professional quality and were good at foreign languages. The purpose of sending this detachment was more specific, namely to promote the development of China's naval and shipbuilding business. These students were sent to Britain that was considered to have the world's most powerful navy and France that had the most advanced shipbuilding industry to cultivate China's own naval and shipbuilding personnel. The Qing government had set clear and strict requirements for the schools, majors, courses, and specific internship procedures for these students. The time for their overseas study was 3–5 years. Many students learned professional knowledge and technologies in various schools, and they were also engaged to the British warships or the French factories for internships. The integration of learning and doing produced remarkable results.

Education in Japan

After the Reform Movement of 1898, the Boxer Movement, and the Siege of the International Legations, the Qing government suffered both internal and external blows. In order to maintain the regime facing internal and external troubles, the Qing government began to implement new measures in the early twentieth century and actively encouraged young students to study in Japan and issued the charter for rewarding. Especially in 1905, the Qing government decided to abolish the imperial examination system, and many intellectuals chose to study abroad. Some of them went to Japan. In 1906, the Chinese students studying in Japan reached a climax, and the number of students in Japan was up to 12,000 (Wang, 1993).

During the peak time, some students studying abroad were supported by the government, and there were also many who were self-financed students. In terms of specialties, law, politics, and teaching were their top choices. These specialties were chosen by the students who had gone to Japan to meet the needs of domestic education reform, and after returning home, many of them became teachers in the new-style schools. Due to the strict management and control of the Qing government and the development of China's domestic revolutionary situation, most of them had high revolutionary passion, and they translated a large number of articles and books to introduce the democratic ideology of the Western bourgeois, wrote articles and monographs to propagate revolutions, established various revolutionary groups, and organized a number of revolutionary movements.

Overseas education funded by the Boxer Indemnity

In 1908, the United States decided to return part of the Boxer Indemnity owed by China to the United States in the Siege of the International Legations in 1900 to fund some students studying in the United States. With the establishment of Tsinghua School for Overseas Education in the United States in 1911, more and more students went to study in the United States. The trend of going to the United States began to form in the first years of the Republic of China, mainly driven by the fact that those whose studied in the United States were funded by the Boxer Indemnity, which made this option popular. During the entire period of the Republic of China, the number of students studying in the United States was 15,000–20,000, second only to those in Japan. Students studying in the United States should pass strict examinations, so they had received high-level systematic and formal education, and most of them were successful. In the twentieth century, China's pace-setters in natural sciences, humanities and social sciences mostly emerged from among them, including Hu Shi, Zhao Yuanren, Zhu Kezhen, and other famous scholars.

Work-study in France

The Work-Study Program in France was originally initiated by the civil activists Li Shizeng and his colleagues. During his study in Paris, Li Shizeng achieved success in soybean research, so he founded Paris Chinese Beancurd Company and recruited more than 40 workers from his hometown. In order to improve work efficiency, he also ran a night school to teach workers French and general scientific knowledge. This is the initial form of work-study in France (Zhao, 2009). The outbreak of World War I created a propitious environment for the development of China's national capitalism, and this needed a large number of talented people. At that time, Japan issued the Twenty-One Demands to China, which led to a large number of students returning home. This brought an opportunity for the development of the Work-Study Program in France. During this period, the spread of social philosophies, such as anarchism, pan-laborism, socialism, and pragmatism, also urged the young people to go to France for study, and at its peak the number of students reached more than 16,000.

The Work-Study Program in France emerging around the May 4th Movement opened up a new way to study abroad. At the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, the class contradictions and ethnic contradictions in China were unprecedentedly acute, leading to the outbreak of the Revolution of 1911, in which the national bourgeoisie came to power. In 1912, in order to popularize education, promote industrial development, and revitalize the country, Li Shizhe, Cai Yuanpei, Wu Zhihui, and some others initiated and organized the establishment of the Association of Studying in France in Beijing, to finance and encourage young students to go to France for study. They subsidized the costs and selected those with a hard-working spirit.

Studying in the Soviet Union

After the founding of New China, overseas education has entered a new historical period. The period from 1949 to 1966 before the Cultural Revolution is the first stage of overseas education, and unlike the previous large-scale studying in the United States, Japan, and Europe, there was a wave of going to the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe for study in the early years after the founding of New China. Since 1951, in order to meet the needs of national economic development, New China began to send a large number of students to the Soviet Union formally, and 375 students were sent to the Soviet Union that year to meet the needs of engineering and technical personnel for developing the heavy industries. By 1966, China had sent a total of 10,668 students to study abroad, who mainly went to the Soviet Union and other socialist countries. Among them, 8414 students went to the Soviet Union, accounting for 78.87% of the total number of students studying abroad (Su, Lei, & Zhang, 2000). Between 1949 and 1978, the number of student who studied abroad at their own expense was almost zero. These students studying abroad were all funded by the government in a planned manner. They were responsible for the glorious mission of building the New China. Therefore, they listened to the call of the state, including the places of study, specialties, and workplaces after returning home, and they unreservedly accepted the organizational arrangements.

Becoming popular after the reform and opening up

The period from 1978 to the beginning of the 1980s is a new stage of overseas education. After 10 years of isolation in the Cultural Revolution, overseas education recovered gradually and regained the characteristics of China's overseas student body which had traditionally been dominated by only the very best. In 1978, the first detachment of 52 government-funded students after the reform and opening up flew to the United States, and all the government-funded students in the early stage had experienced the turbulence of the Cultural Revolution. They were given the opportunity to study abroad when the country's economic conditions were very backward, so this generation of students had a strong sense of mission and high enthusiasm for serving the motherland. In 1984, the State Council promulgated the *Interim Provisions on Self-Financed Study Abroad*, opening the door to self-financed study abroad

and ushering in a wave of overseas education. After 2000, in particular, as the restrictions on going abroad for study were lifted and people's income were increasing, the market for overseas education was constantly developing and became mature. Students heading abroad were no longer confined to a few elites but expanded to cover more and more ordinary people. In the meantime, the government issued a variety of policies to encourage overseas students to return home, forming a positive interaction between going abroad and returning (Figure 1).

Analysis of the transition in education mobility and identity evolution

China has a vast territory, rich resources, and a long history of civilization. From the Qin and Han dynasties to the Tang and Song dynasties, the surrounding countries were all influenced by China, and due to such long-term advantages, the modern Chinese had a sense of superiority and thus developed a closure mentality (Wu, 2000). In the history of China, China's national concept was a 'world' concept centering on the Han civilization and not equivalent to the national concept in the modern sense. Only in the face of a crisis would identity become a problem (Larrain, 2005). In the collision of modern civilization, China once serving as the whole world retreated to become a country in the world (Levenson, 2000). Looking back on the history of overseas education in modern times, students studying abroad, as a special group of intellectuals, felt the collision of civilization and were closely linked with the development and progress of Chinese society, and they have been constantly shaping the time connotation of national identity.

Analysis of the phenomenon of overseas education in the Qing Dynasty and the Republic of China

In the 20 years of the Opium War, the insightful personages represented by Wei Yuan and Lin Zexu began to find a way to resist the enemies and build a powerful nation. They proposed the slogan of 'subduing the enemies by learning from their strong points', and since then Western advanced ideas and technologies began to flood into China, setting off a modernization movement focusing on study and the introduction of modern Western science and military technologies. But the palace of the Qing Dynasty and the Chinese people did not change the inherent mentality, and even the later activities

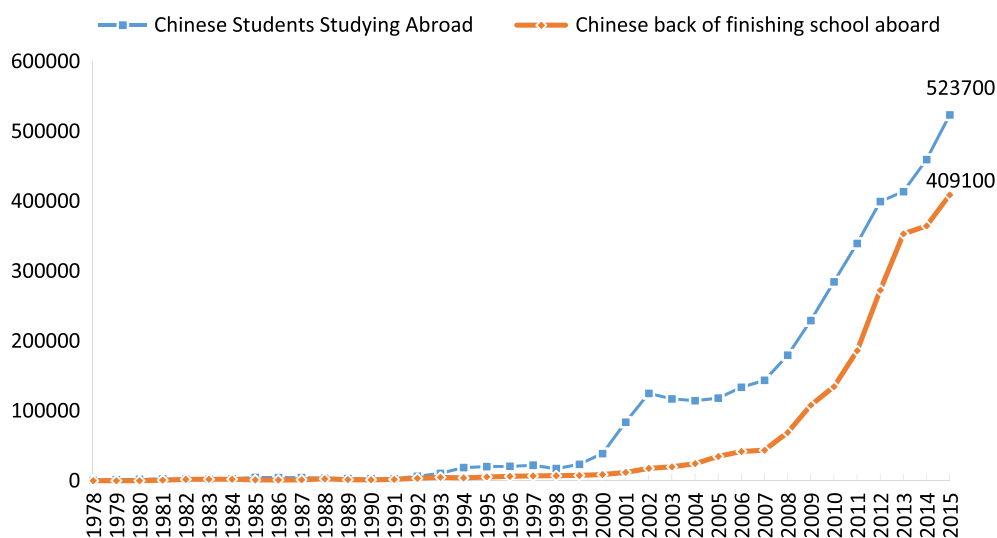


Figure 1. Statistics of China's overseas students and returned overseas students since the reform and opening up. Source: The National Bureau of Statistics (2017). China Statistical Yearbook 2016. Beijing: China Statistics Press.

of learning from the West were also limited to 'strange skills', and they did not want to subvert or even touch the traditional national concepts and culture.

Therefore, in terms of the initial reason for withdrawing the young children from the United States, although there were many accidental factors, it was the inevitable result of the rulers' using the power in their hands to defend the feudal traditional culture and resist the bourgeois culture after the conflicts between Chinese studies and Western studies (Li, 2006). The motive for sending students to Europe was the same as that for sending the young children to the United States, and the Qing government sent students to Europe to meet the needs of foreign business affairs, but it was more specifically and clearly linked with the founding of the Navy. The strong involvement of the government and the confluence of political and intellectual elites showed that the main theme of modern overseas education was 'salvation'. Whether thinking of the early young children sent to study in the United States, the students sent to study ship administration in Europe, or the wave of going to Japan in the late 1890s, the main demand was salvation and survival, behind which was the traditional Confucian idea, the 'rise and fall of a nation rests with every one of its citizens'.

In terms of overseas education in modern times, especially before the abolition of the imperial examination system, government-funded overseas education was aimed at saving the country, and, in addition to the purpose of personal utilitarian, most students studying abroad still had the dream of studying abroad to save the country. With the development of the times, in the path of national identity, two types of political elites and intellectual elites were gradually differentiated. One type covered those who 'studied abroad for political purposes' under the influence of political changes in China, to find the truth and save the nation and the people and serve revolutionary needs. The other type covered those who 'studied abroad for seeking knowledge' driven by China's economic development and modern transformation of culture to transplant the West Culture and use it for our own purposes under the cultivation of modern academics (Li, 2004). Students in the United States and Europe studied scientific knowledge. Students in Japan showed relatively stronger interest in politics, and a number of politicians, soldiers, literati, and artists were emerging among them. The work-study students in France also got in touch with the base of Western society, had personal experience of the deep-seated class contradictions and social contradictions in Europe, and a considerable number of them accepted Marxism and devoted themselves to China's political reform.

Wang Guowei, Cai Yuanpei, Liang Qichao, and other people of their generation basically undertook the academic mission. That is, on the one hand they were still the elites cultivated by the traditional learning system, but on the other hand, they relatively consciously went to study abroad and to seek knowledge in the world. They were essentially different from those of Yan Fu's generation who were sent to Europe by the government to study ship administration with the objective of taking away the theories of Western studies. After the emergence of the generation of Chen Yinque, Hu Shi, and Guo Moruo, the good times for overseas education finally came. They finally established the Chinese modern education and academic system and spirit, thus laying down the basic track for the advancing of modern China.

The goal of the movement to save the nation of the students in the United States and Europe was to maintain the rule of the Qing dynasty, and the goals of the students in Japan, the United States and France later were different. The previous national salvation movement basically remained at the physical level, while the later trend of studying abroad was to reflect on their own national identity at a higher institutional level. They had further realized the conflict and relationship between local culture and foreign culture, the tense relationship balance between other cultures and the challenges from how to rebuild the national subjectivity in the new overall context.

Analysis of the phenomenon of studying abroad since the founding of New China

The wave of studying in the Soviet Union in the 1950s after New China was founded was closely linked with the special international environment and the domestic situation at that time. As China needed to maintain a friendly attitude towards the Soviet Union, it became China's choice to send students to the Soviet Union and other Eastern European socialist countries. In the process of selection, students

should first pass the strict political review and should be politically reliable and have a high degree of political awareness, which were the most important criteria for selecting students. Those who were sent abroad were mostly cadres, workers, and peasants, and the strict political imprint was the most distinctive feature.

Since the reform and opening up, the channels to study abroad have been broadened. Apart from the surge in the number of government-funded students, self-financed study abroad also developed considerably, and to achieve personal utility became the main motivation for studying abroad. After the 1980s, under the impact of reform and opening-up ideology and the influence of globalization and 'global village', national identity was continuously expanded, and studying abroad was regarded as an important way of personal human capital investment. Many people wanted to expand their horizons and enhance their competitiveness through studying abroad, and with the passage of time, such a valuable pursuit was also more and more acceptable to people.

Constructing national identity in postmodern era

After entering the twentieth century, China's national crisis was deepening. While exploring the policies for saving the nation, many people with lofty ideals sought overseas education, and there have been waves of scholars heading abroad to study in Japan, the United States, Europe, and the Soviet Union. Overseas education focused on practical technologies in the early stage, and later its focus was shifted to social sciences, natural sciences, and Marxism–Leninism. Students abroad took national salvation as their responsibility, applied the new knowledge they had acquired in the revolutionary struggles and the practice of saving the nation by education and science, and several generations of revolutionary leaders and modern science and culture founders had been cultivated. Generations of students who have studied abroad were closely linked with the modernization of China, they had promoted China's modern social transformation and social development in various fields, broadening and deepening the Sino-Western cultural exchanges, narrowing the gap between China and the developed countries, showing the strong repair ability of Chinese culture, and enabling the Chinese civilization to last till now. With the strengthening of China's comprehensive national position, China is shaping national identity with a more positive attitude and building consensus for the further development of the Chinese nation through strengthening cultural self-confidence.

Building the soft power of Chinese culture

To further shape national identity, China is building its cultural soft power at the policy level represented by Chinese roads, Chinese theories, Chinese system, Chinese spirit, Chinese programs, Chinese rules, and Chinese wisdom. First, China is improving its public cultural service system, cultural industry system, and cultural market system so that the socialist culture system with Chinese characteristics is more mature. Second, China is implementing the Chinese excellent traditional culture heritage and development programs to achieve transformation and innovation of the creativity of Chinese culture and make the most basic cultural genes of the Chinese nation adaptable to the contemporary culture and compatible to the modern society. Third, China is constructing a modern communication system characterized by advanced technology, fast transmission, and wide coverage and has formed a multi-subject, multi-level, multi-form communication pattern to enhance the ability to speak the ability to tell Chinese stories to the world, strengthen the international discourse right, and promote the overseas spread of Chinese culture.

Actively going global

Cultural confidence is reflected in China's actions of going global. In April 2016, the General Office of the CPC Central Committee and the General Office of the State Council jointly issued *Several Opinions on the Work of the Opening-up of Education in the New Era* (the General Office of the CPC Central Committee

and the General Office of the State Council, 2016). Officially, China has emphasized its identity as a responsible power in the international community. On the one hand, China is promoting Chinese language through the Confucius Institutes, promoting language exchanges with various countries in the world and expanding the intergovernmental language learning and exchange programs. In the exchanges with international organizations, China has selected and recommended people of outstanding talent to work in international organizations, improved the education cooperation system of BRICS, expanded the educational cooperation space with relevant international organizations, and actively participated in global education governance. China is actively carrying out educational assistance, increasing support for the developing countries, especially the least developed countries, speeding up the establishment of foreign education training centers and education aid bases, and actively carrying out the integration assistance of high-quality teaching equipment, overall teaching programs and supporting teacher training.

Enhancing the influence of China's education

Building an education power is the world trend. Building an economic power calls for building an education power, and building the world economic center calls for building the world education center. With the rise of China's economic strength, the Chinese government is also increasingly aware of the importance of training talented foreign students and has increased the training of foreign students to a national strategy. In 2010, the Ministry of Education promulgated the *Program for Foreign Students Studying in China*, which clearly proposes that China will become the largest destination country of overseas education in Asia (Ministry of Education, 2010) by 2020. According to the figures released by the Chinese Ministry of Education, more than 440,000 overseas students were studying in various types of higher institutions in China in 2016 (Ministry of Education, 2017). In terms of internal structure, as China is implementing the 'One Belt and One Road' strategy, it is increasing the government's input to scholarships. In 2016, a total of 49,022 students from 183 countries were studying in China with the scholarships provided by the Chinese government, accounting for 11% of the total number of foreign students in China, an increase of 70% over 2012. The Chinese government's scholarships are increasingly attractive to high-level talents and have become an important channel for national strategic reserves of talents and contacts.

Since adopting the reform and opening-up policy in 1978, China has been increasingly incorporated into the globalization system and process. Starting from economic globalization, globalization is a comprehensive process covering economic, political, cultural, and social development trends. The expansion of the influence of intergovernmental international organizations with supranational authority, the wave of economic globalization represented by the global competition of large multinational corporations, the wave of cultural globalization with the emerging media as the Internet as the carriers and the political, economic, and cultural first-mover advantages of the western developed countries represented by the United States have all brought immense impact on the traditional identity, especially cultural identity and national identity, of developing countries. Facing the challenges of globalization to the traditional national system, China should establish a stronger and more energetic educational and cultural system, make full use of the advantages of the inclusiveness of the Chinese culture and enrich the connotation of national identity. Only in this way can China maintain its vitality in the era of globalization.

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