



A PLACE IN THE SUN

PHOTO BY PANG ZHENGZHENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Tourists wait in line to visit Peking University on Tuesday in Beijing. The line stretches more than 300 meters. Many people held umbrellas to shade themselves from the sun as the temperature reached 31 C. They had to wait for about 40 minutes before entering the university.

Old views are changing on overseas education

By LUO WANGSHU
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Gan Xiaoying has only one regret about sending her 15-year-old son to study overseas: She will miss him too much.

"It will be hard, but it's worth it," said the Chongqing mother, whose son will start at a British boarding school in fall.

"I trust the Western education system, and I hope he'll adapt to the environment and culture quickly," she said, adding that she believes the younger a child goes abroad, the better.

Although it's not a sentiment that has universal support in China, data suggest more people are turning away from the traditional belief that overseas study should be reserved for postgraduates.

A poll for the latest China Education Xiaokang Index found that almost 40 percent of Chinese believe that the best time for someone to study abroad is at the undergraduate level, while about 21 percent said it is during high school.

Only 17 percent stick with the traditional idea of students not going overseas until they have bachelor's degrees, and about 4 percent said it should be at the post doctoral level, according to the report compiled by Xiaokang, a State-run magazine.

As the average age of Chinese students going abroad has dropped, so too has the number



DONG JINLIN / FOR CHINA DAILY
Visitors consult information on studying abroad at an international education exhibition in Nanjing, Jiangsu province, in July. About 90 universities from 12 countries took part in the exhibition.

of youths taking the *gaokao*, or national college entrance exam.

About 9.15 million high school students nationwide took the make-or-break test in June, 180,000 fewer than in 2011. This is the fourth consecutive year that the number has fallen.

The number of high school students in major cities who opted out of the *gaokao* for overseas study increased by 20 percent last year compared with 2010, according to a 2011 trends report by the China Education Association for International Exchange.

The popularity of overseas English tests echoes the trend.

Educational Testing Service, a private, nonprofit educational testing and assessment organization in the United States, announced in February a 19 percent increase in the number

of Chinese taking the TOEFL exam in 2011 from the prior year, marking the largest number of Chinese TOEFL test takers ever. ETS has also developed a TOEFL Junior test for younger test takers.

China is the greatest student export source for many countries. In the US, 127,628 students from China attended colleges or universities in the 2009-10 school year, marking the largest international student population, according to the Open Doors 2010 Report on college demographics for international students, released by the Institute of International Education, a nonprofit agency that offers policy research and education exchange program in the US.

William Vanbergen, founder of British Education, a Shang-

hai-based education consulting company, told China Daily that young children find it easier to get accustomed to foreign environments and cultures.

"The younger they go, the easier for children to pick up the way of thinking and language," he said.

The pressure of *gaokao* is another key reason for parents to send their children abroad earlier.

Rupert Hoogewerf, founder of Hurun Rich List, said students go abroad to study at a younger age because of worries about *gaokao*.

"There is no guarantee that if a student does well in *gaokao*, he or she will be a success in life," said the Briton. "To get success, other abilities are needed, such as leadership, innovation ability, communication skills, etc. And these schools are quite good at building these skills."

However, Xia Xueluan, a retired professor of sociology at Peking University, sounded a note of caution, warning that sending kids overseas when they are too young could cause problems.

"It is better for children to go when they can manage themselves well," Xia said, adding his opinion that the best age to go study abroad is graduate level.

He said many misunderstandings of Chinese education currently exist. "Chinese foundation education is firm," he said.

Chinese students follow their dreams abroad

By ZHOU WENTING
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A dozen high school graduates in Shanghai, who will begin studying in foreign schools soon, recently filmed a documentary titled *Why on Earth Do We Want to Go Abroad?*

They want to tell the public the reasons for their choices and to be viewed objectively as students studying abroad, rather than as spoiled Chinese children squandering money and aiming to secure a place in the fierce job market at home with a foreign diploma.

"Making the video also helped us to clarify the reasons in our own minds," said He Jiaying, an 18-year-old in Shanghai who initiated the activity. She published her idea online in March and found her companions.

A graduate of Shanghai Luwan Senior High School, He interviewed 30 peers out of the nearly 400 who responded to her idea. The team made this 20-minute documentary, which has been uploaded to video sites.

Jiang Zige, one of the students in the video, said he chose overseas study in order to be in an environment that supports his dreams.

"I'd like to do what others want but may give up," said

18-year-old Jiang, who has a rap group with a friend and regularly uploads self-made satirical news to the Internet.

"The videos usually draw lots of applause and encouragements on Facebook, so I really feel happy in that atmosphere. Chinese people don't have special feelings toward my works because they think in a conservative way."

Jiang said his time at a college in the United States in summer 2011 made him more determined about overseas study.

"The education environment is diverse, embracing students from around the world and their cultures and ways of thinking," said Jiang, who will study at Swarthmore College.

"Students contributed different thoughts when doing group assignments. It amazed me to think about how diverse ideas can be," he said.

Zhu Mengou from Shanghai agreed.

"Almost all students in Chinese colleges are Chinese. I've already studied in such an environment for 12 years, so I want a change," she said. She is leaving to study at Harvard.

Another reason they opt for a new environment is they will be able to learn more solidly, the students said.

Wang Yue, 19, finished one semester at a Shanghai college. "The six months couldn't

have been more boring, and what we learned could have been totally learned by self-study," she said. "US universities are more demanding, and we will be able to acquire more knowledge."

King Hao, who is going to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, said: "There are only four years of university life, so I need to make it more meaningful."

Domestic universities seem to place more emphasis on generating profits than on academic development, the students said.

"We want to absorb thoughts about justice and fairness from abroad, and influence the people and the country," said He Jiaying, who turned down a place at a famous university in Shanghai. "We want to make the world a better place."

The short film is only a prelude to what the team plans to shoot: A four-year documentary of their life overseas. Five students — heading for different types of schools in different states and coming from different family backgrounds — will be tracked during the next four years.

"It's true that our families may be economically stronger to send us abroad, but we want to build our futures by ourselves and be recognized more for what we've done," He added.

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《2011-2012中国政府组织机构图》



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Parents question worth of study tours

By CHENG YINGQI
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Overseas study tours for students, usually with a price tag of thousands of dollars, have become controversial among Chinese parents following a number of recent scandals.

In July, a photo of primary school students sitting outside Woodbury Info Center, a shopping center close to New York, caused a stir online as netizens learned the teachers were shopping while the children chewed hamburgers on the curb.

In another example, parents of children at a well-known Beijing primary school found Las Vegas was on the itinerary of a 10-day, 30,000-yuan (\$4,720) study tour to the United States. The teachers explained that the casinos also had services for children.

According to a recent survey of more than 1,000 Internet users conducted by Sina, a Chinese online media company, 49 percent of respondents are against

"If the parents and students give more consideration to the purpose of the trip before departure, they may benefit more from the visits."

ZHOU XIAOLAN
MANAGER OF THE GLOBAL STUDY TOUR MARKETING DEPARTMENT OF THE NEW ORIENTAL EDUCATION

sending children to study tours because they think the tours are too commercialized; 42 percent believe the children can learn little from the tours and 24 percent think the price is too high.

However, some parents have viewed the tours as precious opportunities to give their children an educational edge.

Zhou Li, mother of a 14-year-old, said a study tour helps her son make a better choice of college.

Zhou and her husband worked in Beijing for 15 years but still do not have *hukou* (permanent residence permit).

Their son will have to take the college entrance exam in their hometown in Zhejiang province, where the admission score is

much higher than in Beijing.

"My son won't be able to enter a famous college if he attends the exam in Zhejiang, so the only way is to send him abroad."

In July, Zhou sent her son to the US on a study tour.

"You will need around 1.5 million yuan to support your child studying abroad. So why would you care about spending an extra 39,000 yuan to make him sure he is doing the right thing?" Zhou asked.

Wang Mingxia, mother of an 18-year-old in Hainan province, said the study tour changed her son's dream university.

When Wang's son was 5 years old, Wang told him the story about the birth of Stanford Uni-

versity: after Leland Stanford's son died of typhoid fever in 1884, the Stanfords decided that, because they no longer could do anything for their own child, the children of California would be their children, and they established the university.

"When my son heard this story, he said he would go to Stanford someday," Wang said.

Wang's son took a study tour to the US. After staying in Boston for 10 days, the boy had second thoughts about Stanford.

"Boston has more great universities, and my son said he loves the Atlantic coast and the culture there, so he decided to change his dream college," Wang said.

"If the parents and students give more consideration to the purpose of the trip before departure, they may benefit more from the visits," said Zhou Xiaolan, manager of the global study tour marketing department of the New Oriental Education.