

Lean Management in Promoting Internationalised Educational Programmes for Industrial Cities in North-eastern China

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Abstract

This thesis analyses the international educational programmes offered by the higher educational organisations in China, and diagnoses the challenges from the free market of education. This thesis takes Anshan, the biggest producing city of iron and steel in China, as a target of a focused study. The portfolio of educational programmes offered to foreign students by the local universities is examined with the theory of Lean Management. Following an evaluation, from a standpoint of Lean Management, suggestions are arisen to facilitate the further healthy development of the internationalised educational programmes in the industrial cities of northeastern China.

Keywords

Lean management, internationalisation of higher education, industrial cities, northeastern China.

1. Introduction

Nowadays, an increasing number of foreign students have enrolled in a variety of educational programmes, especially in higher educational organisations located in those biggest cosmopolitan cities, in China. Universities in China, which are qualified to accept foreign students, have built up specific teaching plans and have arranged teaching resources, constantly summarizing experience and polishing teaching designs and resource allocation. Meanwhile, the National Ministry of Education issues Suggestions on the Holistic Improvement of Higher Education Quality, namely, 30 Clauses on Higher Education. It is clearly required that universities should be innovative, and that the cultivation of compound top-notch talents should be enhanced. In 2017, Measures for the Administration of the Admission and Education of International Students in Schools was issued and released by Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, namely, Order No. 42. Order No. 42 validates the importance and urgency for higher educational organisations in China to expand the connotation of internationalisation in an individual university.

Meanwhile, Chinese government has been sparing no effort to build a harmonious society. The construction of service-oriented government and enhancing the government governance level, therefore, become the indispensable way to fulfill this strategic aim.

“Economic development as the centre of country development” has not been the only governance mode after 2003, and Chinese government gradually implement the “multiple governance mode of social, economic and institutional development” around the country.

Under such social and national policies and in the globalised circumstance, worshiped and protected as the old industrial bases, cities in Northeastern China are faced with a cold but solid fact. In 2017, 489,200 foreign students are studying in China. However, Liaoning Province, Heilongjiang Province,

and Jilin Province, have accepted only approximately 27,000 students. This result is far from the expectation of local tourism bureaus and educational organisations.

This thesis takes Anshan, the biggest producing city of iron and steel in China, as a target of a focused study. The portfolio of educational programmes offered to foreign students by the local universities is one of the two targets of this examination, the other being the promotion strategies of the city of Anshan. Guided by the theory of Lean Management, the examination is conducted, followed by a thorough evaluation. As a conclusion, from a standpoint of Lean Management, suggestions are arisen to facilitate the further healthy development of the internationalised educational programmes in the industrial cities of northeastern China.

2. The Portfolio of Educational Programmes Offered by Higher Educational Organisations in China.

Having experienced the in-depth reforms for 35 years, China has witnessed the gradual but overwhelming improvement of the socialist market economy. The higher educational system of China has been swirled into the irresistible trend of globalisation and internationalisation. The academia in the research field in the higher educational system in China need to stay sharp and alert to the trend of international education market, meanwhile, making great efforts in adopting adapted methodology of management to promote educational programmes in China abroad (Yue et al., 2017). Nonetheless, when promoting educational programmes, one must be clear about the fact that the internationalisation of the higher education does not mean that education is regarded as a kind of merchandise which always tracing the direction of the ever-changing market. In other words, when avoiding turn the cultivation plans and the education programmes of higher education into on-sale merchandise on the shelves, China has to find an effective and efficient way to promote the “new-born” booming “industry” of international education (Yan, 1994).

2.1 The Educational Industry for Foreign Students to China is One of the Future Mainstays of Regional Economic Development.

At the end of 2012, released by the special research team of China Association for International Education (CAFSA), Report of Research on Financial Profit from International Education in China 2011 shows that in 2011, the annual tuition fee and the daily expenses of international students to China has reached 14.773 billion yuan (CAFSA, 2012). From the viewpoint of its pushing effect on national economy, in 2011, international education for oversea students to China has made the national GDP increased by 28.28 billion yuan, supplying the entire society with 242,400 opportunities of employment.

2.2 Current Portfolio of Educational Programmes Offered to Foreign Students by the Local Universities.

Oversea students to China generally are enrolled in three types of educational programmes.

The first and the most popular choice is the “ZHONG”-related undergraduate programmes, for example, Chinese (ZHONG Wen), traditional Chinese medical science (ZHONG Yao), Chinese Culture and Art (ZHONG Guo Wen Hua Yi Shu). The above majors are enjoying rapid prosperity. However, the second choice, engineering and technological majors, encounter great difficulties in developing (Cui, 2008) .

This dilemma on the way of internationalising higher education in China indicates two concerns (Diao, 2010). Firstly, although educational programmes are not common merchandise on market, no country can ignore the consideration about the need and consuming motivation of the matriculating-resource market. Secondly, universities famous for industrial and technological majors are refused by the market. Hence, some of those universities redirect the development by focusing on fostering “ZHONG”-related, abandoning the fully developed high-quality industrial majors. If the heated trend of learning Chinese language faded, all the inputs for building up new arts majors to attract foreign students to China would be in vain.

The last choice for overseas students to China, also always the preferable one, is short-term language training programme (Chen, 2004). However, instructors in classes of language training programme suffer from a big headache, that is, the students are always absent from the lectures on trip. Most of such trainees do not need the certificate of the course. And they prefer to spend their time in travelling.

2.3 A missing Piece of the Jigsaw Puzzle: Learning-Tour (Travel-Study) Programmes.

Unlike short-term language training programmes, learning-tour (travel-study) programmes combine language education with local natural characteristics in the destinations with high effectiveness. Without the constraints from the cultivating objectives of undergraduate programmes, learning-tour projects provide both universities of science and technology and the industrial cities with an efficient and an effective solution to the dilemma and conflict they confronted.

By a precisely pinned market pitch, learning-tour projects grant a large number of international matriculation, who are quite possible to continue or to resort their language studies and to become a steady matriculating-resource (Yue et al., 2016). Moreover, the experience of learning-tours assists the digest of the culture shock or cultural conflict encountered in China, which enable the international students to smoothly adapt themselves to the unfamiliar lifestyle and the developing public facilitations in the old industrial cities in northeastern China. learning-tour projects greatly reinforce the determination of international students to fulfill their study and effectively enhance their emotional attachments to universities, to industrial cities, and to China.

3. Analysis on Chances of Promoting Anshan as a Learning-Tour Destination in Australia, Facilitated by the Theory of Lean Management.

3.1 Finding Mudas

Anshan is the third largest prefecture level city in Liaoning province of China. Situated in the central area of the province, it is about 92km south of the province's capital, Shenyang. Anshan is on the boundary between the Mountains of Eastern Liaoning and the plains of West. The area contains the famous Qianshan Park. Anshan is home to the Angang Iron and Steel Company, the largest steel producers in China.

In recent years, Anshan has been trying to through off its image as a heavy industrial town along with the dirt and pollution that goes with such industry. It has remodeled itself as a tourist destination (Yue and Tang, 2013).

Unfortunately, when the researchers showing the promoting video of Anshan to 82 foreign students in Anshan, only 4 of them recognised the city they were in from the video. The video begins with running melted iron liquid, followed by a three-minute clip showing famous tourist destinations in the city.

Moreover, 63 students complained about the length of Chinese classes are intolerantly long. They felt bored at school but surfing online to kill the time. Although language students are seeking language improvement in Chinese, they are not seeking astonishing academic results from short-term studies. The current course arrangement doesn't match their motivation of traveling to China to study.

Hence, two mudas appear in current international language training programmes in Anshan, over-generalised promotion material and unreasonable course arrangement.

3.2 A Market in Need is a Market Indeed.

It is clear that Anshan cannot be a dream tourism destination for every foreigner. To increase the tourist number to Anshan and to avoid waste all the investment into the tourism-relevant constructions, Anshan has to orientate its promotional strategies to a suitable and reasonable market pitch. Considering the natural and social resources of this industrial city, Australia is considered a gold market to boost learning-tours to Anshan, China.

Season greetings from Australia awake the researchers. Seasons in Australia are opposite to what they are in Anshan. Anshan is famous for the hot springs and white winter scenes. Perhaps, Anshan cannot compete with Japan as a white Christmas destination. However, the charm from Chinese language

and the relatively much lower cost, definitely, would make Anshan the kind of dreaming destination for learning-tour tourists.

4. Suggestions on Destination Promoting Strategies

4.1 Target-Control the Market Pitch and Formulate Precise Strategies.

With the cultural industry being McDonaldised or being Hollywoodised, more and more international promotion campaign choose to adopt a global vision and a regional strategy (Dong, 2005). Globalisation leans to not only great commercial opportunities, but also blurred and weakened destination images. Hence, it is essential for industrial cities like Anshan to highlight its distinguished differences from the target market, say, Australia.

4.2 Principles of Formulating Promotion Strategies for Anshan as a Destination of Learning-Tours

First, maintain the uniqueness of local culture. Besides offering foreigners an opportunity to learn Chinese, Anshan has unique cultural and natural resources like hot-spring bathing and therapy, culture of XiuYan jade, the compatibility of Buddhism and Taoism in Qianshan Mountains (Bao and Zhou, 2012).

Second, reassure the pertinence of strategies. Promotions for destination of learning-tours must be redirected according to the changing audience and changing occasions (Moutinho, 2011). For instance, the promotion is suggested to be initiated among the student unions in Australian universities and high schools, especially being aimed at elite academia.

Thirdly, guarantee the integrity of the programmes. Learning-tour programmes are intangible. Therefore, when promoting, the programmes are supposed to not only represent characteristics of regional culture, but also include the smooth operation and high-quality service in the entire system.

5. Conclusion: Challenges from Learning-Tour Management.

For a thorough understanding of the needs and motivation of tourist on a learning-tour, a vast range of data need to be collected. And considering the characteristics of tourism and education system, observation and interview are two reliable ways to fulfill the research task.

Suggestions on the Holistic Improvement of Higher Education Quality, namely, 30 Clauses on Higher Education, indicates the future direction of education in China. It is clearly required that universities should be innovative, and that the cultivation of compound top-notch talents should be enhanced. The essentiality, indispensability and feasibility of opening full-English teaching resources to both international and domestic students is another heated issue awaiting solutions to emerge.

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