

THE FACTORS INFLUENCING PARENTS' INTENTION TO SEND CHILDREN AGED BETWEEN 8-18 YEARS OLD TO STUDY IN UK BOARDING SCHOOLS.

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Abstract: *Children's education is the most important decision for parents who would like to select the best school for their children. Therefore, parents are the most influential factor over their children's education. Thailand currently faces with the problems in education. According to the report of 2016 World Economic Forum, the rank of Thailand's education dropped from 86 to 90 in 2015. This study aims to investigate the factors influencing parents' intention to send children to study abroad in UK boarding schools by using the factors from previous studies in different countries. The researchers used online and offline questionnaires to conduct the research on 389 respondents who are parents and have intention to send their children to study abroad. The limitation of this research is that it focuses only parents of children in a certain age group or children aged 8-18 years old living in Thailand. The finding suggested all four variables factors: Country Image, Personal Growth, Social Factor and Cost and Durations significantly influence parents' intention to send children to study in UK Boarding schools. In conclusion, this paper found that Personal Growth is the most significant influence on parents' intention to send their children to study in UK boarding schools.*

Keywords: *Boarding School, Children, Cost and Durations, Education, Personal Growth, Social, Study abroad, Country Image, Parents' Intention, United Kingdom*

INTRODUCTION

Education is the most powerful weapon we can use to change the world (Mandela, 2003). Education is compulsory at the certain age in every country. International education opens for the world and there is no limitation for students to study in any countries and opportunities for students with unique educational experiences. More than 5 million students are studying abroad now, and the number is increasing to 7 million students by 2022. The number of Asian students studying abroad in top three destination countries including the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia

has seen the most significant growth (www.studyportals.com). The statistics revealed by UNESCO Institute shows that East Asia and Southeast Asia have the largest number of students studying abroad, compared with other regions. China, including Hong Kong and Macau, had the greatest number of students studying abroad from this region or more than 800,000 students (<http://data.uis.unesco.org>).

Thailand faces problems of development in education. Thailand was ranked low level in health and primary education, dropped from the ranking number 86 in 2015. Education in Thailand has been affected by uncertain political policy in the past several decades. A change from agricultural country to middle-income society in the diversified economy, lower educational quality, the unavailability of particular subjects and political problems are the main factors driving the families to consider sending their children to study outside of Thailand. Thai students' study

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outside the country in top four leading country destinations: The United States, United Kingdom, Australia and Japan respectively.

OBJECTIVES

1. To identify the influencing factors on parents' intention to send children aged 8-18 years old to study in UK boarding schools.
2. To determine the significant influencing factors on parents' intention to send children aged 8-18 years old to study in UK boarding schools.
3. To define the degree level of significance of influencing factors on parents' intention to send children aged 8-18 years old to study in UK boarding schools.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Country Image

Countries with the good reputation and positive beliefs including the safe environments and recommendations by their friends and parents influenced one's intention to study abroad. Many students preferred to study in English-speaking countries and consider speaking only English language when they decide to study abroad (Eder et al., 2010). Country image played an important part in making the choice of the destination to study abroad (Ghazarian, 2016).

Personal Growth

Personal Growth including leadership skills, problem-solving skills, ability to cope with unfamiliar and ambiguous situations is an influencing factor on the expectation of parents and the family when sending their children to study abroad to improve their academic performance (Kasravi, J. 2009). In a focus group, students believed that they would gain Personal Growth as an outcome and studying aboard would be a life-changing experience for them. They expected that they would learn more about themselves,

experience life adventure as a process for growing up and be able to live out of their comfort zone, leading to an increase in self-confidence and ability (April, 2015).

Social Factor

Social factor refers to social network involving relationships with the people around them that influence the choice of students to pursue their study overseas (Jupiter et al., 2017). Positive recommendations from family and friends with direct communications has created word of mouth and social media has motivated Thai students to study abroad (Tantivorakulchai, 2013).

Duration and Cost

Duration and cost were the financial factors impacted students' intention to study abroad (Pope et al., 2014). The cost of studying abroad is a major barrier to make the decision to study abroad. An individual analyzed cost-benefits with the possible outcomes whether his or her act upon the decision or not (Kasravi, 2009). Short term studying abroad program or institutions with scholarship would attract more students to study abroad. Most of the students choose a summer program due to lower costs (Soumava et al., 2015). There is a relationship between household income and intention to study abroad, students in the family with high household income are more likely to study abroad than that with less household income (Salisbury et al., 2009).

Parents

Parents want to provide the best education to their children by choosing the best possible school for their children with suitable educational environment, teachers and the size of classes. School choice is also highly related to the parents' occupation. The parents with higher occupational status prefer to select a private school for their children (Rehman, 2010). When parents select the school, they keep in mind education of teachers, school quality,

teacher's effort and teacher's command over the subject (Hoxby, 2002). Parents have right incentive and access to information for their selection of the best school for their children for the academic achievement in long term performance (Bast and Walberg, 2004). The family mainly takes part in making the decision to send their children to study abroad along with other factors such as personal, social and financial investments (Evans and Stevenson, 2011).

In this study, the researcher determines four independent factors based on the previous studies: Country Image, Personal Growth, Social Factor, Duration and Cost influencing parent's intention to send children to study in UK boarding schools. As the study focused on the children aged between 8-18 years old, there is a certain education level to complete the research. The researcher, therefore, grouped cost and duration as one variable.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

H1₀: Country Image has no significant influence on parents' intention to send children to study in UK boarding schools.

H1_a: Country Image has a significant influence on parents' intention to send children to study in UK boarding schools.

H2₀: Personal Growth has no significant influence on parents' intention to send children to study in UK boarding schools.

H2_a: Personal Growth has a significant influence on parents' intention to send children to study abroad in UK boarding schools.

H3₀: Social factor has no significant influence on parents' intention to send children to study abroad in UK boarding schools.

H3_a: Social factor has a significant influence on parents' intention to send children to study abroad in UK boarding schools.

H4₀: Duration and Cost has no significant influence on parents' intention to send children to study abroad in UK boarding schools.

H4_a: Duration and Cost has a significant influence on parents' intention to send children to study abroad in UK boarding schools.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Quantitative research method was used to conduct this study and a correlational research methodology was applied. The convenience sampling is the technique which involves parents having children aged 8-18 years old who are available while total 565 questionnaires from 215 online and 350 offline surveys were returned. The researcher used 389 questionnaires based on the eligibility of screening questions. The questionnaires were designed for the specific group with 7 parts with 32 questions. The first part was to screen the information. As for the part 2-6, it was a set of questions for dependent variables and independent variables by using theory of Zikmund (2003). The researcher used 5-point Likert Scale methods to measure the level of agreement or disagreement for each question. Thirty questionnaires was conducted to test for reliability of variables, Cronbach's Alpha. At first, the pre-test scored lower than 0.6 in the Cronbach's Alpha test. The questionnaires were adjusted, and the pre-test was again conducted until the researcher got the score of 0.904 which is higher than 0.6 in the Cronbach's Alpha test. Lastly, Multiple Linear Regressions was applied to test all hypotheses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The researcher studied the factors that influence parents' intention to send their children to study in UK boarding schools. Multiple linear regression analysis was applied to test all hypotheses. The

adjusted R-square's value is equal to 0.509 or 50.9% of parents' intention to study abroad in the United Kingdom was influenced by Country Image, Personal Growth, Social Factor and Cost and Duration. The VIF refers to a situation where a number of independent variables in a multiple regression model are closely correlated to one another which detected to VIF which in the value between 1.170 to 1.175 means there is no serious problem or overlap of multicollinearity among these four independent variables. Researchers desire lower levels of VIF, as higher levels of VIF are known to affect adversely the results associated with a multiple regression analysis Maximum VIF value of 5 which is recommended in both scholarly articles and advanced statistical textbooks (Rogerson, 2001). All variables factors: Country Image, Personal Growth, Social, Duration and Cost and study abroad have significant influence on parents' intention to send children to study in UK boarding schools. Personal growth was ranked the first factor that influence the intention to send children to study in UK boarding schools with strong effect (Beta = 0.546). The second rank was social factor with Beta's value at 0.230, followed by duration and cost at 0.193 and the 4th rank is country image with the weakest effect at Beta 0.079.

Demographic Factors	Characteristic	Frequency (f)	%
Gender	Female	267	68.6 %
Marital Status	Married	247	63.5 %
Relation to the child	Parents	301	77.4 %
No of Children	One Child	177	45.5 %
Location in Thailand	Bangkok and Metropolitan	296	76.1 %
Age	41-50 years old	184	47.3 %
Highest Education	Bachelor's degree	216	55.5 %
Occupation	Business Owner	150	38.6 %
Household Income per month	100,001-150,000 THB	125	32.1 %

The result of hypotheses tested by using multiple linear regression analysis showed that personal growth was the most significant influencing factor. Social Factor, Duration and Cost, and Country Image also have significant influencing factors respectively.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Conclusion

This study analyzes demographic factors of respondents. The most common profile of the respondents was female (68.8%) who are parents (77.4%) of one child (45.5%); in other word, a mother of a child and the owner of business (38.6%) with household income of 100,001-150,000 THB/month (32.1%). This study also provides an insight to better understand the most important factors of parents' intention to send their children to study in UK boarding schools.

Rank strongest to weakest	Independent Variables	Dependent variable	Beta	Implications
1 st Rank	Personal Growth	Intention to send children study abroad in the United Kingdom.	0.546***	Personal Growth has a significant influence on parents' intention to send children study in UK Boarding schools
2 nd Rank	Social		0.230***	Social has a significant influence on parents' intention to send children study in UK Boarding schools.
3 rd Rank	Duration and Cost		0.103**	Duration and Cost have a significant influence on parents' intention to send children study in UK Boarding schools
4 th Rank	Country Image		0.079*	Country Image has a significant influence on parents' intention to send children study in UK Boarding schools

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Recommendations

This research focuses on determining only the factors influencing parents' intention to send children aged between 8-18 years old to study in UK boarding schools. The results suggested that Personal Growth is the most significant influencing factor on parents' intention to send children aged 8-18 years old to study in UK boarding schools. This would help UK boarding schools and educational consultants to focus on this factor for the successful development of current students after completing their study in UK boarding schools to promote more prospective students as well as their family to send them to study abroad as this would be the most benefits to students themselves. The reasons behind this is Thai society, Parents need to work outside their home and leave their children with grandparents or their maid. Young children are pampered, spoiled and spends most of their times in front of TV and mobile phones. Sending their children to study abroad will make their life under school' rule which will improve them in term of their Personal Growth.

Social factor was ranked the second and it would be useful to develop this as a part of the marketing strategies to attract more students to study abroad. Duration and Cost is the third factors and Country Image would be the least factors to be focused on for schools and educational consultants to recruit Thai students to study abroad.

Future Study

Due to the limited time of the research, the researcher focused on only UK boarding schools. Future researchers may conduct a study to identify the parents' intention to study abroad in other countries such as the United States, Australia and Japan, which are the top four destinations for Thai students to study abroad.

There were only independent variables which are country image, personal growth, social factors and duration and cost influencing parents' intention to send children aged between 8-18 years old to study in UK boarding schools. Thus, other variables that may influence intention for international education should be studied as well.

The future study may focus on other target population such as students in higher education (the university level); in other word; student above 18 years old which would be the focus on the students themselves, not the parents, who would be the main decision makers.

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