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The Higher Education Policy of Global Experts Recruitment Program: Focused on China

Abstract

There is an increasing interest in how to train and use national experts around the world. Major advanced countries are putting their national efforts into attracting global experts overseas and preventing domestic experts from flowing out of their countries. China has also endeavored much to attract global experts for its economic development and the global expert recruitment plan has passed a distinctive development process, which was different from that of western countries, since its aim was to maintain and develop its socialist economic system. After the Reform and Openness Policy began in 1978, China regarded global experts recruitment as one of the most important elements for strengthening its national competitiveness and has implemented various initiatives to attract global experts from foreign countries, one of which being the implementation of the Recruitment Program of Global Experts at both central and local governmental levels. Based on our findings, this research suggests policy implications in terms of the major tasks for establishing and pushing forward the Global Expert Inducement Policy of world.

Keywords: Recruitment Program of Global Experts, global expert inducement policy, higher education, China

Introduction

The time has come that the intangible factors of production such as technology, idea, and intellectual property create more added value than the traditional factors of production such as labor, production equipment, and raw materials in industry. Every country is concerned about how to minimize 'Brain Drain' in this situation that the flow of human resources is rainless and in particular, there is an increasing interest in how to foster and utilize national talents. Accordingly, major advanced countries are making every effort in a political way to attract overseas talents in order to respond to the supply and demand of talents in this era of internationalization and prevent their own talents from leaving their own country.

China has also made a lot of efforts to attract overseas talents for its economic development. Particularly in case of overseas-talents-attraction plan, China went through a different unique development process because it aimed at maintaining and developing its socialist economic system. China's reform policy started in 1978 became a major catalyst for its economic development and to achieve this, required more highly qualified professionals. They wanted to solve this problem by attracting overseas experts. However, China's initial overseas-talents-attraction policy turns out to be an unsuccessful because of insufficiency in attraction system, conflict of interests between government and institutions, inequity against domestic talents, and complaints from invited talents themselves (Gu, Park & Ahn, 2012).

This research will delve into China's Recruitment Program of Global Experts focusing on national government policy in detail and to analyze the China's Recruitment Program of Global Experts designed for attracting global experts. Based on the findings of this, it will make policy suggestions for establishing and promoting other country's overseas-talents-attraction policy.

China's higher education overseas-talents-attraction policy

China has regarded enhancement of national competitiveness as core element and promoted policies to attract overseas talents in case of insufficiency since the reform policy in 1978. It's in the 1980s that China started to emphasize on fostering talents according to the international standards. The field of education was burnt to the ground during the Cultural Revolution, which had been sustained for 10 years since 1966. As a result, 'slip event' of domestic talents became noticeable around 1980. To solve such a 'slip event' of domestic experts, Deng Xiaoping presented his idea of guidance, "Respect Knowledge! Respect Experts!". The Chinese government established a policy goal so that domestic talents could participate in its national development project according to this idea of guidance and every government department promoted various international talents-attraction policies accordingly. Looking back, it can be seen that overseas talents-attraction policies began to be enacted when China's economic development began to recover in 1980s (COD, 2008).

In the first place, Chinese Academy of Science was the representative agency that promoted overseas talents-attraction projects in the 1980s. At this time, the goal of the Chinese Academy of Science's talents-attraction policy was largely to make up for the 'slip event' of talents for the past 10 years. Particularly in this period, policies and measures to induce the young generation of scholars was a priority. After more than 10 years of efforts until early in the 1990s, young researchers in Chinese Academy of Science grew rapidly and their level of quality improved. However, the overall research capacity wasn't improved because the number of young researchers increased, whereas that of leading scholars who could lead them was lacking. Accordingly, an ability to foster the leaders who could lead the Chinese Academy of Science emerged as an important challenge and under such a background, 'Hundred People Plan' was enacted in the 1990s (China Education Daily, 2009).

In 1994, China expanded its research funds despite poor financial status and supported the scholars selected through 'Hundred People Plan'. In the same year, National Natural Science Foundation (NNSF) established 'NNSF's Outstanding Youth Plan'. Unlike the background of 'Hundred People Plan', this plan was one of the overseas-talents-attraction policies targeting young international students who would hesitate to determine whether they would remain in foreign countries after acquiring a degree or return to China after a degree. Such young scholars are talents who strived to concentrate on their studies even in their difficult situations and overcame various difficulties under poor environment ever after the Cultural Revolution. 'NNSF's Outstanding Youth Plan' was a meaningful plan in that the State Council established a plan to induce them to return to China (China Education Daily, 2009).

On the one hand, the Chinese government's policy was that they encouraged their students, who were already employed overseas or still while at school, to study overseas and then return to China, but it was optional. Based on such overseas-talents-attraction policy, the Chinese Ministry of Education established 'Parental Affection (Chunwi) Plan' in 1996 (Ju & Yang, 2010). To encourage international students who studied abroad to return to China, the Chinese Ministry of Education and Rijyacheong, a businessman in Hong Kong together established 'JangGang Scholar Encouragement Plan' in August 1998 (Jiao, 2006). They also established a network with overseas scientific inquirers and research organizations and established an efficient cooperative research system, and to improve the activeness of scholars who hoped to improve the most advanced scientific technology creatively, China Association for Science and 35 international scientific institutions jointly conducted 'National Action Plan on International Intellectual Resources' in February 2004.

The Department of Human Resources Social Security established 'Deficit Plan' in 2009. This plan is a project designed to complement the Returned-International-Students' Volunteer Work conducted by the Department of Human Resources since 1988. In 2010, the State Oceanic Administration published 'Marine Human Resources Plan', which stressed importance to the development of talents in marine field in accordance with this guideline "Develop Professionals Necessary for Economic and Social Development" based on "Guideline for National Long-term Talents Development (2010-2020)" proclaimed by the central authorities and the State Council (The Central Government of The People's Republic of China, 2011). The marine field is the most important area for economic and social development in China and an ability to build a marine super power is one of the core goals of China for the 21st century. To this end, they promoted a systematic marine-talents training project at a national level. Above all, in order to convert human resources into productive capacity, they tried various efforts, which included overseas-talents-attraction policy for fostering international talents.

Most of China's current overseas-talents-attraction policies are led by the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Human Resources Social Security, and the State Oceanic Administration. In addition to these government departments, China's representative projects are led by the Chinese Academy of Science, the National Natural Science Foundation, and the China Association for Science & Technology. Especially, the 'Recruitment Program of Global Experts' implemented in 2008 is a strategic talents-attraction plan at a national level and controlled by the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee by establishing a 'Talents Training Cooperative Office'.

China's current overseas-talents-attraction policy mostly consists of short-term support programs despite the presence of domestic and overseas talents attraction policies. This indicates that the fundamental purpose of China's overseas experts-attraction policy is a transfer of such talents' technology and intellectual assets into China rather than just achieving an outcome of bringing 'people' into China. Most of talents-attraction plans target international students who are interested in returning home or scholars who have their academic position overseas. Such high-quality talents have already shown their achievements in the field of research or their potential to expect good results.

Furthermore, as the focus of various talents-attraction plans varies, the characteristics and outcomes of such talents-attraction plans appear different, and both field of and content of application are subject to the purpose. ‘Parental Affection Plan Project’, for example, is adjusting its field of research, direction of major field, and characteristics of program for talents depending on their need every year. ‘JangKang Scholars Encouragement Plan’ is combined with ‘Project 211’ and its main purpose is to foster mentors for young university schoolteachers by attracting talents with excellent capacity. ‘Marine Talents Plan’ is focusing on attracting talents from various fields such as science and engineering, agriculture, medicine, food safety, environment, biological pharmaceuticals, photoelectrical information technology, digital technology, social welfare, etc.

Major achievements of such talents-attraction programs cannot be ignored. The outcome of ‘Parental Affection Plan Project’ lies in providing support to the development of Chinese western regions by conducting ‘Western Region Construction Project for Chinese Students who Studied in France’ with the Gansheng Government of China and the Chinese Embassy in France. Through ‘JangKang Encouragement Plan’ (Jiao, 2006), 799 scholars were employed as professors in 97 Chinese universities. In addition, 24 ‘JangKang Scholars’ specially invited professors were appointed as director of Chinese Academy of Science and director of Chinese Project Research Center and 57 specially invited JangKang scholars were appointed as senior research scientist for ‘973’ Project. ‘Marine Talents Plan’ became a foundation for constructing seven bases such as China’s Xinjiang Base-International Center for Sustainable Development Research in the Dry and Semi-arid Regions, Fuxin Base, ChangChun Base-ChangChun Overseas Scholars Business Startup Complex, Capital Base, Heopeoi Base, Changzhou Base, and Fujian Base. Through ‘Deficit Plan’, over 10,000 technical cooperation and exchange programs were achieved until 2010 and became a great help for regional development and every field. In this process, 7,000 scholars participated in regional development programs and achieved more than 2,000 cooperative consultations (CPGPC, 2010).

Despite such visible achievements, there are not-a-few problems in that talents-attraction policy caused exhausting competition between regional governments, that they did not achieve good results in attracting the world’s greatest scholars due to limitations in research condition and market environment and they rather selected secondary talents, that they over-exaggerated their talents-attraction outcomes, that some international talents who returned to China only benefited from the overseas-talents-attraction programs and came and went from foreign countries too frequently, that many overseas talents worked for domestic universities although they already had an official job overseas or were in a situation that they could not inform overseas office about their employment in China, and that they were reluctant to sign although they acquired an academic achievement through collaborative research project in China.

China’s Recruitment Program of Global Experts for attracting overseas talents

The Recruitment Program of Global Experts, also known as Thousand People Plan is an overseas-talents-attraction project at a national level to attract the world-

class scholars and more than one thousand professors by investing a massive budget for the next 5-10 years. The purpose is to achieve economic growth and sophisticated industrialization in China. In other words, it is a program to attract scientists and key important talents required for promoting key technology development, advanced technology and industry development, and emerging academic development and support them to engage in China's technical innovation and business startup programs (Ryu, Um & Kwon, 2011). The number of talents attracted through the Recruitment Program of Global Experts is more than 1,500 in 2012.

The Recruitment Program of Global Experts is different from the existing overseas-talents-attraction plans in terms of scope of support and technical requirement. If failed in the individual screening for the Recruitment Program of Global Talents (Thousand People Plan), they are allowed to apply for Hundred People Plan (Recruitment Program of One Hundred People) again. In case of Hundred People Plan, the Chinese Academy of Science led it, whereas Thousand People Plan is a comprehensive and massive project in which most of relevant departments participated under the Central Government Communist Party. Furthermore, the existing policy was based on simple innovation-type talents attraction, whereas Thousand People Plan is an expanded innovation-type centering on the sophisticated industrialization and industrial leader including experts specialized in business startup and financing. Therefore, it is necessary to understand and analyze the contents, current status, and outcomes of Thousand People Plan in order to predict the flow of changing China's Open Innovation and future growth.

The purpose of the Recruitment Program of Global Experts is to bring overseas excellent talents into Concentrated National Innovation Projects, Concentrated Departments, Concentrated Laboratories, Central Enterprise, and State-Owned Commercial Financial Institutions and utilize them for China's economic growth and sophisticated industrialization. It's a program to attract leading scientists and talents who will become a driving force to seek for core technical development, high-tech industrial development, and emerging academic development and help them to strive for China's technical innovation and business startup.

The fundamental principle of the Recruitment Program of Global Experts is, first, to concentrate on expanding excellent talents attraction depending on the demands of national economy and social development based on the concentrated expansion in principle and promote the world-class excellent innovative talents and groups attraction plans. Second, it is to exert the role of overseas excellent talents as fully as possible by establishing an innovative mechanism and project operation mechanism and creating excellent environments based on the expanded role in principle. Third, it is to introduce special policies according to the excellent talents attraction and utilization programs based on special task and special treatment in principle and to offer the best customized Demand-On benefits. Fourth, it is to establish an organic cooperative mechanism between sub-task groups, lead agencies, and recruiting agents based on efficient operation in principle.

Although there are many overseas-talents-attraction programs at the central government and local government level, the Recruitment Program of Global Experts is the strongest overseas-experts-attraction program that is promoted by the Chinese

Communist Party. Indeed, the government organization led by the Recruitment Program of Global Experts is a kind of task force specialized in attracting overseas talents under the government, which is called as ‘Overseas Talents Attraction Sub-Task Group’ and thus led by the Central Organization of the Communist Party and the Government’s Manpower Resources Social Security Department and participated by the Government’s relevant departments.. And the overseas-talents-attraction-specialized service bureau under the experts division of the Central Organization of the Communist Party is engaged in ordinary works related to the Recruitment Program of Global Experts. The purpose of China’s taking the lead in attracting high-quality experts is to develop China’s status a step further in the international division-of-labor structure based on the leverage of creative intellectual labor (Southern Daily, 2012).

The general requirements for applying for the Recruitment Program of Global Experts are that you ought to have a doctor’s degree overseas; you should not exceed 55 years old in principle; and your period of work in China every year should exceed 6 months. And you should meet one of the following conditions. First, you should be an overseas innovation-type expert who has a career of having worked as an expert equivalent to the position of professor in overseas famous universities or research agencies. Second, you are an overseas talent who has a career of having worked for more than 3 years in the field of advanced technical profession and administrative management at internationally famous enterprises and financial institutions. Third, you are a business startup-type expert who holds a unique intellectual property or core technology and has an experience with starting up a business independently overseas and is well aware of the related industrial field and international norms. Fourth, it’s an excellent innovative business startup-type expert who is urgently required at a national level.

Implications and conclusions

In China, the number of students studying overseas has been increasing amid rapid economic development, whereas the number of those who studied overseas and then returned home has been decreasing. This became a national issue. Of the total 1,620,000 Chinese people who studied overseas over the 31-year period (1978-2009), only around 500,000 returned home. In particular, the fact that about 240,000 returned home among 920,000 individuals between 2002 and 2008 highlights the national demand for, and necessity of the Recruitment Program of Global Experts. In 2008, the Recruitment Program of Global Experts implemented and employed world-class scholars, entrepreneurs, and professional technicians. It also input them into national concentrated tasks, higher educational institutions and research centers, state-owned firms and banks as well as high-tech industrial complexes. At the same time, as their resettlement funds and housing, medicine, education and insurance provisions got better and their social improved, systematic outcomes began to appear more favorable.

In 2011, the number of students who studied abroad and returned home was around 147,000, which was a 45% increase compared to the previous year. As of November 2011 the Recruitment Program of Global Experts attracted 1,143 excellent overseas experts, among whom 880 were innovation-type experts (77%) and 263 were business startup-type experts (23%). These people are contributing

significantly to the development of the high-tech and finance industry which had been the relatively weak segments of the Chinese economy.

However, the Recruitment Program of Global Experts promoted so far has many side effects despite the visible outcomes. First, in the process of conducting the Recruitment Program of Global Experts, they are too leaned toward particular experts. So it's pointed out that they are inefficient in managing the rest. Also they have been criticized for being too passive in discovering low-profile experts because they only focus on known figures in the media. Another problem is that such quantitative selections and governmental plans cannot verify the true credibility and faithfulness of the experts.

There is a mal-adaptation phenomenon for invited experts because their original backgrounds are quite different from China's unique research and living environment. Still more, overseas experts' western and liberal style can be a potential threatening factor politically. At the same time, accompanied family's employment, family housing and medical service issues are among the potential problems despite various conveniences provided by the governmental.

Another problem is the issue of inequality between domestic scholars and returned overseas experts. The Recruitment Program of Global Experts aims to select overseas experts and provide very lucrative incentives, but may face two problems. First, domestic scholars in China might lose some opportunities for research. As there are limited budgets, domestic researchers' opportunities for research may be diminished if such opportunities are given to overseas experts. Although domestic scholars in China have the same capacity compared to the overseas experts, their willingness to conduct quality research could be reduced because the same treatment available to overseas experts is not given to them. This might raise problems for the long-term viability of the Program.

We also should investigate success and failure factors in attracting overseas experts and prepare for policy measures accordingly. The challenges are as follows:

Firstly, in order to address the potential challenges, it is necessary to take into consideration any relevant laws or systems which would affect this project. Two of the key factors in determining the ultimate success or failure of this are program management/supervision and accessibility. Efficient management or supervision can provide measures for relieving unnecessary regulations.

A second challenge may be the ability to create enough empathy towards China to make people want to come and to gain and maintain overseas' experts trust in the likelihood of success. Therefore it will be essential to publicize reports of prior successful cases. If people cannot trust in such a project, there will be a limitation in the end.

Thirdly, each task and detailed sub-task should be approached strategically by setting a clear goal for attracting overseas experts. If a goal is not clear, corporate strategy cannot be comprehensive and thus it's difficult to put various tasks into action. In particular, domestic and international investigation of demands, publicity strategy for attraction, organization and utilization of expert groups, and improvement of operating system of committee are important challenges to approach in a strategic way by setting a clear goal.

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