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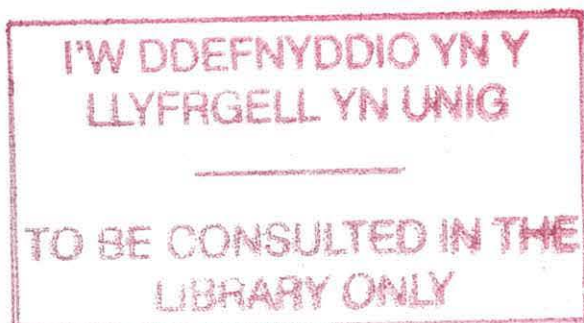
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Graduate Employment among Chinese Graduates from UK Universities:

A Case Study of Bangor University

Shijin Zhang

August 2018



**Graduate Employment among Chinese Graduates from UK Universities:
A Case Study of Bangor University**

**A thesis submitted in accordance
with the requirements of Bangor University
for the degree of
Doctoral of Philosophy (PhD)**

by

Shijin Zhang

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Summary

The research aim of this doctoral thesis is to explore what happens to Chinese graduates from UK universities who achieved the degree of Bachelor, Master's and/or PhD, in terms of their work and employment experience and destinations, by using a case study of Bangor University. Human capital theory, institutional theories and social mobility theory are adopted to build the conceptual framework.

A qualitative research approach was adopted. 39 interviews were conducted with Chinese graduates from Bangor University (in Wales, the UK), who studied different programmes, graduated between 2003 and 2016, achieved different degrees, and worked in different countries (China and the UK) or different cities. 3 interviews were conducted with relevant university staff members. The findings of the socioeconomic background, educational attainment, career expectations, labour market experience and socioeconomic attainment of Chinese graduates from Bangor University reveal both similarities and differences compared with existing literature. The significant roles Chinese parents play in their children's education in the UK and labour market experience are highlighted. Adequate employment, underemployment and unemployment all exist among the Chinese graduates in this research. It can be seen that although the degrees from UK universities are still seen as 'a knocking brick' when looking for jobs in China, the halo of the overseas returnees has faded in recent years. As a result, the things of great importance are the knowledge, skills, capabilities, and performance of the graduates, not just the UK educational background and the certificates from UK universities.

This study makes theoretical contributions by developing a framework for analysing employment situations and involving more measures of underemployment in a single research. It also makes a methodological contribution by using qualitative research methods to reveal deep and rich contextual insights into the labour market experience of Chinese graduates from UK universities. It also provides implications for policy-makers and practitioners.

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I dedicate this thesis to all my family.

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List of Abbreviations

CSCSE	Chinese Service Center for Scholarly Exchange
EU	European Union
HE	higher education
HEI	higher education institution
HEP	higher education provider
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
RMB	renminbi (Chinese currency)

Glossary

This glossary provides the definitions of the Chinese terms and expressions involved in the thesis.

guanxi	relation, relationship, connection
guojia fenpei	assignment of jobs by the state
haidai	A person who returns to the home country after study overseas, but cannot find a job. Its pronunciation is the same as the pronunciation of seaweed in Mandarin.
haigui	A person who returns to the home country after study overseas. Its pronunciation is the same as the pronunciation of sea turtle in Mandarin.
hukou	household registration
iron rice bowl	A job with long-term job security, stable wages and comprehensive welfare.
knocking brick	A brick to knock on the door. It is used to refer to a preliminary means to obtain fame and gain.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Research Context

In recent years, more and more Chinese students prefer to pursue their higher education (HE) in UK universities. From 2010/11 to 2014/15, the number of students from China has always ranked as the largest among the numbers of students from non-EU countries of domicile in UK HE providers (HEPs) (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2016). In 2014/15, there were about 89540 Chinese students enrolled on HE courses in UK HEPs (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2016), which represents over 28% of all non-EU domicile students in UK HEPs (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2016). Obtaining HE in the UK is an investment for these Chinese students, which not only refers to the considerable tuition fees and living fees, but also includes the courage to experience a different culture in an unfamiliar surrounding far from their families. When they enter the labour market after their graduation, it is notable that the graduate-related labour market is extremely competitive, within which fewer vacancies are provided to the new graduates; many graduates encounter unemployment; and a lot of graduates are underemployed (Stewart & Knowles, 1999). In addition, there is an increasing trend ‘in the percentage of new graduates who are unemployed or employed in so-called ‘non-graduate’ jobs’ (Bourner, Greener & Rospigliosi, 2011, p.6).

After graduation from UK universities most Chinese students return to China although some work in the UK. Therefore, the Chinese labour market and the UK labour market are both of great importance to this research. It is notable that in China, because of the considerable number of students graduating from Chinese HE institutions (HEIs) together with the students returning from overseas, the unemployment among graduates is increasing, and the competition in the labour market is growing (Fladrich, 2006). In the UK, the graduate labour market has faced considerable changes both in the ‘composition of the graduate labour supply’ and in the ‘diversity of occupations that graduates subsequently enter’ (Wilton, 2011, p.85). According to James et al. (2013), in the UK, the HE expansion driven by the government has led to an over-supply of graduates compared with the available traditional graduate jobs. Almost half of recent graduates in the UK are working in non-graduate jobs (Allen, 2013), which indicates that finding an appropriate graduate job in the UK is difficult. Moreover, the immigration rules in the UK may restrict Chinese graduates’ opportunities to work in the UK, because of the difficulties qualifying for visas (Adams, 2015). It is a requirement that international students

who wish to stay on in the UK should work for a single employer and earn at least £20,800 per annum (Adams, 2015).

Concerning the numerous Chinese students in UK HEPs, their considerable investment and the increasing competitive global labour market, the investigation of employment among Chinese graduates from UK universities is of great importance. Therefore, by adopting a qualitative case study of Bangor University (in Wales, the UK), this research focuses on Chinese graduates from Bangor University who obtain the degree of Bachelor, Master's, and/or PhD to explore their work and employment experience and destinations.

Contribution to the Field

Although there is a large body of literature on graduate employment, unemployment and underemployment (eg. Feldman & Turnley, 1995; Nabi, 2003; Fladrich, 2006; Moreau & Leathwood, 2006; Cardoso, 2007; Chan, 2015), little is known about what happens to Chinese graduates from UK universities. Concerning the large amount of research in the field of graduate employment in the UK, Johnston (2003) points out the limitations as lack of scholarship and over-concentration on powerful voices in the field. The former refers to the fact that stimulating and insightful theoretical studies are scarce (Johnston, 2003). The latter indicates that the graduate employment research tends to concentrate on areas which interest the groups who can have an influence on the government, such as large employers and public sector (Johnston, 2003). Among the relevant literature written in the Chinese language, overseas returnees are often treated as a whole group when investigating their employment, with little attention being paid specifically to Chinese graduates from UK universities. In this research, Chinese graduates from UK universities, especially the Chinese graduates from Bangor University, are the only focus. Some relevant theories, such as human capital theory, institutional theories and social mobility theory are utilized, in order to direct the understanding of graduate employment among Chinese graduates from Bangor University (in Wales, the UK). In addition, the Chinese graduates' views concerning their employment are valued in this research, although they are not such a powerful group as large employers or public sector.

The findings of this research can advance scholarship regarding the employment patterns of Chinese graduates in a more globalized labour market. It can also benefit potential Chinese students who are considering studying at UK universities, and provide UK universities with valuable information about enhancing the employability of the large number of Chinese students.

Research Questions

This research focuses on Chinese graduates from UK universities who obtain the degree of Bachelor, Master's, and/or PhD to explore their work and employment experience and destinations, by using a case study of Bangor University (in Wales, the UK). The relationship between supply and demand in the labour market and the factors that affect their job destinations are explored, so the main research question is:

What is the relationship between the human capital of Chinese graduates from Bangor University and their labour market experience?

In order to better address this research question, there are three further sub-questions stemming from the main question.

Sub-question 1: *How does the background of Chinese graduates from Bangor University affect their job destinations?*

Sub-question 2: *What are the qualifications, skills and career expectations of Chinese graduates from Bangor University?*

Sub-question 3: *What are the current employment situations and actual labour market experience of Chinese graduates from Bangor University?*

Sub-question 1 is inspired by the notion of social mobility theory. For this question, the roles their socioeconomic background play in their jobs are investigated. Sub-question 2 is a supply-side question, which considers the employability of Chinese graduates from Bangor University. Sub-question 3 pays attention to the demand-side and explores the actual experience of Chinese graduates from Bangor University. By comparing the answers of sub-question 2 and sub-

question 3, any gap between their qualifications, skills and career expectations and the employment reality can be seen clearly, so the relationship between the supply of those Chinese graduates and the demand for them in the labour market can be found. From the answers for these three sub-questions, the main research question can be solved.

Research Methods

In this research, a qualitative research approach was adopted, which emphasizes ‘understanding the meaning of social phenomenon’ (Sirvastava & Rego, 2011), and can effectively achieve the depth of understanding and flexibility of research (Rubin & Babbie, 2010). A case study was employed as the research strategy, and Bangor University was the single case in this research. The participants of this research were Chinese graduates from Bangor University, as well as members of staff from Bangor University, whose work was relevant to Chinese students/graduates and their careers.

Semi-structured interviews were utilized to collect data, which allows for a certain extent of unexpected lines of enquiry and flexibility (Grix, 2001). Both open and closed questions were used in the interviews, but open questions were mainly used. Face-to-face interviews were adopted if possible, otherwise, the interviews were conducted by using Skype voice chat, QQ voice chat, WeChat voice message or by telephone.

Non-probability sampling was used in this research. Two volunteer sampling techniques, self-selection sampling and snowball sampling, were used in order to collect data from Chinese graduates from Bangor University. In addition, purposive sampling was utilized for the data collection from the relevant staff members from Bangor University. In total, 42 interviews were conducted, which included 39 interviews with the Chinese graduates from Bangor University, and 3 interviews with the relevant staff members from Bangor University. Most of the interviews lasted around 45 to 60 minutes. The shortest interview lasted about 20 minutes, and the longest one was over 2 hours. It was believed that the data saturation had been achieved.

Grounded theory was partially adopted when handling and analysing the data in order to keep an open mind, but prior knowledge and relevant theories also informed the data collection and analysis. In addition, thematic analysis was utilized for the data analysis.

Synopsis of the Thesis

In this thesis, first, the relevant literature regarding unemployment, underemployment, graduate employment, graduate employability, Chinese graduates from UK universities, and general theories of the labour market will be discussed comprehensively, all of which constitute the literature review chapter. Secondly, in the methodology chapter, methodology in relevant research, research approach, research strategy, data collection, data analysis, and ethical considerations will be explained. Thirdly, the findings generated from this research will be shown with relevant explanation, including the socioeconomic background, educational attainment and career expectations of Chinese graduates from Bangor University (in Wales, the UK), and their labour market experience and socioeconomic attainment. Finally, based on the findings and relevant existing literature, discussion and conclusions will be generated with implications, limitations of this study and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

A critical literature review provides the foundation on which the research is built (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012). It helps to ‘develop a good understanding and insight into relevant previous research and the trends that have emerged’ (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012, p.73). According to Bryman (2012, p.98), the purposes of reviewing the existing literature should be to identify ‘what is already known about this area’, ‘what concepts and theories are relevant to this area’, ‘what research methods and research strategies have been employed in studying this area’, whether there are ‘any significant controversies’, whether there are ‘any inconsistencies in findings relating to this area’, and whether there are ‘any unanswered research questions in this area’. As a result, a literature review can help to summarise findings in the area, set out key concepts, identify the research gap in the area, revise and refine the research question(s) and objective(s), provide the conceptual framework, and suggest the research methods.

This chapter of literature review covers the key labour market concepts employed in this research and general theories of the labour market. In the section of key concepts, unemployment, underemployment, graduate employability, graduate employment, and Chinese graduates from UK universities are included. The section on general theories of the labour market consists of human capital theory, institutional theories and social mobility theory.

In the section on key concepts, concerning unemployment, the discussion includes how to define it, what frictional, structural and cyclical unemployment are and how to reduce them, and what voluntary and involuntary unemployment are; in addition, the findings from some relevant literature concerning unemployment will also be introduced. Regarding underemployment, the definition, relevant theories, antecedents and consequences, and its measurement will be provided. When discussing graduate employability, the definition of employability, the components of employability, and Dacre Pool and Sewell’s (2007) ‘The Key to Employability’ model will be explained; in addition, the argument that possessing employability may not automatically indicate good employment will be outlined with some examples. Then the phenomena of graduate employment will be introduced. After that, the large number of Chinese students studying at UK HEPs will be presented. A clear gap in knowledge will be pointed out which also indicates the contribution of this research.

In the section on general theories of the labour market, human capital theory will be discussed first as a dominant theory of the labour market, followed by the criticism of it. Then institutional theories and social mobility theory will be explained as the critique to human capital theory. Within institutional theories, two main sub-groups will be reviewed for the purposes of this thesis: labour market segmentation and institutional varieties of political economy. Labour market segmentation involves the notion of an internal labour market and a dual labour market. Concerning institutional varieties of political economy, first, the two types of political economies, liberal market economy and coordinated market economy will be explained. Then, detailed explanation of political economies in the UK and in China will be provided. Social mobility theories will come at the end of the general theories of the labour market section, which attaches importance to the relationships between socioeconomic background, educational attainment and socioeconomic attainment.

After reviewing the relevant literatures concerning key concepts and general theories of the labour market, the conclusion will be drawn by presenting the conceptual framework for this research, which can direct the further stages of data collection and analysis. Before presenting the literature review, the search strategy will first be explained.

Search Strategy

The objective of this research is to explore work and employment experience and destinations of Chinese graduates from Bangor University (in Wales, the UK) who achieved the degree of Bachelor, Master's and/or PhD. When reviewing the literature, the search strategy adopted is comprised of three stages.

First, the keywords were identified for the broad search, including 'graduate employment', 'graduate careers', 'graduate labour market', 'employability', 'unemployment', 'theory of labour market', 'underemployment', 'overqualification', 'underutilisation', 'overeducation'. Since the last four keywords are different terms used interchangeably to describe the phenomenon of underemployment (Scurry and Blenkinsopp, 2011), all of them were adopted in order to achieve the broadest coverage of the literature.

Secondly, the keywords were searched in Google Books, Google Scholar, some relevant journals and news websites. Google books and Google Scholar were used to conduct the general and broad search; while journals were employed when searching the literature in specific disciplines, and news websites were utilized to find out some relevant and contemporary labour market issues. Overlaps might exist between the search in Google Scholar and in journals; however, this search strategy could ensure that a large number of relevant literature was reviewed. The main journals consulted include Education and Training, Industrial Relations, Journal of Education and Work, International Journal of Educational Development, Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology, National Institute Economic Review, Studies in Higher Education, The International Journal of Human Resource Management, and Work, Employment and Society; with the news websites utilized being BBC News, The Guardian, The Independent, and Xinhua. In addition, some relevant Chinese literature was also reviewed for the purpose of this research. Although a large amount of the literature reviewed was written in English, as this research focused on Chinese graduates from UK universities, especially Bangor University, to explore their labour market experience, it was believed that the relevant Chinese literature was also of great importance. As a result, the key words mentioned above were translated into Chinese by the researcher, who is competent in both English language and Chinese language, and searched again in Google Scholar and Baidu Scholar.

Thirdly, reviewing the literature found followed the above two stages could help to identify the literature for further reading. As a result, the search of further literature was completed.

Key Labour Market Concepts

The key concepts employed in this literature review are labour market, graduates, employability, employment, unemployment and underemployment. The definitions of these terms employed in this research are briefly given below.

The concept of labour markets encompasses the institutions and policies that govern supply and demand exchange of labour. Policies generally target labour markets from one of two directions (or combinations of both): a focus on labour supply or labour demand. This includes how jobs

are distributed among workers and employment governance, mobility, supply of skills and training capabilities, and distribution of wages and other rewards (Kalleberg & Sorensen, 1979).

Graduates refer to ‘those people who have left education with qualifications above A level standard’, which include people with HE and people with degrees (Office for National Statistics, 2013, p.1). This research focuses on Chinese graduates from Bangor University (in Wales, the UK), who obtain the degree of Bachelor, Master’s and/or PhD. Related to ‘graduates’, there is a term called ‘non-graduate job’, which has already been mentioned at the beginning of the thesis. A non-graduate job is defined as the job in which the associated tasks ‘do not normally require knowledge and skills’ developed through HE to enable the job holders ‘to perform the associated tasks competently’ (Elias & Purcell, 2013, p.8). ‘Examples of non-graduate jobs include receptionists, sales assistants, many types of factory work, care workers and home carers’ (Office for National Statistics, 2017, p.14).

To define employability, Hillage and Pollard (1998, p.2) indicate that ‘in simple terms, employability is about being capable of getting and keeping fulfilling work’; from a more comprehensive view, it is ‘the capability to move self-sufficiently within the labour market to realize potential through sustainable employment’ (Hillage & Pollard, 1998, p.2). For this research, employability is relevant to the education, qualifications and skills of Chinese graduates from Bangor University, so it is related to the supply side of the labour market. Regarding the research questions, it is related to sub-question 2, ‘*What are the qualifications, skills and career expectations of Chinese graduates from Bangor University?*’

Employment is defined as ‘working for at least one hour a week for some payment, either for a wage or for profit, or commission, or without pay in a family business’ (Junankar, 2003, p.241). For this research, the notion of employment can be related to the demand side of the labour market, as it can be influenced by employers’ demand in the labour market. Regarding the research question, it is relevant to sub-question 3, ‘*What are the current employment situations and actual labour market experience of Chinese graduates from Bangor University?*’

Regarding unemployment, Junankar (2003, p.241) indicates that it is about ‘not being employed, and available and looking for work’.

Turning to underemployment, Feldman (1996, p.387) points out that it is defined ‘somehow as an inferior, lesser, or lower quality type of employment’. Besides, there are some relative

standards when defining underemployment, including the employment experiences of others who have the same education or work history, and the individual's own education or work history (Feldman, 1996).

For this research, the concepts of unemployment and underemployment are also relevant to the demand side of the labour market, because they can be caused by the lack of demand by employers in the labour market. Concerning the research questions, they can be linked to sub-question 3, '*What are the current employment situations and actual labour market experience of Chinese graduates from Bangor University?*'

Having provided the key concepts of this study and their definitions, the following parts examine in further detail the relevant literature of unemployment, underemployment, graduate employability, graduate employment, and Chinese graduates from UK universities in sequence.

Unemployment

According to Hussmanns, Mehran and Varma (1990, p.97), there are three criteria to define unemployment, all of which must be met: 'without work', 'currently available for work' and 'seeking work'; so the 'unemployed' include all the people meeting all three criteria during the defined reference periods (Giles, Park & Zhang, 2005). According to the International Labour Office (2003, p.411), 'individuals are considered to be outside the labour force, or inactive, if they are neither employed nor unemployed, that is, not actively seeking work'. Giles, Park and Zhang (2005) point out that even though there may be seemingly clear criteria to define unemployment, there are many difficulties when attempting to measure it in reality, including selecting reference periods for work and work search activities, and defining what constitutes work search. Concerning the reference periods for work and work search activities, Giles, Park and Zhang (2005) indicate that standard international practice is to enquire about respondents' work activity during the past week and work search activity during the past month.

Concerning the relationship of supply and demand in the labour market, Kaufman (1989) points out that there are three types of unemployment identified and distinguished by economists: frictional unemployment, structural unemployment and cyclical unemployment. Frictional

unemployment is caused by 'the constant flow of people between jobs and into and out of the labour force', for the reason that 'information in the job market is imperfect', and because 'it takes time for unemployed workers and employers with job vacancies to find each other' (Kaufman, 1989, p.603). Structural unemployment emerges because of a basic mismatch between the types of available jobs and the types of people looking for jobs (Kaufman, 1989). The mismatch might be relevant to education, skills, age, or geographic area (Kaufman, 1989). Cyclical unemployment, also called demand deficient unemployment, occurs because of 'insufficient aggregate demand in the economy to generate enough jobs for those who seek one' (Kaufman, 1989, p.605).

All three types of unemployment have distinctive characteristics (Kaufman, 1989). In the case of frictional unemployment, first, it has influence on a relatively large number of people from all industries, demographic groups and areas; secondly, its duration tends to be relatively short; thirdly, the existence of a certain amount of frictional unemployment is inevitable; finally, frictional unemployment not only results in economic costs, but also leads to some tangible economic benefits, such as it allows a person 'a more intensive and wide-ranging job search' (Kaufman, 1989, p.604). Regarding structural unemployment, first, it tends to happen among certain groups of people who have been negatively influenced by 'the decline of a major industry', 'technological change', or 'the movement of jobs to another area of the country'; secondly, its duration is long (Kaufman, 1989, p.605). With cyclical unemployment, the feature refers to that compared to frictional and structural unemployment, first, it varies more obviously from year to year due to the expansion and contraction of the economy; secondly, cyclical unemployment 'tends to be widespread throughout the economy'; thirdly, the duration of cyclical unemployment is longer than frictional unemployment and shorter than structural unemployment (Kaufman, 1989, p.605-606).

Due to the different nature of frictional, structural and cyclical unemployment, there are different ways to reduce each of them by public policy (Kaufman, 1989). In order to reduce frictional unemployment, the first way is to increase the flow of job information in the labour market; the second way is to remove undesirable causes of turnover (Kaufman, 1989). Regarding the ways to reduce structural unemployment, the first is 'government provision or subsidization of training programmes', the second is to stimulate unemployed workers to move out of depressed areas, and the third refers to government provision of public service jobs to people who encounter persistent unemployment (Kaufman, 1989, p.605). Concerning the

reduction of cyclical unemployment, the first is to utilize fiscal and monetary policies that ensure the rates of economic growth are stable and healthy; the second is to 'time public works projects' (make them start with recession periods) (Kaufman, 1989, p.606).

From an individual's perspective, Gillespie (2014) points out that unemployment can be voluntary or involuntary. Voluntary unemployment implies that the person is in the labour force and is seeking work, and employment is available, but 'he or she is not yet willing or able to accept the work at the given real wage rate' (Gillespie, 2014, p.440); involuntary unemployment means that because of a lack of employment opportunities available, the personal 'who are willing and able to work at the given real wage' are not employed (Gillespie, 2014, p.440).

The unemployment rate can be seen as 'the most common measure of labour market slack', which demonstrates how many people are unemployed, shown as a proportion of the labour force, consisting of the employed and the unemployed (Bell & Blanchflower, 2013, p. F8). The monthly or annual calculation of the unemployment rate can be utilized to track the status of the labour market over time; and the unemployment rates of different groups of people (for example, male and female) at a given point of time can also be used to describe the inequalities (Jensen & Slack, 2003). However, because of the recent obvious increase in underemployment in the UK, Bell and Blanchflower (2013) hold that the unemployment rate becomes a weaker indicator of the degree of labour market slack than it was in the recent past.

According to Price and Fang (2002), in many cases, the individuals who are unemployed will encounter distress and will be compelled to compete in new labour markets, with which they might be unfamiliar. Clark and Oswald (1994) illustrate that regarding lost 'utility' units, being unemployed is worse than marital separation or divorce. Concerning the influence of unemployment on job satisfaction, Lange (2013) suggests that anticipated unemployment can decrease employees' job satisfaction substantially. In Price and Fang's (2002) investigation into unemployed Chinese workers, they indicate that different groups of individuals view their situations and life prospects differently. 'Survivors', who have relatively high education levels, few needs for new coping skills, and little economic and psychological distress, are found to be least disturbed by their unemployed circumstances, and they hold the most positive attitude towards their future; 'worried young workers', who are at the beginning of their working lives, express higher depression levels and little confidence about their job searching and financial coping skills, although they eventually want to achieve upward job mobility; 'discouraged older workers', who are nearer the end of their working lives, hold the least human capital regarding

their educational background, and expect the refuge of retirement (Price & Fang, 2002, p. 425). Clark and Oswald (1994) utilize the data from the new British Household Panel Study, and they find that the distress caused by unemployment is less among individuals in high-unemployment areas and among young people; and individuals who have suffered unemployment for a long time express less distress than the people who have recently lost the jobs (Clark & Oswald, 1994). The findings from Price and Fang's (2002) investigation and Clark and Oswald's (1994) study both involve 'the young'. Although Clark and Oswald (1994) claim that the distress from unemployment is less among the young, Price and Fang (2002) argue that the young express higher depression levels when they encounter unemployment; however, their views are not absolutely conflicting, as they have different grouping methods, and the emphases in the analyses are different.

In order to investigate the influence of numerous social and labour market policies of destination countries on the immigrants' unemployment rates, Fleischmann and Dronkers (2010) selected 13 destination countries in the EU, and adopted a sample of 1363 immigrants. The results of their study indicate that in the countries with higher unemployment rates among natives, the immigrants are more often unemployed; in the countries which have a larger segment of low-status jobs, a higher GDP per capita, and higher immigration rates, the unemployment rates of immigrants are lower; concerning the origin countries of the immigrants, those who come from more politically stable and free, more wealthy and more developed societies suffered less unemployment (Fleischmann & Dronkers, 2010).

Underemployment

In this section, the definition, relevant theories, antecedents and consequences, and measurement of underemployment will be provided.

Definition of Underemployment

There are different terms used concerning the phenomenon of underemployment, including 'overqualification', 'underutilisation', 'overeducation', and 'underemployment', which are used interchangeably (Scurry & Blenkinsopp, 2011). From the various definitions of underemployment, Feldman (1996, p.387) points out that underemployment is defined 'somehow as an inferior, lesser, or lower quality type of employment'. Besides, there are some relative standards when defining underemployment, including the employment experiences of others who have the same education or work history, and the individual's own education or work history (Feldman, 1996). Similarly, McKee-Ryan and Harvey (2011, p.963) define underemployment as 'working in a job that is below the employee's full working capacity', and they indicated that the experience of workers suffering underemployment is similar to the experience of workers who are unemployed, than to the experience of workers who are employed adequately. To be specific, Jensen and Slack (2003) point out that the underemployed include those who hold part-time work, but prefer a full-time job; those holding a full-time job, but earning poverty-level wages; those who do not have a job and prefer to have one, but have given up seeking a job; and those whose occupational position is far below what the individual expects commensurate with their education level.

From the view of different working hours, underemployment can be visible and invisible. Visible underemployment refers to the individuals who are employed less than full-time but would like more work; invisible underemployment is having full-time work but in endeavours with very poor economic returns, very low productivity, and/or that underutilize the individuals' skills (Jensen & Slack, 2003).

According to Khan and Morrow (1991), there are two perspectives concerning underemployment, which are objective underemployment and subjective underemployment. The former refers to education or skills held by employees that 'exceed normal job requirements'; the latter indicates that employees 'feel that their abilities are not fully utilized' (Khan and Morrow, 1991, p.211). Feldman (1996) also points out that underemployment is not only objectively determined by the characteristics of the job, but also subjectively determined by the interpretations of those. According to McKee-Ryan et al. (2009, p.565), 'objective and subjective underemployment are related but separate constructs', for the reason that objective underemployment is related to 'relatively observable characteristics of a job', while the

assessments of subjective underemployment need an employee's interpretation of these characteristics 'relative to some internal standard'.

Feldman and Turnley (1995) explore underemployment among recent business college graduates, and provide a four-attribute conceptualization of underemployment (Feldman and Turnley, 1995). The first three attributes are related to the utilization of education (Feldman and Turnley, 1995). A recent graduate would be considered underemployed if his/her job 'did not require a college degree for employment', his/her job field was not related to his/her education, and/or his/her career path did not use his/her training and expertise (Feldman & Turnley, 1995, p.692). The fourth attribute refers to whether or not a recent college graduate is employed full-time in a permanent position (Feldman & Turnley, 1995).

Feldman (1996, p.386) provides a conceptualization of underemployment, defining it 'in terms of education, work duties, field of employment, wages and permanence of the job'. The five dimensions of underemployment include holding more formal education than that required by the job, being involuntarily employed outside the individual's area of formal education, having 'higher-level work skills and more extensive work experience' than required by the job, being 'involuntarily engaged in part-time, temporary, or intermittent employment', and 'earning wages 20% or less than in previous job' or 'than average of graduating cohort in same major or occupational track' for new graduates (Feldman, 1996, p.388-389). Feldman (1996) also indicates that no single research may use all of these five dimensions at the same time within the same sample.

Based on the underemployment dimensions provided by Feldman (1996), McKee-Ray and Harvey (2011) provide eight underemployment dimensions, by adding three to Feldman's five. They rank these dimensions from the most objective to the most subjective, including pay/hierarchical underemployment, hours underemployment, work-status congruence, overeducation, job field underutilization, skill underutilization, perceived overqualification, and relative deprivation (McKee-Ray & Harvey, 2011). Pay/hierarchical underemployment refers to employees who are underpaid or at a lower level of hierarchical position than their former job (for laid-off workers) or similarly skilled employees (for new graduates and other workers); hours underemployment, also known as involuntary part-time work, means that people are currently working less than full-time, but they would like more working hours; work-status congruence indicates a match between employees' preferences and their actual working conditions, including full-time or part-time status, number of hours, shift, and schedule;

overeducation, also seen as underutilization of education, represents the extent to which an employee is required to apply his or her education at work; job field underemployment occurs when a person works in a field which is not relevant to his or her formal education or training; skill/experience underutilization indicates that a person has greater skills and/or more work experience than his or her job demands; perceived overqualification means that a person perceives that he or she is overqualified for the job, and has more education or skills than the job demands; relative deprivation includes both 'the perception that a job is lacking in some way' and 'the belief that the job should be better than it is' (McKee-Ray & Harvey, 2011, p.974). These eight underemployment dimensions provide a more comprehensive view than Feldman's (1996) dimensions, because Khan and Morrow's (1991) opinion on subjective underemployment perspective is integrated into the dimensions.

Glyde (1997) focuses on skills perspective, pointing out that underemployment refers to an involuntary employment condition in which the skills achieved by workers exceed the skills required by the jobs they perform. He distinguished intraskill underemployment and interskill underemployment as two major forms of underemployment (Glyde, 1997). Intraskill underemployment happens 'when particular individuals or cohorts of individuals within an identifiable skill group are less able to utilize their skills than is the average individual from this skill group' (Glyde, 1997, p. 247). This form of underemployment is caused by individuals' real or perceived characteristic (Glyde, 1997). Interskill underemployment means 'a condition in which the average individual in a particular skill group is underutilized in employment relative to the typical individual from other skill groups where training investment costs are the same but the nature of the occupational preparation differs' (Glyde, 1997, p.247). This form of underemployment happens because of the nature of the skill the individuals hold (Glyde, 1997).

Underemployment can also be categorized into voluntary underemployment and involuntary underemployment. According to Feldman's (1996) five dimensions of employment, it is assumed that graduates always prefer to avoid underemployment (Scurry & Blenkinsopp, 2011), so the subsequent underemployment is thought to be involuntary. In addition, factors such as race, age, gender, and economic pressures causing downsizing and reorganization, which are out of the individual's control, can result in underemployment; and when underemployment happens because of these influential factors, it is seen as involuntary (Scurry & Blenkinsopp, 2011). However, some people, for a variety of reasons, choose to not fully utilize their qualifications (Brynin 2002), which means that they are voluntarily

underemployed. The two main categories of the reasons refer to treating underemployment as a temporary transitional period and accepting underemployment to avoid unemployment (Scurry & Blenkinsopp, 2011). But within these two situations, if the person thinks there is no other choice, his or her underemployment might be involuntary (Scurry & Blenkinsopp, 2011). Elias and Purcell (2004) provide another reason for underemployment, stating that some graduates take up non-graduate occupations as lifestyle choices. Brynin (2002) also points out that some women choose to not fully use their qualifications for the reason that they make career sacrifices for their family.

Relevant Theories of Underemployment

There are four major theories which are relevant to underemployment, including human capital theory, person-environment or person-job fit, relative deprivation theory, and the coping and control theory model of reemployment (McKee-Ray & Harvey, 2011). These four relevant theories of underemployment are explained below.

According to human capital theory, individuals and society generate economic benefits from investment in people (Sweetland, 1996). Deriving from this theory, McKee-Ray and Harvey (2011) put forward the idea that an individual determines the investment in his or her own human capital, which is achieved through education, certifications and training, with the expectations of the economic rewards and outcomes generated from their attained human capital. As a result, human capital theory claims to provide the explanation for the outcomes of individual employees, organizations and the labour market, 'reflected by a match between the employee's human capital and the job's requirements' (McKee-Ray & Harvey, 2011, p. 964). Human capital theory is not just relevant to underemployment, it is a dominant theory in the labour market, which leads to the emphasis of skills supply among individuals, organizations, governments and society; further analysis and criticism of human capital theory will be provided in the section of general theories of the labour market.

Person-environment fit theory proposes that when there is a fit or match between an individual and the environment, positive responses occur (Carless, 2005). It is used as a general term, and there are more specific concepts of 'fit' under it, including person-job fit, which propose the

match between an employee's abilities, knowledge, and skills and the job requirements (Carless, 2005; McKee-Ryan & Harvey, 2011). In the case of underemployment, this theory implies that when differences exist between an individual's abilities, experience, education, skills and the demand of his or her job, a lack of fit occurs, which account for some of the underemployment related negative outcomes.

Relative deprivation refers to a 'perceived negative discrepancy' between one self and some referents, together with 'a feeling of discontent' (Olson & Hafer, 1996, p.85). Relative deprivation theory suggests that the extent to which people negatively react to underemployment depends on how much people desire to achieve job rewards, feel entitled to those rewards, and the standards of comparison held by him or her for appraising the fairness and justness of the rewards he or she receives in reality (Feldman, Leana & Bolino, 2002). As a result, relative deprivation theory is applied to the subjective perspective of underemployment.

Latack, Kinicki and Prussia (1995) coping and control theory model of re-employment emphasized the significance of equilibrium during the process of job search (McKee-Ryan & Harvey, 2011). With regard to underemployment, this theory proposes that the displaced employees can return to a state of equilibrium only if they are re-employed in high-quality jobs which are similar to the ones they lost (McKee-Ryan & Harvey, 2011), and the equilibrium can also be seen as a discrepancy reduction or a fit (McKee-Ryan & Harvey, 2011).

Antecedents and Consequences of Underemployment

Glyde (1977) points out the diverse causes of underemployment, including imperfect labour market information, discrimination, and the costs of searching for workers and jobs. He also indicated the sources of underemployment, which are costs of labour mobility, shifts in demand and supply of labour, and lags in adjustment to these shifts (Glyde, 1977).

Feldman (1996) also lists the antecedents of underemployment, including economic factors, job characteristics, career history, job search strategies and demographic characteristics. First, with regard to the economic factors, Feldman (1996) hypothesizes that deep recessions and

depressions are likely to result in underemployment; uncertainty in the economy concerning governmental regulation relating to wages, benefits and protections for workers might lead to underemployment. In addition, differences across industry and company economic conditions can also influence underemployment (Feldman, 1996). However, McKee-Ryan and Harvey (2011, p.974) point out that there was 'no direct evidence regarding the effects on underemployment of business's concern that the government would regulate labour costs'. Secondly, the relationship between job characteristic and underemployment refers to the issue that both employees in different hierarchical positions (such as managers, middle managers and line workers), and employees with different occupational backgrounds (such as marketing, research and development, accounting and finance) might suffer different levels of underemployment in declining firms (Feldman, 1996). McKee-Ryan and Harvey (2011) suggest that direct research comparing the underemployment rates among these groups of people is needed in order to support Feldman's (1996) view. Thirdly, an individual's career history might also result in underemployment, indicating that the person who has been laid off from his or her jobs previously, the person who is unemployed for a long period, and the person who is career plateaued will be more likely to suffer underemployed (Feldman, 1996). Fourthly, with regard to the influence of job search strategies on underemployment, Feldman (1996) suggests that the individual who starts job hunting early and makes a concerted effort to job search, and the individual who adopts strategies of retraining and relocating geographically in order to get a new job, will be less likely to suffer underemployment. However, McKee-Ryan and Harvey (2011) indicate that according to the results from the job search literature, it can be seen that there are more complex relationships than Feldman (1996) suggests. Fifthly, demographic characteristics, including gender, race, age and education, can also affect underemployment (Feldman, 1996). In addition to the above five antecedents of underemployment, McKee-Ryan and Harvey (2011) provide another two antecedents, which are employee experiences, characteristics and traits, and personal work preferences.

Based on all seven antecedents, McKee-Ryan and Harvey (2011) conclude that there are two trends regarding underemployment. First, difficult situations can result in an individual's underemployment, including both difficult economic and personal situations; second, everyone has the possibility to encounter underemployment (McKee-Ryan & Harvey, 2011). Further to this, educational expansion which results in over-education can be seen as another cause. According to Tian and Ji (2017), China, like many countries, is confronting over-education as a result of educational expansion. However, it is shown by partial over-education and general

under-education in China's case (Tian and Ji, 2017). Although the incidences of over-education and under-education are different in China, they are both important, for the reason that both of these two phenomena make against social stability and sustainable development. In addition, regarding the level of the degree qualification, Tian and Ji (2017, p.364) hold that in China, 'the higher the level of the degree, the more likely the incidence of over-education'.

Regarding the consequences of underemployment for individuals, Glyde (1977) indicates that underemployment can result in low earnings, possible job dissatisfaction, feedback effects which reduce the amount of future human capital accumulation, and alienation from work. Feldman (1996) identifies the consequences of underemployment which include job attitudes, overall psychological well-being, career attitudes, and job behaviour and performance. He pointed out that job attitudes (including job satisfaction, job involvement, work commitment and work motivation) and psychological well-being (including overall life satisfaction, self-esteem, optimism and locus of control) will be negatively affected by underemployment (Feldman, 1996). In the case of career attitudes, Feldman (1996) holds that underemployment will negatively relate to attitudes towards careers, but it might positively link to careerist attitudes and behaviors. The relationships between underemployment and job behaviour and job performance suggest that underemployment is likely to cause high rates of turnover and absenteeism, and negatively affect job performance and organizational citizenship behaviours (Feldman, 1996). Regarding the influence of underemployment on society, Glyde (1977, p.258) states that underemployment can be seen as 'an inefficient usage of human resources and lost output'. Feldman (1996) holds that underemployment can influence marital, family and social relationships, which indicates that underemployment can cause a decreased quality of interpersonal relationship with spouses, children, and friends. Building on Feldman's (1996) view, McKee-Ryan and Harvey (2011) suggest that the consequences of underemployment include job outcomes, career outcomes and personal outcomes. Job outcomes indicate that underemployment is negatively linked to an individual's job attitudes, and positively related to employee withdrawal; in addition, there are mixed results with regard to job performance (McKee-Ryan & Harvey, 2011). Turning to career outcomes, they hold that the relationships between underemployment and career outcomes are complicated, because there are both positive and negative influences. Personal outcomes include psychological well-being and marital, family and social relationships (McKee-Ryan & Harvey, 2011).

Measurement of Underemployment

Scurry and Blenkinsopp (2011) argue that the measurement of underemployment is a central issue for research on underemployment. Battu, Belfield and Sloane (2000) identify three main traditional approaches to measure underemployment. The first approach is the objective measure, which refers to the professional job analysts who conduct a systematic evaluation in order to ascertain what level and type of education is required for a particular occupation (Battu, Belfield & Sloane, 2000). The second approach is the subjective measure, and the individual's own job assessment is involved in this measurement (Battu, Belfield & Sloane, 2000). The questions, such as 'how much formal education is required to get a job like yours?' or 'if they were applying today, what qualifications if any would someone need to get the type of job you have now?' are asked in order to conduct the measurement (Battu, Belfield & Sloane, 2000, p. 83). The third approach is the standard deviation measure, which is about taking the average of the actual levels of education from the individuals in a particular occupation, with an individual being deemed as underemployed if his/her level of actual education is more than one standard deviation above the mean (Battu, Belfield & Sloane, 2000).

Scurry and Blenkinsopp (2011) indicate that the discrepancy between educational attainment and employment outcomes can define underemployment. To measure the discrepancy, first, they provide the assumption that educational attainment will result in an employment outcome, which is composed of the expected employment outcome and the actual employment outcome; secondly, they look at the educational attainment and emphasize the use of qualification in the measurement; thirdly, regarding employment outcome, they conclude three approaches to the measurement, including the educational requirements of an occupation, earnings, and contract status (Scurry & Blenkinsopp, 2011). The measurement in terms of education requirements of an occupation is the same as Battu, Belfield and Sloane's (2000) three approaches. It can be seen that Scurry and Blenkinsopp (2011) provide a more comprehensive and completed view concerning the measurement of underemployment. Applying the measurement in terms of earnings, it is argued that overqualified graduates receive lower earnings compared with others holding the same qualifications (McGuinness & Sloane, 2011). Looking at the measurement in terms of contract status, it is proposed that underemployment occurs when a part-time or temporarily employed individual would prefer a full-time or permanent work (Scurry & Blenkinsopp, 2011). This measurement of underemployment is related to working hours. Bell and Blanchflower (2013) adopt this point of view, and defined underemployed as the

individuals currently in work who desire to work longer hours. They provided the underemployment index, which measures ‘the excess supply of hours in the economy’ (Bell & Blanchflower, 2013, p. F8). Jensen and Slack (2003, p.23, 24) also conclude that underemployment includes ‘Underemployed by occupational mismatch (or overeducated)’, ‘underemployed by low income (or working poor)’ and ‘underemployed by low hours (or involuntary part-time employment)’. It can be seen that the measurement of underemployment concerning the educational requirements, incomes and working hours, are generally adopted by scholars.

Graduate Employability

Employability is hard to define and measure (Harvey, 2001). As there is no one universally adopted definition of employability, from numerous literature, Hillage and Pollard (1998) conclude that employability is about work and the capabilities to be employed, including the ability to gain initial employment, the ability to maintain employment and the ability to obtain new employment if required; in addition, employability is also about the quality of such work or employment. They put forward their definition of employability, indicating that ‘in simple terms, employability is about being capable of getting and keeping fulfilling work’; from a more comprehensive view, it is ‘the capability to move self-sufficiently within the labour market to realize potential through sustainable employment’ (Hillage & Pollard, 1998, p.2).

Moreau and Leathwood (2006, p.307) point out that employability is ‘a matter of an individual’s skills’. Holmes (2013) indicates that the approach to define graduate employability based on the notions of skills and attributes is currently the dominant approach, he refers to this as the possessive approach. Smetherham (2006) and Ren, Zhu and Warner (2011) hold that graduates’ employability is related to their knowledge and skills and the employers’ valuation concerning these, together with how they approach the labour market and their attitudes towards job competition. Similarly, but more comprehensively, Hillage and Pollard (1998, p.2) hold that there are four components of employability, named as ‘assets’, ‘deployment’, ‘presentation’ and ‘in the context of personal circumstances and the labour market’. Employability assets are composed of an individual’s knowledge, skills, and attitudes; deployment refers to how the

individuals use and deploy the above assets, including career management skills, job search skills and strategic approach; presentation means how the individual presents himself or herself to employers; the last component is the context within which the individuals seek jobs, and both personal circumstances and external factors are included (Hillage & Pollard, 1998).

Holmes (2001) presents the 'graduate identity' approach in order to understand graduate employability, which is termed a processual approach (Holmes, 2013). By providing a 'claim-affirmation model of emergent identity' (Holmes, 2001, p.116), he argues that the interaction between claim/disclaim by the individual and the affirmation/disaffirmation by others determined the different kinds of emergent identity. Graduate identity is also determined by this interaction, which puts the emphasizes not too much on the formal degree gained, but on the extent to which an individual who has graduated is successful in achieving affirmation of his/her identity as a graduate within relevant social surroundings (Holmes, 2001).

Based on Holmes's (2001) concept of graduate identity, Hinchliffe and Jolly (2011) indicate the importance of graduate identity as the cultural capital required before an individual enters an organization. In addition, regarding identity, they claim that values, intellect, social engagement and performance are all significant for graduates (Hinchliffe & Jolly, 2011). Values contain social values, personal ethics, and organizational values; intellect means the graduate's abilities in critical thinking, analysing and communicating information, bringing ideas and challenges to an organisation, and reflection of his/her work; performance refers to the application of intellect and skills in the work; and engagement implies the willingness to meet challenges and to be outward looking (Hinchliffe & Jolly, 2011). These four elements of identity should not be treated independently from each other; instead, the interpenetration between them is of great importance, in order to build a composite identity (Hinchliffe & Jolly, 2011).

Besides the possessive and processual approaches to define graduate employability, Holmes (2013) also points out a positioning approach, which is built on social positioning theory. This approach is more closely related to the evidence of employment outcomes (Holmes, 2013).

Dacre Pool and Sewell (2007) provide a model called 'The Key to Employability'. It suggests the development of career development learning, experience (work & life), degree subject knowledge, understanding and skills, generic skills and emotional intelligence, together with the reflection and evaluation of these experiences, will lead to the development of higher levels

of self-efficacy, self-confidence and self-esteem, which are significant to employability (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007).

According to Li, Morgan and Ding (2008), in China the factors affecting graduate employment probability include the level of education, the reputation of the HEI, gender, the depth and breadth of knowledge, and the ability to obtain information about potential employment from universities or colleges. In the case of the level of education, the higher the education level a graduate holds, the greater probability for him or her to obtain employment (Li, Morgan & Ding, 2008). Regarding the reputation of the HEIs, graduates from key universities have greater opportunities for employment compared with the graduates from ordinary universities (Li, Morgan & Ding, 2008). The gender factor refers to the fact that males have more of an advantage when seeking employment than females (Li, Morgan & Ding, 2008, p. 690). Depth of knowledge refers to the class rank of the qualification, playing a role in student societies and taking part in volunteer social work (Li, Morgan & Ding, 2008), and breadth of knowledge indicates the second degree and the experience of part-time job (Li, Morgan & Ding, 2008); both of these can positively affect an graduate's employment probabilities, with the influence of depth being greater than the influence of breadth (Li, Morgan & Ding, 2008). The last factor refers to the fact that graduates who have the ability to obtain information about potential employment from universities or colleges have more opportunities to get employment (Li, Morgan & Ding, 2008). It can be said that these factors are strongly relevant to the employability of graduates in China.

However, bearing in mind that employability cannot automatically indicate good employment. Wilton's (2011, p.97) research on UK business and management graduates' skills development and their employment outcomes indicates that in the labour market, the 'entrenched proclivity for particular types of graduates' (such as minority ethnic graduates, female graduates, and graduates from a new university with the most marked contrast reported between employability development and employment outcomes) still has a considerable negative influence on the new graduate labour supply, even when the graduates possess the developed skills which are often required by employers. From a longitudinal study of undergraduate students conducted in a post-1992 inner-city university in England, Moreau and Leathwood (2006) also point out that the graduates in this research were at a disadvantage when seeking graduate employment, for the reason that they achieved a degree at a post-1992 university or because of their gender, ethnicity, age, social class background or disability. Rafferty (2012) focuses on ethnic

differences to examine graduate level overeducation, unemployment and wages in Britain, and found that despite the levels of educational attainment they achieved, there were penalties among some minority ethnic groups. From these studies, it can be seen that social background affects what happens to graduates in respect of employment prospects, which coincides with social mobility theory. The explanation of social mobility theory will be provided in the section of general theories of the labour market. According to ‘a longitudinal case study of the construction of personal employability by Chinese students at a UK university’, which involves the in-depth semi-structured interviews with 23 Chinese students who study for taught programme Master’s degrees from ‘a single research-intensive, elite UK university’, it is pointed out that, although these students still treat the overseas education as ‘contributing to their employability in general’, there is a decrease ‘in the labour market value of the ‘hard currencies’ that overseas qualification carries’, while the ‘soft currencies’ obtained from the overseas experiences carry more important merit (Li, 2013, p.473, 480).

Graduate Employment

Labour market is the place for trading between labour supply and demand, and the organizational form that using market mechanism to adjust the relationship between labour supply and demand (Ma, 2013). Graduate labour market is a sub-market of labour market (Ma, 2013). In terms of the supplying and demanding subjects of graduate labour market, their levels are relatively high, which is shown not only in the relatively high level of talents’ knowledge and skills of the supplying subject, but also in the relatively high level of post technique required by the demanding subject (Ma, 2013). Compared with average job seekers in labour market, graduates tend to work in knowledge-intensive industries or high-value links of industry chains (Ma, 2013). Moreover, only the people who have relatively high level knowledge and skills can be competent for the requests of these positions’ functions (Ma, 2013).

In recent years, the rapidly increasing number of young people graduating from HEIs has led to ‘increased attention to the potential discrepancy between supply and demand’ in the labour market; and the concerns of graduate employment have increased (Scurry & Blenkinsopp, 2011, p.643). The phenomena of unemployment and underemployment among graduates have

attracted the attention of many scholars (eg. Feldman & Turnley, 1995; Nabi, 2003; Scurry & Blenkinsopp, 2011). According to Tomlinson (2007, p.286), in the graduate labour market, many graduates are not using the knowledge and skills achieved from their HE; and there are 'positional' differences between graduates from different social classes, ethnicity and gender. In addition, some graduates encounter unemployment, and Moreau and Leathwood (2006) identify increased unemployment among graduates.

International experience shows that within the process of rapid education development in both developed and developing countries, the phenomenon of graduate employment difficulty appears (Lai & Tian, 2009). According to Li, Morgan and Ding (2008), because HE is expanding all around the world, new graduates may encounter more difficulties getting jobs with good terms and conditions than people who entered the labour market earlier. For example, similar positions might be provided to new graduates with lower starting salaries or shorter contract terms; or they will have to do jobs at lower level positions; or they will be confronted by unemployment after graduation (Li, Morgan & Ding, 2008). Supply and demand in the labour market will be affected by the fact that there are more job seekers who have higher education qualifications (Li, Morgan & Ding, 2011). Wilton (2011, p.85) indicates that in the UK, the graduate labour market has faced considerable changes both in the 'composition of the graduate labour supply' and in the 'diversity of occupations that graduates subsequently enter'. Almost half of recent graduates in the UK are working in non-graduate jobs (Allen, 2013).

In China, over the past 20 years, the higher education has expanded rapidly (Liu & Morgan, 2018). According to Meng, Su and Shi (2012), since the massive expansion of higher education in 1999, the labour market of higher education graduates in China has been tightening. The phenomenon that university graduates cannot successfully get a job at the time of graduation becomes more and more obvious (Meng, Su & Shi, 2012). Fladrich (2006, p.201) points out that in China, graduates face 'fierce employment conditions' because of the 'increasing domestic and global socioeconomic pressure and competition'. In addition, because of the considerable number of students graduating from Chinese HEIs together with students returning from overseas, unemployment among graduates is increasing, and competition in the labour market is growing (Fladrich, 2006). Moreover, when graduates seek jobs, they are facing the fact that there are increasing better educated workforces, which result in greater competition (Fladrich, 2006). Li and Morgan (2011) also point out that in China, with the expansion of higher education, difficulties in job search are faced by higher education graduates. It is the

reality that in China, labour supply is greater than demand and it exists almost everywhere (Fladrich, 2006). According to Yue and Zhou (2005), in China, the more and more severe employment pressure of college graduates has become a hot topic attracting widespread attention from the whole society.

On the graduate labour market, it seems that more attention has been paid to the supply side than the demand side. The expansion of HE provides more graduates to the labour market. Many people pursue their HE in order to obtain a good job, and graduate employability skills are emphasized by individuals, universities and scholars (such as Bridgstock, 2009; Cranmer, 2006; Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007; Wilton, 2008; Wilton, 2011). However, in reality, many graduates are underemployed or unemployed. James et al. (2013) indicate that economic fortunes not only depend on increasing the labour supply; just having more graduates in the labour market will not help to achieve economic competitiveness.

Tomlinson (2007) points out that employability policies concentrated on the supply side of the labour market. James et al. (2013) also argue that government concentration is much too narrowly emphasized on supply. Supply-side approaches cannot correctly catch the relative nature of employability, and the nature of graduate demand in many job sectors, which are very competitive and hard to enter, but into which numerous graduates expect to enter, is often overlooked (Tomlinson, 2007). Under this circumstance, how employers manage graduate talents and how employers facilitate graduates' knowledge and skills is a serious matter, which will continue for the reason that the number of graduates from mass HE has increased (Tomlinson, 2007). Concerning the demand side, problems exist. For example, the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) (2009) indicates that in the UK, relative to other industrialized nations, there are too few businesses in high skill, high value added industries, too few workplaces with high performance, and too few high skilled jobs are created. As a result, the mismatch between supply and demand is a considerable issue; without solving this problem, the capability of individuals and universities to enhance graduate employability will be limited. According to Unwin (2010), if there is not sufficient employer demand, the continuous attempts to develop the UK's vocational education and training (VET) system have been and continue to be seriously hindered.

Chinese Graduates from UK Universities

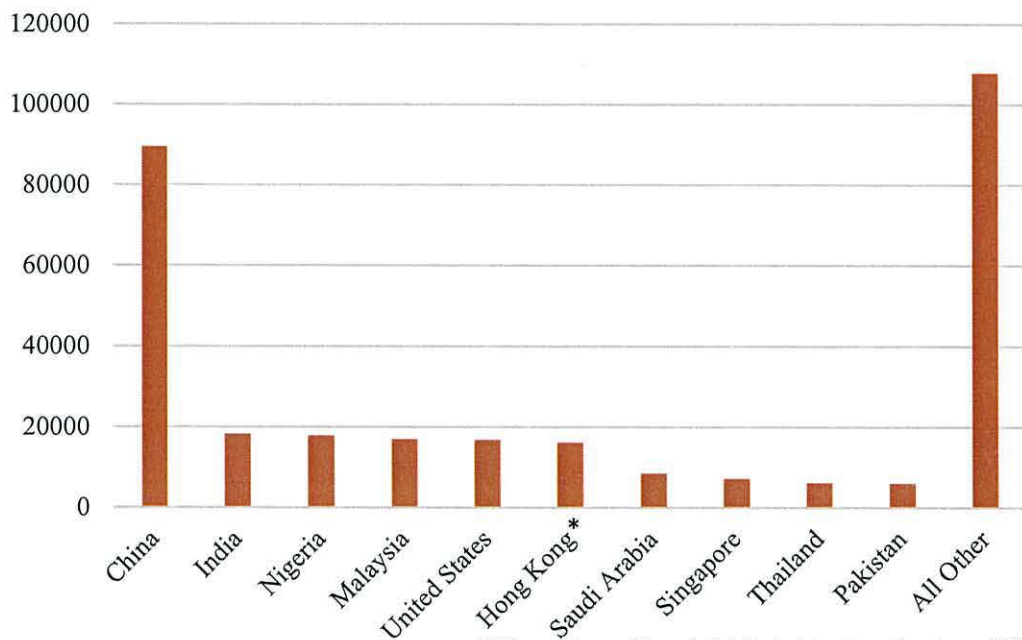
Education is highly regarded in China. For example, a Chinese proverb, ‘the pursuit of knowledge is superior to all other walks of life’ (wan ban jie xia pin, wei you du shu gao) (Zhu, 2016), reflects the importance of education. Lee and Morrish (2012) point out that in China, education is treated as the ticket to a bright future, as an investment with a guaranteed good return, for both children and parents.

With increasing numbers of both those who study abroad and those who return to China, the phenomena of ‘craze for going abroad’ and ‘difficulty of employment’ both exist in China (Jia, 2012). In China, a person who returns to the home country after his/her overseas study is called a sea turtle, or hai gui in Mandarin, as the phrase ‘return across the sea’ has the similar pronunciation in Mandarin to the pronunciation of hai gui (Anon, 2013). For the sea turtles who cannot find jobs, wags call them seaweed, or hai dai in Mandarin (Anon, 2013), also because of the similar pronunciation.

This thesis specifically addresses what happens to Chinese graduates who obtained their HE in the UK. According to Iannelli and Huang (2014, p.818), ‘the UK receives the second largest number of Chinese overseas students in the world’. In recent years, more and more Chinese students prefer to pursue their HE in UK universities. According to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (2016), in 2014/15, there were about 89540 Chinese students enrolled in UK HEPs. This number is the largest among the numbers of students from non-European Union countries of domicile in UK HEPs, which represents over 28% of all students from non-European Union countries of domicile in UK HEPs (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2016).

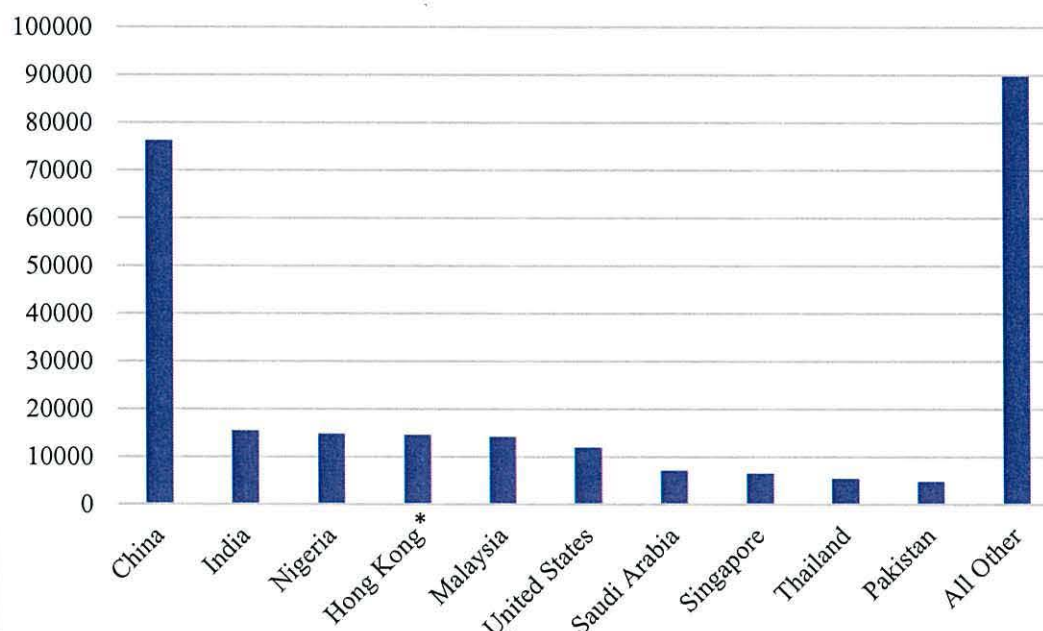
Figure 1 shows the numbers of students from different non-European Union countries of domicile in UK HEPs in 2014/15. Concerning the non-European Union domicile student enrolments in HEPs in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, the numbers of students from China in different locations are all the largest (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2016) (See Figure 2, 3, 4 and 5).

Figure 1. Numbers of Students from Non-European Union Countries of Domicile in All UK HE Providers (2014/15)



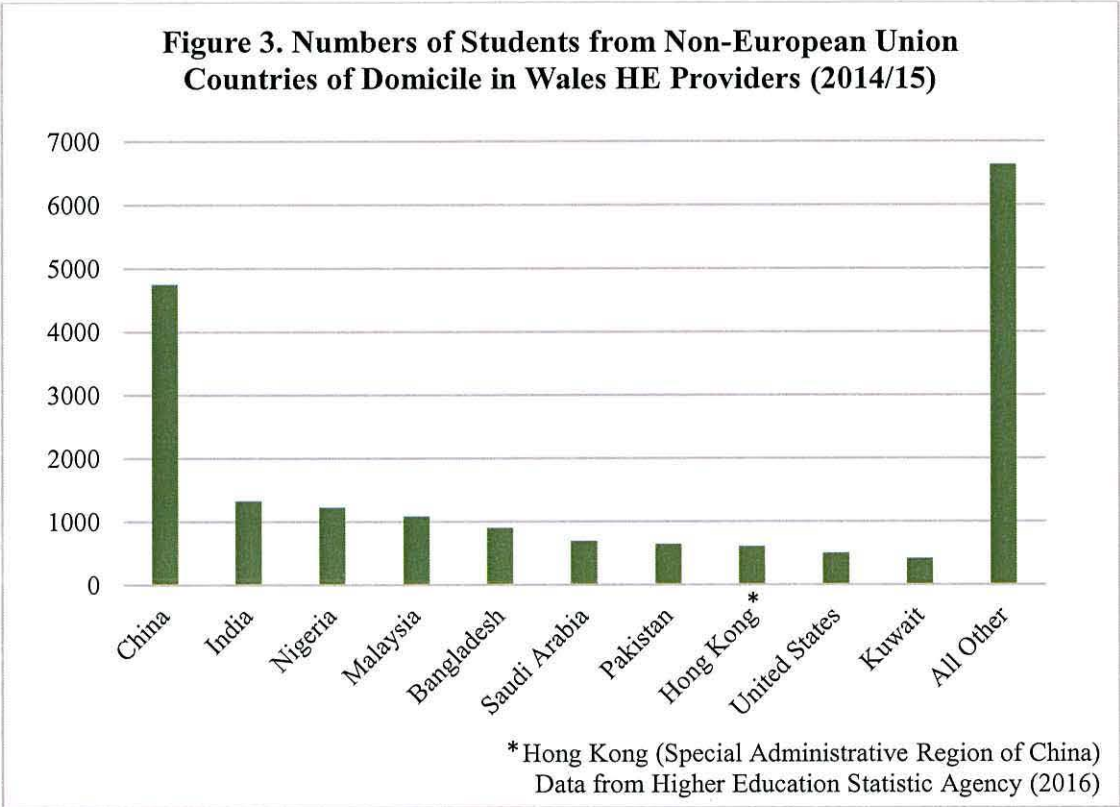
* Hong Kong (Special Administrative Region of China)
Data from Higher Education Statistic Agency (2016)

Figure 2. Numbers of Students from Non-European Union Countries of Domicile in England HE Providers (2014/15)



* Hong Kong (Special Administrative Region of China)
Data from Higher Education Statistic Agency (2016)

In 2014/15, the number of Chinese students in England HEPs represented more than 29% of all students from non-European Union countries of domicile in England HEPs (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2016).



In 2014/15, the number of Chinese students in Wales HEPs represented more than 25% of all students from on-European Union countries of domicile in Wales HEPs (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2016).

In 2014/15, the number of Chinese students in Scotland HEPs represented more than 26% of all students from non-European Union countries of domicile within Scotland HEPs (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2016).

Figure 4. Numbers of Students from Non-European Union Countries of Domicile in Scotland HE Providers (2014/15)

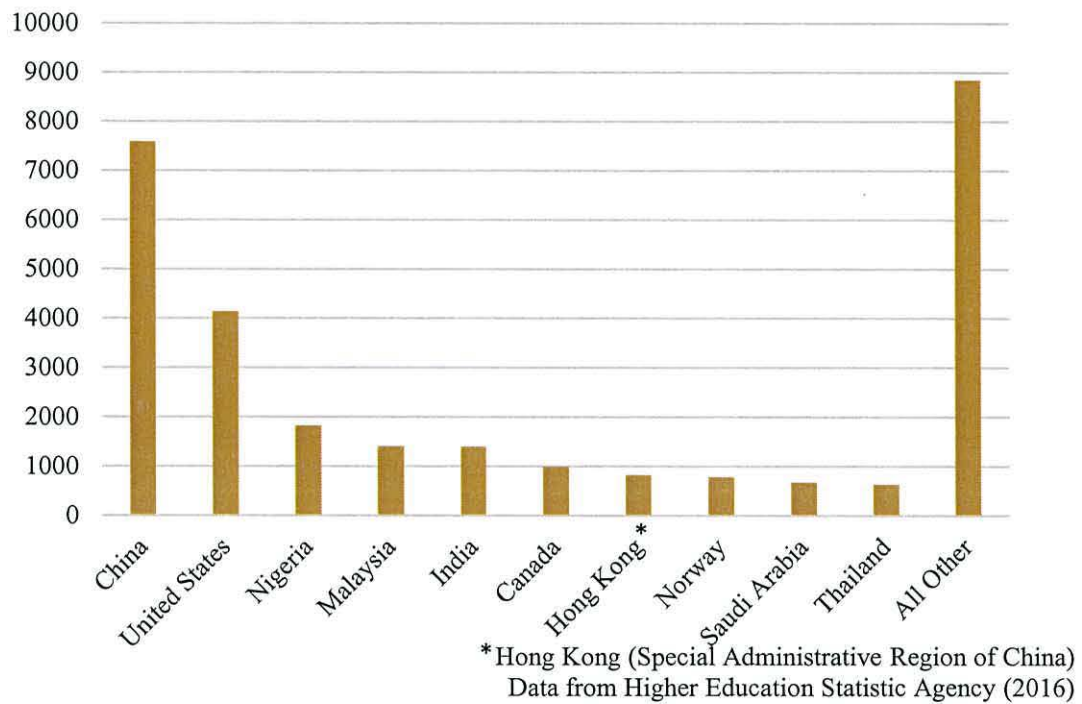
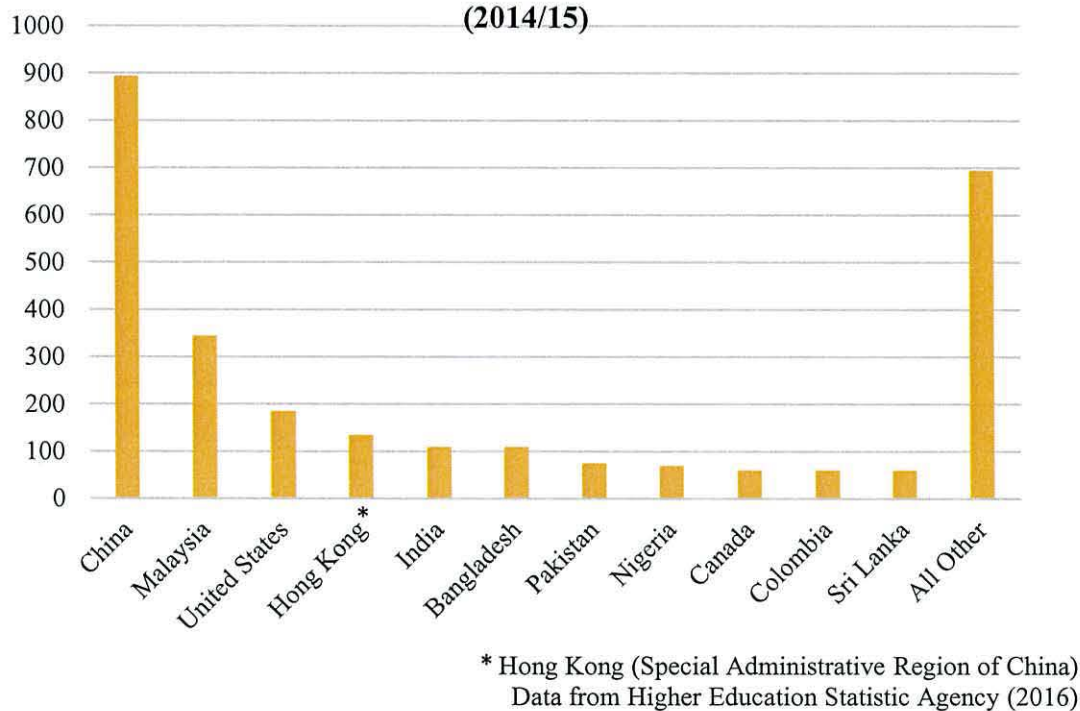
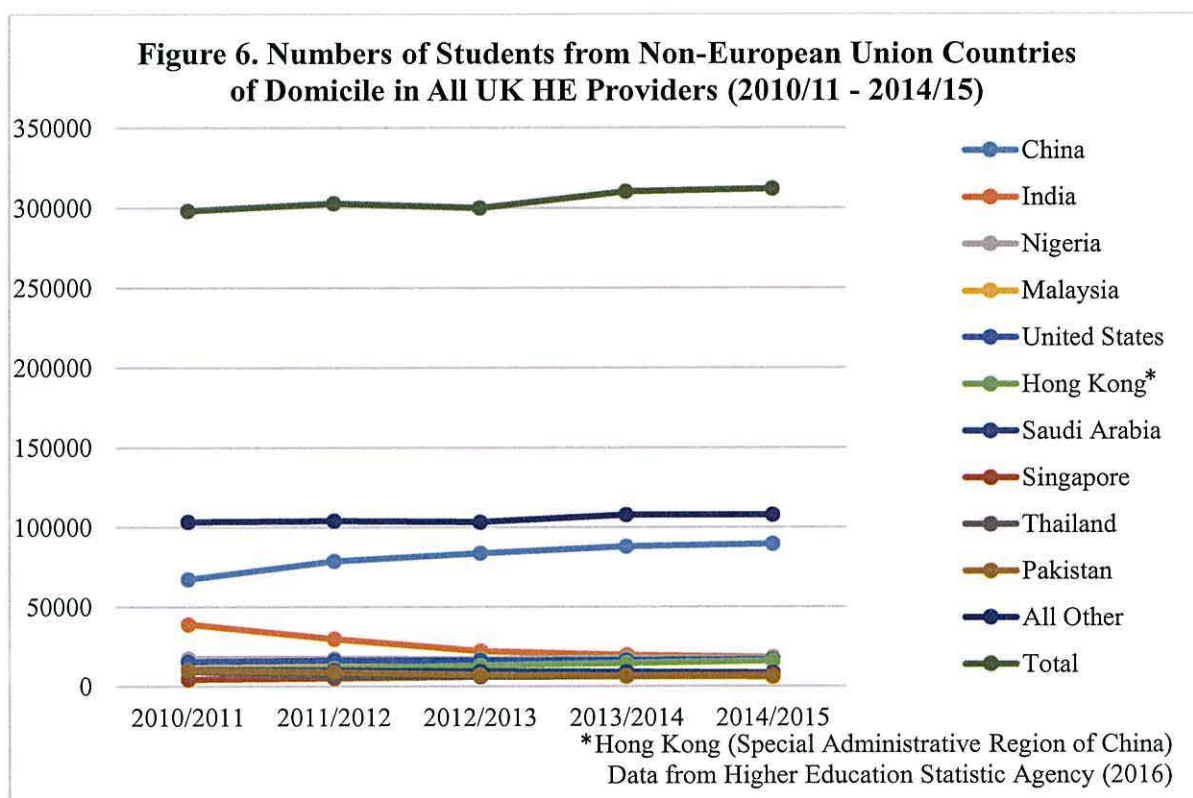


Figure 5. Numbers of Students from Non-European Union Countries of Domicile in Northern Ireland HE Providers (2014/15)



In 2014/15, the numbers of Chinese students in Northern Ireland HEPs represented more than 32% of all students from non-European Union countries of domicile in Northern Ireland HEPs (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2016).



Compared with the year 2013/14, the number of students in UK HEPs from China increased 2%, while the number of students from India, which ranked as the second largest number, decreased 7%, and the numbers of students from Nigeria, Saudi Arabia and Thailand all decreased (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2016). It is also notable that the total number of all non-European Union domicile students in UK HEPs increased 1% from the year 2013/14 to 2014/15, which was lower than the increase rate of the number of student from China in UK HEPs (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2016). In addition, despite the total number of students enrolled on HE courses in all UK HEPs decreasing every year from 2010/11 to 2014/15, the number of Chinese students in all UK HEPs increased every year (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2016). Figure 6 shows the trends in numbers of students from different non-EU countries of domicile in UK HEIs from 2010/11 to 2014/15. The numbers of Chinese students in all UK HEPs represent approximately 22.6%, 26.0%, 27.9%, 28.3%, and

28.7% of all the students from non-European Union countries of domicile in all UK HEPs in 2010/11, 2011/12, 2012/13, 2013/14, and 2014/15 (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2016). It can be seen that there is an upward trend in this rate from 2010/11 to 2014/15.

Fang and Wang (2014) point out that push-pull theory is very often used in the literature regarding students' choice of overseas higher education. According to Mazzarol and Soutar (2002), 'push' factors act within the source country and originate a student's decision to study overseas; 'pull' factors act within a host country which attract international students to study there. From Liu and Morgan's (2017, p. 455-456) systematic review of the literature regarding the major factors affecting mainland Chinese students' choice of overseas higher education, the main push factors include 'career-related aspirations', 'lack of access to satisfying domestic HEIs' or to major subjects, 'education system and methods'. 'political and economic environment', 'personal perceptions, abilities and intentions', 'parents' economic, cultural and social capital', and 'influence of family, friends, alumni and agents'; the main pull factors include 'high-quality education', 'authentic English language environment', 'high quality of the programme', 'better employment opportunities', 'influence of friends, relatives and alumni', 'shorter duration of the programme' and 'safety of the destination'.

Li, Zhao and Morgan (2016, p.79) point out that the investment in education and training by individuals 'comprises both time and money, which includes fees and associated expenditure, living expenses, and earnings forgone during the process of education'. Obtaining HE in the UK is a bigger investment than pursuing HE in China for Chinese students, which not only refers to the considerable tuition fees and living fees, but also includes the courage to experience a different culture in an unfamiliar surrounding far from their families. The decision to study abroad is one of the most significant and expensive initiatives that many students and their families will have ever undertaken (Mazzarol, 1998). Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) point out that the decision to undertake international study is often a family decision which is relevant to several decision makers. Bodycott and Lai (2012) indicate that in traditional Confucian societies such as the People's Republic of China, families, if not only parents, play a significant role when making major education and future employment related decisions. Chinese parents' attitude towards education has a connection with the culture of Confucianism (Liu & Morgan, 2016). Because of the influence of Confucian philosophy, filial piety, education and hard work are highly valued (Salili et al., 2001). Filial piety refers to 'loyalty and obedience toward one's parents and by extension, authority figures' (Salili et al., 2001, p.129). It is a basis of Confucian Chinese culture, according to which, all children are required to respect their parents, obey

them, take care of them as they age, advise them in later life and love them' (Bodycott & Lai, 2012, p.254). As a result, the influences of Chinese parents on their children's education in the UK are of great importance.

According to Chen (2011), about 93% of Chinese students attending foreign universities are self-funded (Chen, 2011); and Burns (2013) points out that in the UK, students from outside the EU pay far more tuition fees than UK and EU students, which illustrates the significant financial investment by Chinese students in their study. It is worth noting that most of the Chinese students currently studying overseas are the only children in their families, as a result of the one child policy adopted nationally in 1979 (Zhu, 2016), the primary aim of which was 'to promote modernization by reducing the number of people who must compete for resources, both in the family and the nation' (Fong, 2002, p.1100). Only children in China are therefore, the sole focus of their parents' love and pride (Fong, 2004). In addition, the one child policy in China allowed concentration of resources (Li & Bray, 2007), which for some Chinese students makes overseas study possible. Liu and Morgan (2017) indicate that because of international Chinese students' significant financial contribution, they are important to the United Kingdom. However, Chinese students in the UK may face difficulties in adjusting to daily life. According to Gu and Schweisfurth (2017), students who study abroad face not only the challenges of adjusting academically to the local teaching and learning environment, but also the challenges of acculturation and socialization. Spencer-Oatey and Xiong (2006) indicate that in the UK, Chinese students' adjustment in social interaction with non-Chinese is problematic. As a result, Chinese students studying in the UK should not only concentrate on their study, but also need to adjust to the different culture and the new environment, which can be seen as a challenge to them. After their graduation, most Chinese students from UK universities go back to China. However, as both the number of students go to foreign countries for education and the number of students coming back from foreign countries after their graduation are increasing, the popularity of study abroad and the difficulty of obtaining employment both exist in China (Jia, 2012).

According to 'a longitudinal case study of the construction of personal employability by Chinese students at a UK university', which involves in-depth semi-structured interviews with 23 Chinese students studying for Master's degree (taught postgraduate) from 'a single research-intensive, elite UK university', although these students still treat the overseas education as 'contributing to their employability in general', there is a decrease 'in the labour market value

of the 'hard currencies' that overseas qualification carries', while the 'soft currencies' obtained from the overseas experiences carry more important merit (Li, 2013, p.473, 480).

In addition, there are some Chinese graduates who would like to work in the UK after they graduate from UK universities. According to Fleischmann and Dronker (2010), generally, when compared with natives, immigrants have higher unemployment rates, which not only limits their earnings, but also restricts their social integration into native colleagues' networks. As a result, their opportunities of upward social mobility are seriously jeopardised (Fleischmann & Dronker, 2010). Although there are many differences between international students and immigrants, one of the common characteristics of them is that they are not natives. Therefore, these problems faced by immigrants may also be faced by international students who would like to work in the host countries after their graduation rather than to work in their home countries. In addition, the work visa related policies in the UK may make it even harder for those international students who would like to work in the UK, as it requires those international students who wish to stay on in the UK to work for a single employer and earn at least £20,800 per annum (Adams, 2015).

Considering the numerous Chinese students in UK HEIs, their considerable investment and the increasingly competitive global labour market, an investigation of employment among Chinese graduates from UK universities is of great importance. Although there is a large amount of literature on graduate employment, unemployment and underemployment (such as Nabi, 2003; Moreau & Leathwood 2006; Cardoso 2007), there is limited literature that specifically relates these issues to Chinese graduates from UK universities.

This research focuses on Chinese graduates from Bangor University (in Wales, the UK) who obtain the degree of Bachelor, Master's and/or PhD, exploring their work and employment experience and destinations. According to Chen (2013), 72.38 percent of Chinese overseas students choose to return to China after they finish their studies. As a result, the labour market experience of those Chinese graduates from Bangor University who went back to China after they finished their studies were emphasized in this research. At the same time, the Chinese graduates from Bangor University who did not go back to China after they finished their studies were also involved in this research.

General Theories of the Labour Market

In this section, general theories of the labour market are considered in relation to the research question and the concepts introduced above. Human capital theory will first be considered as a dominant theory of the labour market; after that, a critique of human capital theory will be provided. Then institutional theories will be explained, including labour market segmentation and institutional varieties of political economy. Within the discussion of labour market segmentation theory, the notions of an internal labour market and a dual labour market will be considered; and regarding political economy theory, liberal market economies and coordinated market economies will be explained. Finally, social mobility theory will be discussed, with the emphasis on the relationships between socioeconomic background, educational attainment and socioeconomic attainment.

Human Capital Theory (Orthodox Neoclassical Theory)

Similar to business-people who invest in buildings or in better or more machines, in order to increase outputs and/or profits, ordinary people also make some investments, expecting greater ‘outputs’ and/or ‘profits’ (Fevre, 1992, p.27). They make investment in themselves, including schooling and training, which is called ‘investing in human capital’ (Becker, 1962, p.9). According to Morley (2001, p.132), ‘human capital is the stock of individual skills, competencies and qualifications’. It is assumed by human capital theorists that the rational investor who makes investments into human capital invests up to the level that marginal benefits just goes beyond marginal costs (Adnett, 1996). According to Sweetland (1996), human capital theory indicates that society, organizations and individuals generate economic benefits from investing in people. Becker (1993) put forward the idea that a key notion underpinning human capital theory is that human capital is treated as other means of production, whereby investment in the education and training of workers can subsequently generate productive outputs for individuals, organizations and economies. Goldthorpe (2013, p.10) views human capital theory as ‘part of a continuing attempt to integrate the treatment of labour, as a factor of production, within the general framework of neoclassical economics’. According to Burke (2016), human capital theory suggests that, in a knowledge economy, a high level of education can be exchanged for better salaries and higher occupational status. Sweetland (1996) points out that

among the various types of human capital investment, education always ranks as the prime one for empirical analysis.

Regarding the influences from the interpretation of human capital theory, skill supply is emphasized among policy prescriptions (Dobbins, Plows & Lloyd-Williams, 2014). Rubery and Grimshaw (2003, p.106) point out that ‘education and skills are at the forefront of the policy agenda at both national and international level’. Keep and Mayhew (2010) also indicate that education and training policy has been ranked in first place for government activities. For example, in the UK, in order to develop individual employability and economic competitiveness, increasing the supply of individual skills and training has been highlighted and put at the forefront of government policy (Dobbins, Plows & Lloyd-Williams, 2014). For organizations, investment in skills is deemed as ‘a rational win-win’ for employers and employees (Dobbins & Plows, 2014, p.5). The increasing attention on skills supply from individuals and society advocated by human capital theorists is built on neoclassical labour economics, which provide the model of a perfectly competitive labour market (Figure 7) (Kaufman, 2010). ‘The demand curve D and supply curve S determine the equilibrium wage W_1 and employment level L_1 ’ (Kaufman, 2010). In a perfectly competitive labour market, ‘labour-as-a-commodity’ theory is presented (Kaufman, 2010). Resources are optimally allocated to their most efficient use by demand and supply, with no friction or cost (Kaufman, 2010).

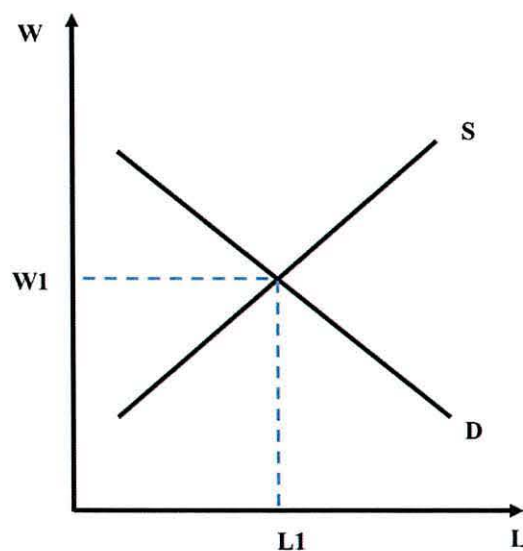


Figure 7. Perfectly Competitive Labour Market (Kaufman 2010)

However, human capital theory assumptions have been criticized from different perspectives, including the 'labour-as-a-commodity' theory, a perfectly competitive labour market, and human capital theory's lack of attention on other forms of capital and the demand side of the labour market.

First, the 'labour-as-a-commodity' theory from neoclassical labour economics has been criticized by many industrial relations scholars, labour reformers, early founders of industrial relations, trade unionists, and progressive business people. They stated that 'labour is embodied in human beings', and 'labour is not a commodity' (Kaufman, 2010, p.79). From a more comprehensive view, it is incomplete to say that labour is a commodity, because labour does not only possess the characteristics of a commodity. According to Kaufman (2010, p.103), labour inevitably holds commodity characteristics because it has value and it is traded in markets; in addition, however, labour is also unique and distinctively human, and labour 'has a soul'. Armstrong (2006, p.35) points out that labour 'actively control their own working lives'. As stated above, 'labour-as-a-commodity' theory underpinned human capital theory. Since this theory is incomplete, the effectiveness of using human capital theory in labour market analysis is questionable.

Secondly, a perfectly competitive labour market, which assumes no friction or cost (Kaufman, 2010), does not exist in the real world. In a perfectly competitive labour market, labour problems, which exist in the real world, are allegedly eliminated by 'demand and supply' reaching equilibrium through free operation of market forces. In addition, 'demand and supply' natural equilibrium also supposedly 'render ineffective and unnecessary all of IR's (industrial relations) problem-solving tools', including trade unions, worker representation, government macroeconomic stabilization policy, social insurance, progressive employee management, and labour law (Kaufman, 2010, p. 85). Moreover, as the criticism of 'labour-as-a-commodity' stated, labour is unique and distinctly human; as a result, the supply curve of labour in a perfectly competitive labour market model becomes 'upward sloping', and this movement occurs for the reason that companies are 'no longer indifferent to which unit of labour they purchase' (Kaufman, 2010, p.87). Besides, in an imperfectly competitive labour market, such as a monopolist one, no conventional labour demand curve exists for a firm (Kaufman, 2010). As a result, the model in Figure 7 is changed. The model of perfectly competitive labour markets supposedly arises from individuals' and society's awareness of skill supply; however, since a perfectly competitive labour market does not exist in reality, the usefulness of too much concentration on skill supply is questionable.

Thirdly, human capital theory overshadows other forms of capital (Coffield, 1999). Different forms of capital (economic capital, cultural capital and social capital) will be explained later, when social mobility theory is discussed. According to Coffield (1999, p.482), ‘the overconcentration on individual human capital leads to a corresponding neglect of social capital’, which refers to the social relationships and arrangements needed to support learning. Continued from this point of view, economic capital and cultural capital, which can also affect learning, are also neglected.

Fourthly, human capital theory emphasizes the supply side of the labour market, and assumes that the demand side will ‘take care of itself’ if left to market forces (Keep & Mayhew, 2010, p.567), which has also been criticized. Schuller (2000) points out that human capital theory emphasizes on the supply side, and neglects the demand side, especially with regard to whether workplaces and society have the ability to actually make use of the human capital available. Dobbins, Plows and Lloyd-Williams (2014) conclude that human capital theory is critiqued for the reason that the demand from employers for skills cannot be automatically created by the supply of particular skills. By only focusing on the supply of skills and neglecting the demand for using skills, the application of human capital theory may not trigger job opportunities (Dobbins & Plows, 2014). A study focuses on the Greater China region provides a support for the critique of human capital theory: it is argued that ‘the massification of higher education has not necessarily led to more occupational opportunities for youth or opportunities for upward social movements (Mok, 2016, p.51)’. In addition, Schuller (2000) puts forward the idea that the concentration on human capital as a characteristic of an individual can result in a very unbalanced emphasis on individual’s acquisition of competences and skills, which neglects the method of how such knowledge is embedded into a complex web of social relationships. Following on this critique of human capital theory, possible mismatches between supply and demand should be considered.

Institutional Theories

In contrast to human capital theory, which only emphasizes the supply side of the labour market, institutional theories attach importance to both the supply side and the demand side of the labour market. Institutions here refers to various organizations such as governments, unions, and

corporations (Kaufman, 1989). They influence labour outcomes in two different ways: first, institutions split the labour market into some 'segmented', 'loose connected' submarkets (Kaufman, 1989, p.22); secondly, they influence labour market outcomes 'through their independent effect on wage rates' (Kaufman, 1989, p.23). Within institutional theories, two main sub-groups will be reviewed for the purposes of this thesis: labour market segmentation theory and political economy theory.

Labour market segmentation theory provides the notions of 'internal labour markets (ILMs)' and 'dual labour market (DLM)', which assert that 'institutions on the demand side of the labour market lead to the creation of labour markets that are not unified' (Fevre, 1992, p.32). In regard to political economy theory, different countries utilize different approaches to coordinate supply and demand within the labour market; some countries prefer 'liberal market economies' (LMEs), while some countries adopt 'coordinated market economies' (CMEs) (Hall & Soskice, 2001).

In this section, therefore, institutional theories are explained in two parts. First, labour market segmentation, which is ignored by human capital theory, will be introduced, including the notions of internal labour markets and dual labour markets. Secondly, different political economies will be explained, which are liberal market economies and coordinated market economies; and the political economies in the UK and in China will be discussed for comparative purposes. Human capital theory neglects these institutional varieties.

Labour Market Segmentation

Fevre (1992, p.31) points out that 'one person's labour market is not always another person's labour market', by indicating that people with different occupations, localities, ages, genders and races. tend to vary. It is not accurate to claim there is 'one' labour market; instead, labour markets are 'split', 'dual', 'structured', 'balkanised', and 'segmented' (Fevre, 1992). The role of institutions is put forward to account for many of the differences among individuals and jobs by economists who disagree with the perception of 'one' labour market (Fevre, 1992).

Doeringer and Piore (1971, p. 1-2) define an internal labour market as 'an administrative unit such as a manufacturing plant, within which the pricing and allocation of labour is governed by a set of administrative rules and procedures'. Bosanquet and Doeringer (1973, p.423) indicate

that companies with 'open' internal labour markets recruit workers into most job classifications directly, and little opportunity for training or promotion is provided by them. On the contrary, companies having 'structured' internal labour markets recruit workers into a limited number of entry jobs, and then training and promotion are provided in order to 'staff the majority of the remaining jobs' (Bosanquet & Doeringer, 1973, p.423). According to Berntson, Sverke and Marklund (2006), the difference between internal labour market and external labour market refers to the fact that economic principles directly govern the external labour market; while the internal labour market provides privileges (such as greater job security, career opportunities and competence development) to internal workers, which are not available to the external workforce. Here is an example of internal labour market: in the United States, because of the expansion of large corporations in the twentieth century, bureaucratic and structured internal labour markets emerged 'within those primary sector enterprises', which had 'formal pay and fringe benefit policies' and 'well-defined job progressions' (Katz & Colvin, 2011, p.65).

Rubery and Grimshaw (2003, p.110) treat the internal labour market as a model of training system, which refers to the fact that 'firms design either formal or informal training programmes, specific to the needs of the firm and building upon the general education that employees have acquired previously through full-time education'. There is also another model of training system, called occupational labour market, which refers to 'a system that provides nationally recognized occupational qualifications, usually through apprenticeship training' (Rubery & Grimshaw, 2003, p.110). Comparing the internal labour market system and occupational labour market system, within internal labour market system, training is on-the-job, and led by employers; skills development is narrow and uncertified, which only focuses on the needs of the individual firm; in addition, since the training is within a firm, trained employees are restricted to the firm's job ladders (Rubery & Grimshaw, 2003). In contrast, the occupational labour market system provides 'general vocational education and practical training', which is regulated by social partners; certification is in accordance with broad occupational criteria; and the qualified workers have strong mobility in the labour market, while unqualified workers' entry to the labour market may be hard (Rubery & Grimshaw, 2003, p.110).

The dual labour market refers to the fact that 'the labour market is divided into two segments' (Berntson, Sverke & Marklund, 2006), the primary segment and the secondary segment. Arnholtz and Hansen (2013) call the primary segment a central part of the labour market, while the secondary segment is called a peripheral part. Fevre (1992) indicates that primary employers

are those who utilize internal labour markets to protect their expensive investment in employees training; while secondary employers recruit their employees from the open labour market, and are not worried about labour turnover, for the reason that they may not make too much investment in training. He also argued that primary companies are usually characterized by more sophisticated machines, more complex work processes, greater skill requirement, more value added to their product, and more profits (Fevre, 1992). In addition, primary employers recruit primary workers, and secondary employers recruit secondary workers, correspondingly (Fevre, 1992). In the dual labour market, the primary segment has the characteristics of capital-intensive production (Arnholtz & Hansen, 2013), 'high wages, good working conditions, employment stability, chances of advancement, equity and due process in the administration of work rules' (Doeringer & Piore, 1971, p.165); while the secondary segment has the characteristics of labour-intensive production (Arnholtz & Hansen 2013), low job security, low wages, and poor working conditions (Berntson, Sverke & Marklund, 2006). For college graduates, good working conditions, welfare and treatment and relatively stable jobs make them choose the primary labour market for their first employment, while the secondary labour market with relatively poor working conditions and not high welfare, treatment and job stability is unattractive (Zhang & Wang, 2013). According to Ma and Yue (2011), the educational level of college graduates is an important factor that affects their entrance to the primary or the secondary labour market. Doeringer and Piore point out that a significant difference between the primary labour market and the secondary labour market is 'the extent of the presence of internal labour markets within the firm' (Harrison & Sum, 1979, p. 690). Here is an example illustrating segments in the labour market: Appleton et al. (2004) suggest that in the labour market in urban China, there are three segments, which are non-retrenched urban workers (primary labour market), re-employed urban workers, and rural-urban migrants.

The 'flexible firm' manpower strategy (Atkinson, 1984), which is developed by employers when facing strong pressures to realize a more flexible workforce and good opportunities to do so, involves labour market segmentations. In the model of 'flexible firm' (Atkinson, 1984), the divisions rely on the separation of jobs which are specific to a firm, rather than those only relevant to general skills. Both firm-specific skills and general skills can be found at all levels of a firm, for example, specific skills may range from production manager to maintenance occupations, and general skills from systems analyst to driver (Atkinson, 1984). There is a numerically stable core group and numerically flexible peripheral groups in the model (Atkinson, 1984). 'Core-periphery model' is also used by Hunter et al. (1993, p.383) to indicate

the 'flexible-firm model' in their paper. The core group provide 'functional flexibility' within the labour process, 'by crossing occupational boundaries and multi-skilling' (Pollert, 1988, p.283); with flexibility by time also offered by the core group, 'in terms of adjusting more closely to production demands' (Pollert, 1988, p.283). MacInnes (1988, p. 12) points out that 'here flexibility is qualitative'. In the core group, workers have full-time permanent careers, for example, managers, craftsmen, quality control staff, technicians, technical sales staff and designers (Atkinson, 1984). Around the core, there is 'an outer layer of peripheral workers' (MacInnes, 1988, p.12). Within the peripheral groups which provide 'numerical flexibility', the workers might be employed irregularly or insecurely, or there may be no direct relationship between them and the firm, for example, they are self-employed or sub-contracted (Pollert, 1988, p.283). MacInnes (1988, p. 12) indicates that 'here flexibility is quantitative'. According to Atkinson (1984), there are the first peripheral group and the second peripheral group within the 'flexible firm' model. Workers within the first peripheral group are also employed full-time, however, their job security is at a lower level, and they have less access to career opportunities (Atkinson, 1984). Within this group, functional flexibility is not sought at all (Atkinson, 1984). The workers may have supervisory, clerical, component assembly and testing occupations (Atkinson, 1984). Turning to the second peripheral group, the feature of this group refers to some functional flexibility that is added to the numerical flexibility of the first peripheral group (Atkinson, 1984). Part-time working, short-term contracts, job-sharing, temporary contracts and public subsidy trainees are all included in the second peripheral group, with the function of maximising flexibility while minimising the firm's commitment to the job security and career development of the workers (Atkinson, 1984). In addition to the core group and peripheral groups in the model, firms are also likely to source some jobs outside (Atkinson, 1984). This occurs where jobs are not specific to the firm at all, for the reason that they are very mundane or very specialised (Atkinson, 1984). Subcontracting, temporary help agencies, self-employed workers and the like are utilized by firms on these occasions (Atkinson, 1984). Through sourcing some jobs outside, great numerical flexibility can be realized, and greater functional flexibility than direct employment can be achieved (Atkinson, 1984).

Pollert (1988, p.283) points out that the 'flexible firm' is a 'micro dual labour market model'. Within the 'flexible firm', the numerically stable core group has access to the 'primary labour market' (the primary segment), while the numerically flexible peripheral groups are more easily recruited from the labour market (the secondary segment) (Pollert, 1988). Atkinson (1984) indicates that the central feature of the core group refers to the fact that their skills cannot be

bought-in easily, which accounts for the reason why the firm separate this group from the wider labour market. In contrast, in the case of the workers in the first peripheral group, since their jobs are not firm-specific, the firm recruits them from the external labour market, and pursues numerical and financial flexibility by constructing a more immediate and direct link to the external labour market compared with recruiting for the core group (Atkinson, 1984).

Institutional Varieties of Political Economy

According to Rubery and Grimshaw (2003, p.106), although it is generally agreed among policymakers that upskilling is needed, there are significant differences among ‘the substance and direction of policy solutions’ in different countries, due to variation in labour institutions and political economy. These different approaches indicate the differences in the national education and training systems (Rubery & Grimshaw, 2003). It is of importance that whether the system is led by the market; whether within the system, decisions are mainly made by state institutions or employers; and whether the system is ‘organized on a corporatist basis involving social partners (employers and unions) and the state (Rubery & Grimshaw, 2003, p.106). Organizing training systems in these different approaches requires different kinds of policy intervention (Rubery & Grimshaw, 2003). Besides, in countries with highly segmented workforces, the promised benefits caused by upskilling may be counteracted by the attractiveness of ‘providing goods and services through the medium of lower skilled ‘junk jobs’’ (Rubery & Grimshaw, 2003, p.107).

Hall and Soskice (2001) identify two types of political economies, liberal market economies (LMEs) and coordinated market economies (CMEs). ‘Briefly stated, LMEs and CMEs are ideal-type economies situated at the extreme ends of an array of nations’ (Chua, 2011, p.2). According to Hall and Soskice (2001, p.8), in liberal market economies, companies coordinate their activities primarily through ‘hierarchies and competitive market arrangements’; in coordinated market economies, companies more heavily rely on non-market relationships ‘to coordinate their endeavours with other actors and to construct their core competencies’ (Hall & Soskice, 2001, p. 8). Heyes, Lewis and Clark (2014, p.36) indicate that in liberal market economies, coordination is realized through market-mediated exchanges and formal contracting, and in coordinated market economies, ‘economic activity is coordinated through

complementary institutions and networks that facilitate access to information, skills and other resources'. According to Dobbins (2010, p.501), within liberal market economies, the economy primarily runs in accordance with free market principles and shareholder value; 'there is little engagement of employers or worker representative organizations in national social pacts governing macro-economic issues'; and there are weak regulations to promote cooperation within workplaces. According to Kelly and Frege (2013, p.6), the UK is treated as one of the 'leading exemplars' of liberal market capitalism in the world. In addition, the countries adopting liberal market economics also include the US and Canada (Dobbins, 2010). On the contrary, within coordinated market economies, there are complementary connections between institutions encouraging cooperation across a variety of levels; and 'between employers, workers and their representatives, and other institutions', and patient longer-term collaborative relations exist (Dobbins, 2010, p.501). Germany is the 'largest exemplar' of coordinated market capitalism in Europe (Kelly & Frege, 2013, p.6). In addition, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden are countries which adopt coordinated market economies (Dobbins, 2010; Goergen et al., 2012). Thelen (2004, p.5) points out another difference between coordinated market economies and liberal market economies, which refers 'more and better plant-based training' being supported by coordinated market economies. According to Hassel (2011), compared with before, coordinated market economies today are more divergent and less egalitarian; in addition, the institutions within coordinated market economies are less encompassing (Hassel, 2011). Compared with liberal market economies, the differences that remain exist in the following ways: within coordinated market economies, there are still underdeveloped capital markets, coordinated pay setting, much stronger trade unions, more regulated labour markets, and generally higher social spending (Hassel, 2011).

Concerning the political dynamic related to globalization, Hall and Soskice (2001, p.57) hold that when facing more intense international competition, companies located in liberal market economies are likely to 'pressure governments for deregulation', for the reason that 'firms that coordinate their endeavors primarily through the market can improve their competencies by sharpening its edges'. Since 'the comparative advantage of the economy as a whole' relies on 'the effectiveness of market mechanisms', the government may well be sympathetic (Hall & Soskice, 2001, p.57). However, in coordinated market economies, 'governments should be less sympathetic to deregulation because it threatens the nation's comparative institutional advantages' (Hall & Soskice, 2001, p.58).

A detailed explanation of political economies in the UK and in China will be given below. The UK is treated as one of the 'leading exemplars' of liberal market capitalism in the world (Kelly & Frege, 2013, p.6). China is one of 'the world's largest and fastest growing economies' (Kelly & Frege, 2013, p.6). In addition, since about 72 percent of Chinese overseas students choose to return to China after they finish their studies (Chen, 2013), the Chinese labour market is the key area when investigating graduate employment among Chinese graduates from UK universities. Therefore, analysis of the Chinese political economy is of great importance.

The United Kingdom

According to Marchington, Waddington and Timming (2011), over the last 30 years, a dramatic change has occurred within the British industrial relations system. Prior to 1980, negotiations between unions and employers were adopted as the method to solve many of the controversial issues in employment relations, including redundancies, dismissals and wage rises, and the role of the government was seen as a third party usually involved in dispute resolution (Kelly, 2013). A more equitable balance of power between employers and unions was apparent (Kelly, 2013). Since then, because of the influences of increased product market competition, slacker labour markets and government policy, there has been substantial change concerning the balance of power in employment relations, favouring employers (Kelly, 2013). Currently, union density is about half of its peak in 1979 (Marchington, Waddington & Timming, 2011); in addition, unions are endeavouring to identify themselves clearly for the twenty-first century, 'both in their international and workplace profiles, and in their traditional links with the Labour Party' (Marchington, Waddington & Timming, 2011, p.58). Controversial issues in employment relations are now settled 'either through unilateral action by the employer or by employee recourse to Employment Tribunals in pursuit of individual legal rights' (Kelly, 2013, p.183). However, Marchington, Waddington and Timming (2011, p.58) point out that although the juridification has been increased, the lack of 'a strong and centrally regulated system of employment relations' remains in Britain, which indicates that employers have relative freedom to set or negotiate terms and conditions at the levels they perceive to be proper concerning their own competitive circumstances.

Regarding the role of the state in industrial relations, Marchington, Waddington and Timming, (2011) point out that in some aspects, it has lessened in accordance with the reduction of the public sector's size; while in other respects, it has expanded because of the increased legal regulation in many areas of employment practice (Marchington, Waddington & Timming, 2011). According to Kelly (2013), the government is still the largest employer in the UK; in addition, education and labour market policy, macro-economic policy and welfare spending are all directed by government (Kelly, 2013). All of these show the government's significant role in employment relations.

There have been many government training initiatives in the UK. For example, the 1964 Industrial Training Act saw the establishment of 27 Industrial Training Boards, each of them responsible for making decisions about training needs within its sector, and statutory powers to increase a training levy from companies, to be redistributed by providing grants to companies with satisfactory training (Stevens, 1999); The Young Training Scheme started in 1983 as a response to unemployment among the youth (Stevens, 1999); Investors in People standard was founded in 1990, aiming at helping companies utilize best practice in 'integrating training and human resource development with business performance objectives' (Stevens, 1999, p.18). From 1964 to 1998, the UK government training policy has changed from 'regulation of employers' to 'subsidies for the training of young people and the unemployed' (Stevens, 1999, p.17).

According to Keep and James (2012, p.240), under the UK's New Labour Government, a strong belief existed which indicated that 'the existence of bad jobs was by no means inevitable'. In order to speed up the removal of bad jobs, the policy emphasized that the government could supply more skills to the people 'at the lower end of the employment ladder' (Keep & James, 2012, p.240). As a result, importance has been attached to better and more training and education (Keep & James, 2012). With regard to the national training system in the UK, Rubery and Grimshaw (2003) point out that in recent years, a market-driven approach to training has been followed, and a weak hybrid of both occupational labour market and internal labour market principles exists. Keep and James (2012, p.240) indicate that 'a twin track approach to skills' was followed by the New Labour Government, which intended to develop both 'the quality and outcomes in initial compulsory and post-compulsory education and training' and 'poorly qualified adult workers'. Although enhancing skills has its effects, on its own it is not an omnipotent solution (Lloyd & Mayhew, 2010; Keep & James, 2012). Keep, Lloyd and Payne (2010) argue that it is dangerous to load unrealistic expectations onto the education and training

system. However, Lloyd and Mayhew (2010, p.442) point out that so long as the design and structure of jobs remain as they are in the UK, a supply-driven skills policy will have little influence on ‘the fortunes of those at the bottom of the labour market’. Keep and James (2012) indicate that a skill-centric policy can spend a large amount of public money but achieve limited effect, and can, in fact, distract attention from other issues which need to be solved.

Emphasizing an education and training system is on the supply side of the labour market, but insufficient attention has been paid to the demand side. Keep, Lloyd and Payne (2010) indicate that while it is important to develop a more skilled workforce, ensuring that those skills are used and managed to develop performance is surely no less important. Instead of treating the organization as a ‘black box’, which can simply accept more skills, policy should be relevant to ‘how the different elements of production, not least labour, interact with each other, and are deployed and managed within the workplace’ (Keep, Lloyd & Payne, 2010, p.416).

According to Office for National Statistics (2017), in July to September 2017, among the people aged between 21 and 64 in the UK who were not enrolled on any educational course, there were 14 million graduates, which occupied about 42%. The employment rate of graduates was 82% (Office for National Statistics, 2017). During the same period of time, the employment rate of people aged from 16 to 64 years in the UK was 75% (Office for National Statistics, 2018). From the statistics, it can be seen that the employment rate of graduates was obviously higher, which, to some extent, can reflect the effect of higher education.

China

The development of the labour market in socialist China involved three periods (Cooke, 2011). In the first period, the labour market was highly controlled, and was governed by administrative policy ‘during the state planned economy period’ (Cooke, 2011, p.307). The hukou system, ‘a residential registration system where individuals were registered with the local authority where they were born and lived’, were used to restrict the labour mobility (Cooke, 2011, p.307, 309). The population was divided into urban residents and rural residents, and rural residents were prohibited from entering urban areas for employment (Cooke, 2011). According to Liu (2013, p.344), within the planned economy period, employment relations in China were characterized by the ‘iron rice bowl’. The ‘iron rice bowl’ is a Chinese term which ‘was created to refer to

those who were employed in state-owned enterprises or public sectors with long-term job security, relatively high wages, welfare and social security, and protected by the state via the national planned system' (Li, Wu & Morgan, 2016, p.54). In addition, since 1955, direct state job assignment (*guojia fenpei*) had been a main method of job placement (Bian, 1994). The jobs were directly assigned by government labour agencies to people waiting for the assignment (Bian, 1994). Under the system, graduates did not conduct any job search activities and obtained their job passively (Li et al., 2012). According to Zhao and Wang (2004), under the planned economy system, the mobility of labour forces between different regions, different economic sectors, and different work units are under the strict control by the country. The second period was a period of deregulation (between the 1980s and the early 2000s), the restriction which forbade rural residents to work in urban areas was gradually removed (Cooke, 2011). Liu (2013) points out that the 'iron rice bowl' has been smashed by the economic reform (since 1978). Lifetime employment has been displaced by contract labour (Liu, 2013); 'cradle-to-grave' welfare has been displaced by contributory social insurance schemes (Liu, 2013); stable wages have become contingent and highly variable (Liu, 2013). Direct state job assignment (*guojia fenpei*) 'has faded away gradually following the higher educational reforms implemented since the early 1990s' (Li et al., 2012, p.45), and in a more open labour market in the 1990s, looking for jobs through individual application was encouraged (Bian, 1994). After the cancellation of direct state job assignment, 'the new system is effectively a two-sided market, with graduates finding jobs based on mutual agreements with employers, and with much less intervention from the government' (Li, Whalley & Xing, 2014, p.568-569). The third period started with the promulgation of three major employment-related laws (in 2007), Labour Contract Law, the Employment Promotion Law and the Labour Disputes Mediation and Arbitration Law (Cooke, 2011). A number of regulations were also issued by the government (Cooke, 2011). Within this period, the labour market was re-regulated by the government through legislative intervention, aimed at giving workers greater protection concerning their employment (Cooke, 2011). Because of the labour laws and regulations, a legal framework is provided 'within which the employment relationship is governed and the labour market regulated in principle' (Cooke, 2011, p.310).

There have been considerable shifts in Chinese employment relations during the economic reform process (Cooke, 2011). Currently, the features of employment relations are 'diverging across different ownership forms, industrial sectors and groups of workers' (Cooke, 2011, p.325). Due to the absence of any 'representational strength of the unions and employers'

associations', employment relations in China are largely determined directly between employers and workers, and little bargaining power is possessed by the majority of workers (Cooke, 2011, p.325). The emergence of changes in employment practices have often been caused by the enactment of employment regulations and laws, so in the foreseeable future, the state still plays a crucial role in shaping employment relations (Cooke, 2011). Similarly, Liu (2013) points out that the state has started to become the most obvious factor in shaping changes in employment relations in China.

Regarding unions, although there are some new initiatives with the objective to organise those outside the state sector, including community unions for the unemployed, block unions for smaller enterprises, and project unions for construction sites, generally unions are vibrant mainly in the state sector and private firms which are tied strongly to the government (Cooke, 2011). In addition, unions mainly implement a welfare role (Cooke, 2011).

Bian and Huang (2015, p.962) suggest that the economic context in China 'appears to be much more complicated than a LME-CME dichotomy implies'. Lin (2011, p.63) argues that in China there is a tendency towards a centrally managed capitalism' which 'can be viewed as a variant of CME capitalism' (Bian & Huang, 2015, p.962). However, according to Bian and Huang (2015, p.963), 'in the post-2001 period, institutionalization began to increase in certain areas and industries in which World Trade Organization (WTO) regulations directed the Chinese economy to move toward an LME type of capitalism'. Fligstein and Zhang (2010, p.49) indicate, while 'market activity has certainly increased across the Chinese economy' and 'the government's role in the economy has been dramatically altered in the past 30 years', the Chinese government is still very influential. Lo (2016) indicates that China is not a LME or CME. 'Politically it is still a socialist state ruled exclusively by a communist party, but has been trying to open up its economy and forge a modern capitalist system with Chinese characteristics' (Lo, 2016, p.33). Meyer (2011) suggests that China's current trajectory is in the direction of central management, and not toward capitalism.

Regarding the business entities in China, in the year 2016, the total number of enterprises in China was 14,618,448, including 14,378,293 domestic funded enterprises, 117,764 enterprises with funds from Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan, and 122,391 enterprises with foreign investment, according to their status of registration (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2017). Among the domestic funded enterprises, there were 132,373 state-owned enterprises, 141,442 collective-owned enterprises, 67,654 cooperative enterprises, 20,094 joint ownership

enterprises, 2,532,423 limited liability corporations, 174,881 share-holding corporations Ltd. and 10,500,697 private enterprises (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2017). It can be seen that the private enterprises accounted for nearly 72% of the enterprises in China, while the proportions of state-owned enterprises and enterprises with foreign investment in enterprises in China were only about 0.9% and 0.8%, respectively.

In terms of the employment situation in China, from 2012 to 2016, the number of labour force increased from about 788,940,000 to about 806,940,000, and the total number of employed persons increased from about 767,040,000 to about 776,030,000 (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2017). The employment rate in 2016 was about 96.2%. During that time, the number of urban employed persons increased from about 371,020,000 to about 414,280,000, while the number of rural employed persons decreased from about 396,020,000 to about 361,750,000 (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2017). Among the urban employed persons, in the year 2016, about 61,700,000 of them were employed in state-owned units, about 120,830,000 persons were employed in private enterprises, and about 13,610,000 persons were employed in foreign funded units (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2017). It can be seen that in urban area, private enterprises provided job opportunities to a very large number of people. Regarding the registered unemployment rate in urban areas in China, it was 4.1%, 4.05%, 4.09%, 4.05% and 4.02%, from 2012 to 2016 respectively (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2017), which is relatively stable.

Regarding the employment situation of people over 16-year-old with different education levels in China, according to the tabulation on the 2010 population census of the People's Republic of China (National Bureau of Statistics of China 2010), the total number of the people with college degrees, undergraduate degrees and postgraduate degrees were 11,480,387, which occupies about 11.1% of the total number of people over 16-year-old. Among them, the economically active population was 7,567,697, including 7,192,856 people with employment and 374,841 unemployed people. The unemployment rate among the people with college degrees, undergraduate degrees and postgraduate degrees was about 5.0%; while the unemployment rate among the total economically active population was 2.9%, and the unemployment rate among the economically active population in urban areas was about 4.8%. It can be seen that the unemployment rate among the people with degrees was higher. If this phenomenon always exists, it will lead to the consideration about the functions of higher education.

In China, the occupations are classified into eight categories, including unit head (of government organization, party organization, enterprises, or public institution), professional and technical workers, clerical workers and relevant workers, commerce and service personnel, agricultural, forestry, husbandry, fishery and water conservancy workers, production and transport equipment operators and relevant workers, soldiers, and other unclassified occupations (Guojia Zhiye Fenlei Dadian Revision Committee, 2015). As for the occupational distribution, according to the tabulation on the 2010 population census of the People's Republic of China (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2010), about 1.8% of the employed persons were in the category of unit head (of government organization, party organization, enterprises, or public institution), about 6.8% of the employed persons were in the category of professional and technical workers, about 4.3% of the employed persons were in the category of clerical workers and relevant workers, about 16.2% of the employed persons were in the category of commerce and service personnel, about 48.3% of the employed persons were in the category of agricultural, forestry, husbandry, fishery and water conservancy workers, about 22.5% of the employed persons were in the category of production and transport equipment operators and relevant workers, and about 0.1% of the employed persons were in the category of other unclassified occupations.

Regarding the labour market segmentations in China, Li, Li and Morgan (2018, p. 67) indicate that 'there is significant urban-rural labour market segmentation and a huge gap between the income and expenditure of the urban and rural areas in China'. Lai and Tian (2009) point out that a key feature of current Chinese labour market refers to the labour market segmentations between urban and rural areas and the labour market segmentations among different regions and between different industries. According to Ying (2007), in China, multiple segmentations exist in college graduates' employment market, including institutional segmentation, regional segmentation, restriction of industries, restriction of work experience and time segmentation.

The institutional segmentation is represented in two ways (Wu & Hong, 2013). One is the systematic segmentation that determined by the difference of ownership system, and the other is the segmentation between rural and urban areas or among regions that determined by policy differences (Wu & Hong, 2013). The former refers to the segmentation between labour markets in and out of the system. Lai (1996) puts forward that in China, the system reform started at the end of 1970s makes the urban-rural dual labour market segmentation evolve into the segmentation between labour markets in and out of the system. The labour market within the system is mainly dominated by state organs, public institutions and large and medium-sized

state-owned enterprises (Lai, 1996). The labour market out of the system can be segmented into rural labour market and the labour market out of the system in urban areas (Lai, 1996). The former is dominated by rural and small town enterprises and private enterprises, and the latter is dominated by foreign-funded enterprises and the market resulting from state-owned enterprises and public institutions employing peasant workers (Lai, 1996). Being employed in the in-system sectors in China has the advantages of relatively high income levels, various special welfare treatment, more stable employment, relatively good rungs of the career ladder, relatively light work and relatively comfortable work environment (Liu & Ma, 2016). Because of the advantages of being employed within the system, the competition is fiercer and there are more varied means of competition (Liu & Ma, 2016).

Ying (2007) indicates that the labour market segmentations caused by regions and institutions are related, for the reason that institutions in different regions may be different. The regional and institutional factors that result in college graduates' employment market segmentations generally include household registration system, social security system, housing system, welfare system, local protectionism and so on (Ying, 2007). Under the current household registration system, different hukou status are linked to different treatments (Song & Song, 2016). The welfare linked to urban hukou is very different from the welfare linked to rural hukou, and the welfare linked to different urban hukou is also very different (Song & Song, 2016). If a person want to enjoy the welfare provided by a local government, he/she needs to have the hukou of that city (Song & Song, 2016). Yue and Zhou (2005) point out that in China, because of the restriction of the residence registration system, the college graduates with more human capital, such as better academic performance, may not get jobs with higher starting salaries.

Ma and Yue's (2011) study indicates that in China, in terms of college graduates' employment, the eastern regions where the economy is relatively developed are the main areas where college graduates flow to, while the central and western regions only absorb about one fifth of college graduates. In addition, considering the costs for job changes and earnings in their life, many Chinese graduates treat eastern areas and big cities as their first targets for employment, and would rather put up with transitory unemployment in order to wait employment opportunities in these areas than work in western areas and rural areas (Lai & Tian, 2009).

Restriction of industries refers to that college graduates' employment is generally restricted in the industries which are the same or similar to their specialities, consciously or unconsciously

(Ying, 2007). In addition, the recruitment from particular higher education institutions by employers is also a kind of industrial segmentation (Ying, 2007). Regarding the restriction of work experience, Ying (2007) points out that it is the barrier and segmentation for the labour force who are employed for the first time. In labour market, college graduates are often troubled by the lack of work experience (Ying, 2007). In addition, college graduates' face a time segmented labour market, which is caused by their graduation time and the peak time for their job-hunting (winter vacation and summer vacation) (Ying, 2007).

Besides, in the college graduates' labour market in China, there is a clear boundary between primary and secondary labour markets, and the flow of talents is extremely difficult (Ma, 2013). However, there are different segmentation methods of primary and secondary labour markets in China. For example, Liu and Ma (2016) indicate that the market within the system is the primary labour market, and the market out of the system is the secondary labour market. According to Zhang and Wang (2013), in China, the work units in the primary labour market are mainly concentrated in large and medium-sized cities, and the vast western regions and rural areas are the secondary labour market. Ma and Yue (2011) indicate that the primary labour market refers to the jobs provided by big companies and government departments, and the secondary labour market mainly consists of the jobs provided by small businesses and small companies. Guo (2004) divides the different categories of occupations in China into primary labour market and secondary labour market. In the primary labour market, occupations include unit head (of government organization, party organization, enterprises, or public institution); professional and technical workers; and clerical workers (Guo, 2004). In the secondary labour market, occupations include production and transport workers, service personnel; commerce personnel; agricultural, forestry, husbandry and fishery workers; and other unclassified occupations (Guo, 2004). It can be seen that the criteria for judgement above are not coincident. A person who belongs to the primary labour market according to one criterion may belong to the secondary labour market according to another criterion. For example, a professional works in a foreign-funded enterprise can be located in the primary labour market according to the occupation, based on the criterion of Guo (2004). However, since foreign-funded enterprises belong to the labour market out of the system (Lai, 1996), the profession should be located in the secondary labour market based on the criterion of Liu and Ma (2016). Besides, according to Qiao, Qian and Yao (2009), workers who have the same occupations or whose workplaces are in the same nature may be in different labour market segments, the primary segment or the secondary segment. As a result, in order to judge whether a person works in the primary labour

market or the secondary labour market, the characteristics of the primary segment and the secondary segment in the dual labour market, such as wages, working conditions, job security and chances of advancement, should be considered.

Regarding the percentages of the primary labour market and the secondary labour market occupies in the labour market in China, it is calculated based on Guo's (2004) method in this thesis, because of the lack of detailed data which are relevant to the other segmentation methods mentioned above. According to the data from the tabulation on the 2010 population census of the People's Republic of China (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2010), about 12.9% of the employed persons were in the primary labour market, and about 87.1% of the employed persons were in the secondary labour market. As discussed above, the primary labour market was more suitable and attractive to the graduates than the secondary labour market. Based on the data from the tabulation on the 2010 population census of the People's Republic of China (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2010), it can be seen that among the economically active population in China who were over 16-year-old, the total number of the people with college degrees, undergraduate degrees and postgraduate degrees occupied 10.3%. As a result, it can be seen that the job positions in the primary labour market were sufficient for the graduates in China. However, it does not mean that all the graduates in China can be adequately employed in the primary labour market, for the reason that the total number of job positions does not convey any further information regarding the requirement of the jobs. There is a possibility that some graduates cannot meet the requirements of the jobs in the primary labour market. There is also a possibility that there are a lot of graduates looking for opportunities in one job field, but that job field only require limited graduates. As a result, the situation of graduate employment in China should be discussed not only with the consideration of the human capital of graduates, but also involve all the factors relevant to the labour market.

The centrality of personal networks in Chinese life has been noticed by Chinese and foreign scholars (Gold, Guthrie & Wank, 2002). 'Guanxi', meaning 'relation' or 'relationship' (Gold, Guthrie & Wank, 2002, p. 6) or 'connections' (Gold, Guthrie & Wank, 2002, p.3), is a Chinese word which has gained entry into English parlance (Gold, Guthrie & Wank, 2002). It can refer to 'a guanxi person, a guanxi relation, or a guanxi net depending on the context within which it is used' (Chen, Chen & Huang, 2013, p.173). Besides being used as a noun, guanxi can also be used as a verb, which denotes 'to have bearings on' (Chen & Chen, 2004, p.307). According to Bian (2006, p.312), 'guanxi (or kuan-hsi) refers to a dyadic, particular and sentimental tie that has potential of facilitating favour exchanges between the parties connected by the tie'. In

addition, 'when guanxi goes beyond the dyadic basis to connect more than two persons, a guanxi network (or guanxiwang) emerges' (Bian, 2006, p.312). Guanxi practices in human resource management refer to making human resource management decisions based on personal relationships (Chen, Chen & Xin, 2004). Although guanxi is not a phenomenon that only exists in China (Chen et al., 2011), its influence in China has attracted much attention. According to Gold, Guthrie and Wank (2002, p.3), 'conventional wisdom among Chinese and foreigners holds that in People's Republic of China (PRC), guanxi is absolutely essential to successfully complete any task in virtually all spheres of social life'. Research on Chinese guanxi involves three different streams, as suggested by Chen, Chen and Huang (2013) in their review of the relevant research over the past twenty years. These streams concerned with the individual/interpersonal level, the stream focusing on the organizational level and the stream related to the social and moral dilemmas of guanxi. Based on Bian's (2006) definition of guanxi, since sentiments can only be held, expressed and received by people, the basic form of guanxi is interpersonal. In this research, guanxi at the individual and interpersonal level (the micro level) (Chen, Chen & Huang, 2013) is emphasized to explore how the social economic background of Chinese graduates from Bangor University affects their employment destinations (sub-question 1). Their utilization of guanxi will be revealed.

According to Bian (1994), guanxi plays a significant role in the process of job allocation and mobility in urban China. Guanxi is used 'to collect internally circulated information on jobs', 'to press favourable decisions from leaders of hiring organizations on jobs', 'to obtain influence from powerful cadres to initiate an assignment or grant a labour quota', 'to locate a work unit to which one wanted to be transferred', and 'to influence the current employer to allow one to leave the work unit or job' (Bian, 1994, p.999). Huang (2008, p.467) uses in-depth interviews to investigate whether guanxi networks are still influential factors 'in China's emerging labour market in light of economic liberalization', and it shows that guanxi networks affect job search and acquisition in 'a considerably transformed state sector, when jobs are highly desirable or when jobs are 'soft-skill' and thus job performance is hard to measure, quantify or monitor'. However, in large corporations, mainly in the non-state sector, where standardized and transparent procedures to screen and recruit are utilized, the influence of guanxi networks is 'limited, resisted or eliminated' (Huang, 2008, p.467). O' Connor (2013) points out that social network contacts, which refer to the people who are asked to provide help for others' job searches, played key roles in the job networking process. From Bian and Huang's (2015) study regarding the effect of job search networks on entry-level wage in urban China, it is shown that

when comparing people who use social contacts with people who do not, the former ones' wage at job entry is significantly higher. Regarding the influence of guanxi in the workplace in China, Law et al. (2000, p.759) point out that 'supervisor-subordinate guanxi will affect some Chinese supervisors' administrative decisions such as bonus allocation and chances of promotion'. A Chinese supervisor would have a higher tendency to allocate higher bonuses and give a better chance of promotion to a subordinate who has good guanxi with him/her (Law et al., 2000).

Social Mobility Theory

As indicated by human capital theory, education has an influence on an individual's employment destination. However, according to social mobility theory, not only education, but also an individual's socioeconomic background can affect his/her socioeconomic attainment (Blau & Duncan, 1967). This section will provide a detailed explanation of social mobility theory. Based on social mobility theory, sub-question 1 of this research arises, which is '*How does the background of Chinese graduates from Bangor University affect their job destinations?*'

Ravi (2011, p.391) indicates that social mobility is 'the movement of an individual in a social structure'. It involves the change in an individual's or a group's social status (Ravi, 2011). The physical movement from different places and the material change between poverty and prosperity are not social mobility (Ravi, 2011). Ravi (2011) also points out that numerous cases show that an individual's social status and economic standard changes because of superior intellect or higher education or hard work, and better education and better service result in social mobility. Social mobility has been divided into two principal types by Sorokin (1998) according to the direction of people's movement in society (Ravi, 2011); these being horizontal and vertical social mobility (Sorokin, 1998).

First, horizontal social mobility, which refers to 'the transition of an individual or social object from one social group to another situated on the same level' (Sorokin, 1998, p. 133). Ravi (2011, p.392) points out that horizontal social mobility involves 'the change of occupations, without any change in social status'. There are different forms of horizontal social mobility, including inter-group mobility in race, sex and age group, occupational mobility, religious mobility, political mobility, family and kinship mobility, territorial mobility and international

mobility (Ravi, 2011). Since this research is aiming to explore graduate employment among Chinese graduates from UK universities, emphasizing their education and careers, occupational mobility is more relevant to this research. Occupational mobility refers to the change from one occupation to another one with similar nature, circumstances, conditions and status (Ravi, 2011).

Secondly, vertical social mobility, which indicates the change of an individual or a social object 'from one social stratum to another (Sorokin, 1998, p.133). It involves 'the achievement of higher status and prestige by an individual or a group of lower status' and the 'degradation of an individual or a group from higher status and prestige to lower status' (Ravi, 2011, p. 394). In accordance with the direction of the change, Sorokin (1998, p.133) categorises vertical social mobility into two types: 'ascending' and 'descending', or 'social climbing' and 'social sinking'. There are two forms of ascending mobility: the first form refers to the 'infiltration' of an individual at a lower stratum into an existing higher stratum (Sorokin, 1998, p.133); and the second form is 'a creation of a new group by such individuals, and the insertion of such a group into a higher stratum instead of, or side by side with, the existing groups of this stratum' (Sorokin, 1998, p.133-134). Correspondingly, there are also two forms of descending mobility: the first form is the movement of an individual from a higher social position to an existing lower social position, 'without a degradation or disintegration of the higher group to which they belonged' (Sorokin, 1998, p.134); and the second form refers to 'a degradation of a social group as a whole, in an abasement of its rank among other groups, or in its disintegration as a social unit' (Sorokin, 1998, p.134).

Ravi (2011) points out that social mobility is influenced by many factors, including the structure of society, economic prosperity, demographic structure, political factors, education, level of aspiration, occupational status, intelligence factor, religion and superstition, and industrialisation, liberalisation and globalization. According to Ravi (2011), education is the most predominant factor to increase social mobility. It develops an individual's capability and ability to achieve higher social status, thereby making social mobility effective (Ravi, 2011). Some scholars hold that education-related factors are not the only most significant determinant of social mobility, but that family background also plays an important role in 'educational opportunity, competitiveness in the labour market, occupational and social mobility and so forth' (Mok & Wu, 2016, p.79). The relationship between education and jobs or careers is emphasized by human capital theory, which has been analysed above. However, social mobility

not only emphasizes the influence of education on a person's job or social destination, but also highlights socioeconomic background.

Another notion, known as intergenerational social mobility, refers to 'the relationship between the socio-economic status of parents and the status their children will attain as adults' (Causa & Johansson, 2009, p.5). The socio-economic status of parents can affect their children's socio-economic status through two main methods: directly influencing their labour market attachment and labour productivity, and indirectly promoting their success on the labour market in other ways (such as 'by the transmission of social norms such as work ethics or the legacy of social networks that help labour market insertion') (Causa & Johansson, 2009, p. 5). In turn, children's labour productivity is to a great extent determined by their parent's investment into their human capital and the children's capability to grab educational opportunities (Causa & Johansson, 2009). With regard to the influences of education on intergenerational social mobility, Deary et al.'s (2005) study indicated that education had an important influence on upward social mobility. According to Hong and Zhao (2017, p.264), 'education is a process of resource consumption as well as one of self-competence improvement'. In addition, because of its scarcity as a resource (especially for quality education and higher education), it is also 'a social mechanism for resource allocation' (Hong & Zhao, 2017, p.264). In the modern society, education becomes the intermediary for intergenerational inheritance or mobility, and the main route for the transmission of inequalities (Li, 2006). On the one hand, education is the channel for the upward mobility of the lower society (Li, 2006). On the other hand, people in the upper society utilize their various resource advantages to ensure that their children obtain more education opportunities (Li, 2006).

In addition, the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's concept of 'capital' (2004) is also worth discussing, as this provides a detailed explanation of the factors affecting social mobility. According to Bourdieu (2004), there are three essential forms of capital, which are economic capital, cultural capital and social capital. Economic capital refers to material assets, which can be measured by monetary capital levels, and includes savings, property and investments (Burke, 2016). Cultural capital includes personal tastes, skills and knowledge (Burke, 2016). Social capital refers to the resources which combine the actual or potential relationships and networks 'that can lead to a form of exchangeable credit' (Burke, 2016, p.11). Burke (2016) points out that economic capital is the foundation of cultural capital and social capital. However, having their own specific manner and character, cultural capital and social capital are not reducible to economic capital alone (Burke, 2016). According to Zhao and Luo's (2005) review of the

empirical study regarding social capital, social capital could be divided into the individual social capital and the collective social capital. The former refers to the external social capital or private goods (Zhao & Luo, 2005). Besides the individual relationships in the micro level and the resources embodied in these relationships, it also includes the resources that could be brought by the position an individual occupied in the network structure (Zhao & Luo, 2005). The latter refers to the internal social capital or public goods (Zhao & Luo, 2005). Besides the collective internal social ties and trust in the macro level, it also includes whether the collective structure could facilitate collective actions and create resources (Zhao & Luo, 2005). Regarding this research of the employment among Chinese graduates from Bangor University, the individual social capital is emphasized.

Economic capital, cultural capital and social capital provide a comprehensive view when placing individuals within a social space, rather than only using economic indicators. Bourdieu (1979, p.114) points out that when locating individuals within a social space, there are three dimensions which should be considered: 'volume of capital, composition of capital, and change in these two properties over time'. The last dimension can be closely linked to social mobility, as the change in capital can lead to the change of an individual's position within a social space, while Ravi (2011, p.391) defines social mobility as 'the movement of an individual in a social structure'.

There is a large body of literature focusing on the influence of capital on social mobility. For example, Elias and Purcell (2013) point out that from recent research, it has been found that employers valued the candidates' social class background, social skills and experience of private education, with these having been treated as 'the appropriate prerequisites to the job' rather than qualifications or knowledge from higher education (Elias & Purcell, 2013, p.8). According to Brown and Lauder (2006), the leading universities largely recruit students from families with high income; these students are then most likely to get the elite jobs. This indicates that economic capital can affect an individual's education, and because of this, the individual's job destination is affected. With regard to the influence of cultural capital, Brooks and Everett (2009) point out that people who attended the highest status institutions and who own a large amount of cultural capital were the least concerned about encountering unemployment. They also claim that the people from a high-status university and/or from a family within which someone has previous higher education experience may wait for a prestigious job, instead of accepting a lower status temporary job (Brooks & Everett, 2009).

Guo and Min (2006) point out the effect of family economic capital and cultural capital on one's education. The parents have relatively more economic capital means that they have relatively stronger economic capacity to pay, and they can invest more capital in their children's education (Guo & Min, 2006). Thus, they can provide sufficient and quality education to their children (Guo & Min, 2006). The parents who have relatively more cultural capital generally put more emphasis on their children's situation of obtaining education (Guo & Min, 2006). In addition, by precepts, examples and family cultural atmosphere, they can make their children form better study habits and so on, and thus, enable their children to obtain more and better education (Guo & Min, 2006).

Chen and Tan (2004) indicate the significance of social capital in promoting graduate employment. Social capital could make up for the asymmetry of graduate employment information and help graduates obtain employment opportunity (Chen & Tan, 2004). In addition, it could guarantee the supply of capital for the graduates who start their own undertaking (Chen & Tan, 2004). Yan and Mao (2008) point out the significant positive impact of family social capital on university graduates' employment rate and starting salary. However, some studies present a different view regarding the influences of social capital on graduate employment. For example, in Yue, Wen and Ding's (2004) study of the employment competitiveness of higher education graduates, it is found that in China, graduates' family location, their father's education years, their mother's education years and their father's employment status have no significant influence on whether they can find a job. In addition, regarding the influences of these factors on graduates' starting salary, it is found that their father's education years has a significant positive influence on their starting salary. However, the other family factors have no obvious influence. Hu, Ma and Liu's (2007) study on the effect of social capital on graduates' employment shows that overall, social capital, especially social network, did not work well to improve employment probability, although some social capital factors partially had significant positive influences. They also point out that social capital, especially social network, almost had no positive influence on initial wages, and even had negative influence (Hu, Ma & Liu, 2007).

Social capital and human capital can be interacted. On the one hand, individuals' opportunities to achieve better education, training, and skill and knowledge credentials can be enhanced by well-connected parents and social ties (Lin, 1999). On the other hand, individuals who are better educated and better trained are likely to move in social circles and clubs rich in resources (Lin, 1999). According to Zhao and Wang (2017), there is a relatively strong correlation of the quality

of social capital possessed by college graduates with their human capital. The level of education is not only relevant to learning abilities and personal qualities (Zhao & Wang, 2017); it also means the social capital of higher education institutions which possibly provided by college graduates' learning environment and the levels of interpersonal relationships they contact with (Zhao & Wang, 2017). Human capital and social capital are two important factors which affect the employment of university graduates (Meng, Su & Shi, 2012). Lai, Meng and Su (2012) examine the relationship between college graduates' human capital and social capital in their employment process in China, and indicate that both human capital and social capital are necessary to improve their employment probability. Human capital is more important in terms of starting salary; while social capital is more important in terms of entering the state-owned sectors (Lai, Meng & Su, 2012). When it comes to taking employment opportunities and determining starting salaries, there is a substitution relationship between human capital and social capital; while with regard to entering the state-owned sectors, there is a strong complementary relationship between them (Lai, Meng & Su, 2012).

Although scholars have different definitions of social capital, they all admit that social network is an important aspect of social capital (Qin & Pei, 2011). Gold, Guthrie and Wank (2002) point out that in a very general sense, *guanxi* is similar to Bourdieu's concept of social capital. According to Morgan, Gu and Li (2017, p.xviii), *guanxi* is 'social capital producing social connections and influence'. With regard to job searches, O' Connor (2013, p.593) indicates that when comparing 'job seekers who activate social capital through their networks' and job seekers who cannot do it, the former are likely to conduct more productive searches. Qin and Pei (2011) point out that the recommendations from colleagues are highly valued by many work units. Since colleagues know both the jobs and the circumstances of the people they recommend reasonably well, there will be a better match between the people they recommend and the jobs (Qin & Pei, 2011). As a result, enterprises generally hold a positive attitude towards hiring the people recommended by colleagues (Qin & Pei, 2011). According to Ma and Ding (2010), the human capital accumulated by college graduates is the most crucial influential factor in the job-hunting of college graduates. As the employment situation becomes severe year by year, more and more attention is paid to social network (Ma & Ding, 2010). In addition, according to Little (2001), in the UK, the influence of graduates' socio-economic background on their labour market opportunities is very much an issue. Burke (2016) also points out the existence of obvious connections between an individual's social background and his/her occupational trajectory.

Blau and Duncan (1967) provide a model of the socioeconomic life cycle, shown in Figure 8. There are three variables in the model: socioeconomic background, educational attainment, and socioeconomic attainment (Blau & Duncan, 1967). According to Bills (2004), each of these three variables can represent a much larger collection of variables. ‘Socioeconomic background’ indicates ‘the ascribed and achieved characteristics’ which affect life chances (Bills, 2004, p.64), and anything that exists or happens before a person’s educational and socioeconomic attainment is included (Bills, 2004), such as parental education, occupation, motivation, and cultural assets, wealth, gender, ethnicity, race, residence, aspirations, ability, non-cognitive behaviours (Bills, 2004; Breen & Jonsson, 2005). In addition, some resources, which are not on the level of the individual, such as social networks, social contracts, social capital and community structure, also play important roles (Bills, 2004). ‘Educational attainment’, put most simply, refers to the number of years of schooling that a person has completed (Bills, 2004). From a comprehensive view, it also includes other features of schooling, such as type of degree, type of programme and institutional reputation (Bills, 2004). Also, school experiences, including degrees or certificates achieved and credits earned, are relevant to educational attainment (Bills, 2004). ‘Socioeconomic attainment’ refers to occupation and income (Bills, 2004). In addition, socioeconomic outcomes such as job satisfaction, workplace benefits, the degree of autonomy in one’s work, and how much authority one holds in the workplace, are all included in socioeconomic attainment (Bills, 2004).

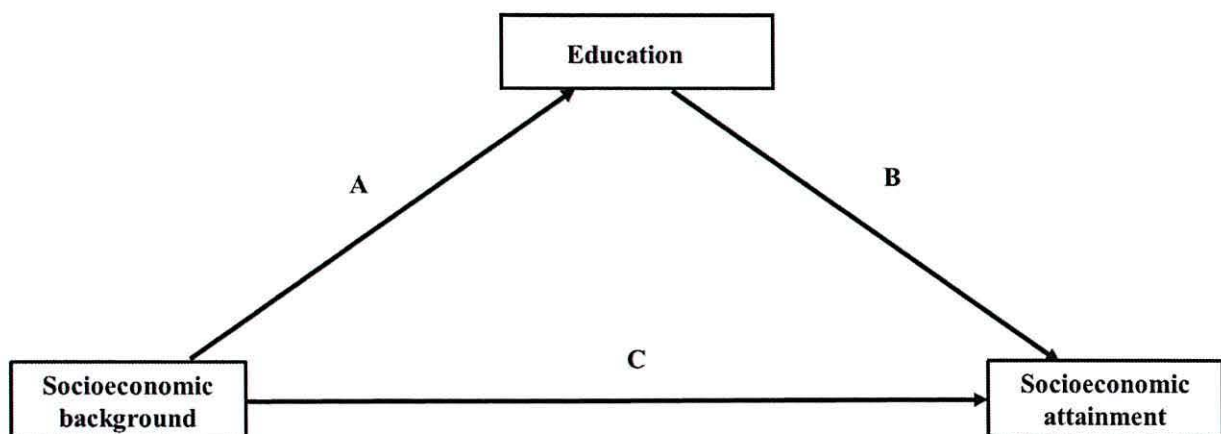


Figure 8. A Model of the Socioeconomic Life Cycle (Blau and Duncan 1967)

In Blau and Duncan's (1967) model, there are four relationships. The first relationship (A) refers to the influence of socioeconomic background on educational attainment; the second relationship (B) refers to the influence of educational attainment on socioeconomic attainment; the third relationship (C) refers to the influence of socioeconomic background on socioeconomic attainment; the fourth relationship ($A \times B$), which is often overlooked by scholars, indicates the influence of socioeconomic background on socioeconomic attainment as mediated by educational attainment (Bills, 2004). As a result, in the case of intergenerational mobility processes, there are two ways presented in this model. Firstly, parents can transmit their socioeconomic status to their children by means of education, for the reason that socioeconomic background affects education attainment (relationship A), and educational attainment affects socioeconomic attainment (relationship B). Secondly, parents directly transmit their socioeconomic status to their children (relationship C), such as a transfer of proprietorship (Jackson et al., 2008).

From Blau and Duncan's model (1967), it can be seen that social mobility theory provides a more comprehensive view regarding the factors affecting a person's job or social destination than human capital theory. Not only is the influence of education emphasized, but the effect of a person's socioeconomic background is also of great importance. With regard to the influence of individual non-education features on returns to education, much academic debate is related to social capital and family intergenerational impacts (Tian & Ji, 2017).

There is some literature regarding the influences of graduates' socioeconomic background on their educational attainment and socioeconomic attainment in China. For example, Liu and Gao (2011) point out the significant influence of family capital on their children's higher education quantity and quality. In Li and Zhang's (2010) study of college graduate employment opportunity in China after higher education reform, they highlight the positive impacts of pre-college urban hukou status and a proxy of father's education on the educational and employment outcomes of a graduate (Li & Zhang, 2010). Yao, Huan and Su (2006) indicate a positive relationship between family background (parents' education) and returns to schooling in urban China. Wen (2005) points out the impacts of family social economic status on graduate employment in China: the better the family social economic status, the higher the probabilities to find a job and to pursue further study, and the higher the starting salary.

Conclusion

This literature review is used to direct the research aim, exploring work and employment experience and destinations of Chinese graduates from Bangor University. The relevant literature concerning unemployment, underemployment, graduate employability, graduate employment, Chinese graduates from UK universities, and general theories of the labour market has been discussed. From the literature, it can be identified that graduate employment among Chinese graduates from UK universities is a considerable issue, but one that has not been sufficiently investigated. Therefore, evidently a clear gap in knowledge exists.

Human capital theory, institutional theories and social mobility theory are all relevant to this research. Human capital theory is a dominant theory of the labour market, which treats human capital as a commodity/other means of production, whereby investments in the education and training of workers can subsequently generate productive outputs for individuals, organizations and economies (Becker, 1993). Based on human capital theory, skill supply is highly emphasized by individuals, organizations, governments and society. However, only emphasizing the supply side, and neglecting the demand side, human capital theory is criticized by many scholars (such as Dobbins, Plows & Lloyd-Williams, 2014; Schuller, 2000). It is questionable whether organizations and society fully utilize the available skills supplied, and whether the demand for skills can keep pace with the increasing skill supply. That is to say, by questioning human capital theory, it is worth considering whether there is a mismatch between supply and demand in the labour market. In the case of this research which explores graduate employment among Chinese graduates from Bangor University, in order to identify whether the mismatch between supply and demand exists, sub-question 2 and sub-question 3 are helpful. Sub-question 2, *‘What are the qualifications, skills and career expectations of Chinese graduates from Bangor University?’*, can investigate the supply of skills among them. Sub-question 3, *‘What are the current employment situations and actual labour market experience of Chinese graduates from Bangor University?’*, can be used to explore the actual demand for skills in the graduate labour market. By comparing the answers to sub-question 2 and sub-question 3, any gap between qualifications, skills and career expectations and the employment reality can be seen clearly, and any mismatch between skills supply and demand will be identified.

Institutional theories include labour market segmentation theory and political economy theory. Labour market segmentation theory involves the notions of internal labour markets and dual

labour market. It is questionable how segmentation in the labour market affects the employment of Chinese graduates from Bangor University. For example, whether the existing internal labour markets stop new graduates from entering into jobs which can fully utilize their skills? Which labour market segment can Chinese graduates from Bangor University obtain access to? (Primary segment? Secondary segment?) Why? Regarding political economy theory, different countries utilize different institutional approaches to coordinate supply and demand within the labour market; some countries prefer 'liberal market economies' (LMEs), while some countries adopt 'coordinated market economies' (CMEs) (Hall & Soskice, 2001). The UK is evidently closer to a liberal market economy, while the Chinese political economy is 'more complicated than a LME-CME dichotomy implies' (Bian & Huang, 2015, p.962). It is worth considering how the different political economies and national labour market institutional contexts affect graduate employment among Chinese graduates from Bangor University. The role of employers and the government should also be understood. In addition, the impact of *guanxi* in the Chinese labour market will also be investigated in relation to the employment of Chinese graduates from Bangor University.

Social mobility is 'the movement of an individual in a social structure' (Ravi, 2011, p.391), and education is widely perceived to be the main factor to increase social mobility (supply side). Intergenerational social mobility indicates 'the relationship between the socio-economic status of parents and the status their children will attain as adults' (Causa & Johansson, 2009, p.5). According to Blau and Duncan's model (1967), factors like social origin, class background, ethnic background and parental education can have an effect on labour market destination outcomes. It is notable that employer demand for labour is also a factor in a person's socioeconomic background, because some social networks, for example, *guanxi* with an employer, may lead to the employer's demand for labour; so social mobility theory considers both the supply side and the demand side of the labour market. The influence of socioeconomic background on socioeconomic attainment can be direct; and this influence can also be indirect, which is mediated by educational attainment. From social mobility theory, it is questionable '*How does the background of Chinese graduates from Bangor University affect their job destinations?*' (Sub-question 1).

From the explanations and analyses of human capital theory, institutional theories, and social mobility theory, it can be seen that all three of these theories can form a comprehensive background for this research. Figure 9 presents the conceptual framework in order to direct this research, which is derived from the literature review and especially based on and developed

from Blau and Duncan's (1967) model of the socioeconomic life cycle. In addition, institutional varieties of political economy and labour market segmentation are also included in this conceptual framework, which provide the macro-environment of the labour market. This framework involves both the supply side and the demand side of the labour market, and different factors, such as influences from governments, employers, an individual's parental education, occupation, and wealth are all included.

Having reviewed the relevant literature, and outlined the research objective, the contribution, the research question, and the theoretical background, the next chapter will explain the methodology and methods.

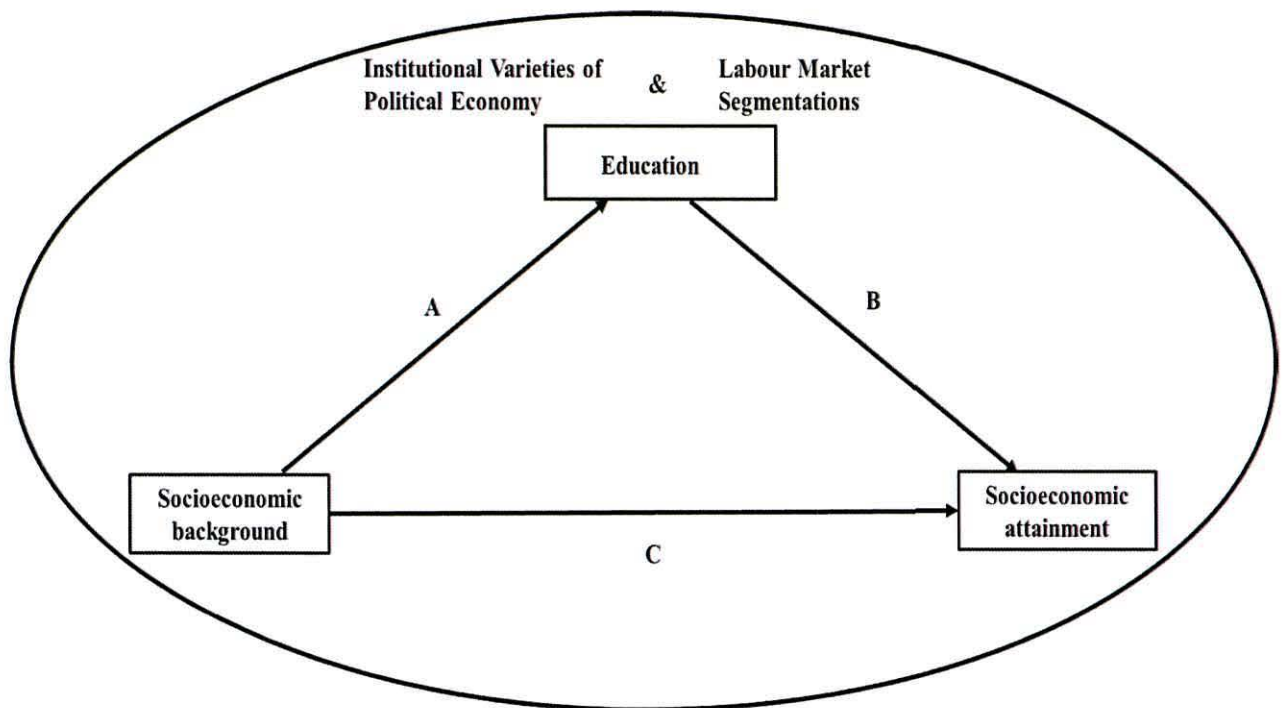


Figure 9. Conceptual Framework for the Research
(Consist of Human Capital Theory, Institutional Theories and Social Mobility Theory)

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

Introduction

This research explored the work and employment experience and destinations of Chinese graduates from Bangor University (in Wales, the UK). Their socioeconomic background, educational attainment, career expectations, labour market experience and socioeconomic attainment were all investigated in this research. This chapter will discuss the methodology and methods.

In this chapter, there are the following six parts, methodology in relevant research, research approach, research strategy, data collection, data handling and analysis, and ethical considerations.

For methodology in relevant research, some research about graduate employment will be included as examples, and some discussion will be provided. Regarding the research approach, the differences between positivism and interpretivism, the differences between deduction and induction, and the differences between quantitative approach and qualitative approach will be explained, and the approaches adopted by this research will be identified with some reasons. In the research strategy part, case study as the research strategy will be analysed by stating its appropriateness to be adopted in this research; the advantages and disadvantages of case study will be provided; and the five significant components of case study design will be discussed with regard to this research. In the data collection part, semi-structured interview will be discussed, including its features, its advantages and limitations to collect data; after that, the sampling techniques adopted will be explained, and the basic information of the participants will be provided; then the details regarding the interview process will be explained, with the brief discussion of the questions used during the interviews. Regarding data analysis, the four key steps will be explained with consideration to this research; in addition, grounded theory, which can partially inform the data analysis in this research will be discussed, with some criticisms; besides, the utilization of thematic analysis will be explained. In the ethical consideration part, the potential ethical issues in this research will be discussed, and the methods to deal with these issues will be explained.

Methodology in Relevant Research

With regard to the research in the field of graduate employment in the UK, Johnston (2003, p.416-417) indicates that the large amount of quantitative data, generated from 'large-scale statistical analyses of graduate experiences, in the shape of surveys', 'large-scale statistical collections of official national UK statistics with some accompanying commentary' and 'economic analyses of graduate employment', is helpful to construct macro pictures about educational and employment patterns and trends, looking at the factors including institution attended, subject studied, and employment field entered. This abundant quantitative data can also provide context for small-scale studies (Johnston, 2003). In addition, Johnston (2003) also points out the methodological problems of graduate employment research, which refers to the limited range of investigative methods, and the inappropriately used investigative methods. Turning to the investigative methods, Johnston (2003, p.420) claims that these methods are limited to 'scrutiny of national and international databases', 'large-scale surveys', and sometimes 'interviews and focus group discussions'. Since a positivist paradigm is the favoured one in this research field, surveys and other quantitative studies are usually used to conduct research, and quantitative data is generated (Johnston, 2003). However, such quantitative research achieves breadth, but depth has not been realized.

There has been a large amount of research in the field of graduate employment using a quantitative approach. For example, Feldman and Turnley (1995) conducted quantitative research examining the consequences of underemployment and explored graduates' coping strategies towards underemployment. A survey was used by them to collect data, and data analysis was based on individual self-report. Nabi (2003) also conducted quantitative research using questionnaires to examine the opportunity for skill utilization and career success (from both intrinsic and extrinsic perspectives) among graduates who were encountering underemployment. Wilton (2011) used a questionnaire survey to examine to what extent levels of reported 'employability' appear to affect employment outcomes and help to overcome traditional social disadvantage. Although these quantitative studies have a broad coverage of participants, and a breadth of research is achieved, it is notable that lack of depth is an obvious limitation of such research.

There are also some studies adopting qualitative approaches to explore graduate employment. For example, Tomlinson (2007, p.285) adopted a qualitative research approach, using semi-structured interviews, to explore how students 'construct, understand and begin to manage their

employability', when they make 'the transition from higher education into the labour market'. Ren, Zhu and Warner (2011) carried out an in-depth case study, which explored the impact of higher education reforms on human resources, the labour market and graduate employment in the People's Republic of China. They gathered primary data from 25 semi-structured, face-to-face interviews, with their secondary data coming from publications and internal documents from participants (Ren, Zhu & Warner, 2011). Their research achieved depth. In addition, although there was only one case involved in the research, the findings from that single case study can also be representative to some extent, because the characteristics of the case was taken into consideration for the case selection.

It is notable that whether using a quantitative approach to conduct a questionnaire survey, or adopting a qualitative approach to conduct interviews, individual self-report is heavily relied on. However, using individual self-report as the source of data has its limitation. Since people may have a conscious or unconscious motivation for their behaviour (Johnston, 2003), the reliability of their responses is questionable. This limitation may have more influence on the interview than the anonymous questionnaire, because when completing an anonymous questionnaire, people can provide honest answers without worrying about being identified; but during an interview, the participant may want to hide bad things, or things that make them feel uncomfortable. In order to overcome this limitation to some extent, during face-to-face interviews, the interviewer should pay attention to the participant's expression and body language. In addition, conducting the interview via telephone or some online methods (such as Skype voice chat or QQ voice Chat) may make the participants feel relaxed and comfortable when talking about sensitive topics or bad things, because through these methods to conduct the interview, the participants can 'hide' behind these communication tools. With no face-to-face meeting during the interview, the participants cannot be directly and exactly identified to some extent, so they may feel relaxed to share more information.

After having a brief discussion about the methodology used by some existing research in the field of graduate employment, the next five parts will focus on this specific research, graduate employment among Chinese graduates from Bangor University (in Wales, the UK), to explain and identify the research approach, research strategy, data collection, data analysis, and ethical consideration.

Research Approach

In this part, an explanation of the differences between positivism and interpretivism, the differences between deduction and induction, and the differences between quantitative approach and qualitative approach will be provided. The approaches adopted by this research to explore graduate employment among Chinese graduates from Bangor University (in Wales, the UK) will be identified, and the reasons for this choice will be given.

Positivism and Interpretivism

There are two contrasting types of research philosophy (Bryman, 2012), called positivism and interpretivism. Positivist researchers view the nature of reality or being as ‘external, objective and independent of social actors’, while interpretivist researchers hold that it is ‘socially constructed’, ‘subjective’, ‘multiple’, and may change (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012, p.140). For positivist researchers, the role of the researcher is to collect facts, and study the relationship between one set of facts and another (Anderson, 2012), so the researchers are ‘independent of the data’, and keep ‘an objective stance’ (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012, p.140). For interpretivist researchers, information generated from observation or interviews ‘in the form of words or meanings’ is more valuable (Anderson, 2012, p.46). They emphasize the access and understanding of individuals’ view of the world (Anderson, 2012), so the researchers cannot be separated from the research (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012).

Based on these differences, positivist researchers prefer to gather quantitative data, and utilize statistically valid techniques to analysis the data, in order to generate quantifiable and generalizable conclusions (Anderson, 2012). Interpretivist researchers, however, prefer to collect qualitative data (Anderson, 2012), and their attentions are not focused so much on numbers and facts, but instead, they emphasize words, meanings, and observations (Creswell, 2008).

In this research, interpretivist research philosophy was applied, because when exploring graduate employment among Chinese graduates from Bangor University, it was believed that the emphasis was not to discover the facts; how many Chinese graduates were adequately

employed, unemployed and underemployed did not need to be quantified in this research. The aim of this research is to explore the reasons behind the facts, which cannot be simply answered by using a positivist approach. For example, when exploring the reasons for why some of Chinese graduates were unemployed or underemployed, the individual's thought, feeling and labour market experience of the Chinese graduates should be emphasized. By adopting an interpretivist approach, analysis of the phenomena of graduate employment among Chinese graduates from Bangor University was based on the interpretations, feelings, experiences and perceptions of Chinese graduates from Bangor University, which was more appropriate for the research objective.

Deduction and Induction

There are two approaches to the relationship between theory and research, which are deductive approach and inductive approach. By using a deductive approach, a process of testing established generalisations is carried out in order to develop and refine theories (Anderson, 2012). The researcher, based on what is known about a particular area and theoretical consideration concerning that area, deduces a hypothesis (or hypotheses) (Bryman, 2012), and then through the process of data collection, findings are generated, which will help to confirm or reject the hypothesis (or hypotheses). By using an inductive approach, the starting point is 'at the level of practice' (Anderson, 2012, p.146), and 'theory is the outcome of research' (Bryman, 2012). In other words, an inductive approach involves generating theory through a process of observations (Anderson, 2012, Bryman 2012). According to Babbie (2015, p. 23-24), deduction 'moves from the general to the specific', while induction 'moves from the particular to the general'. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2012, p.144) point out that a deductive approach is 'theory falsification or verification', while an inductive approach is 'theory generation and building'. Bryman (2012) indicates that a deductive research approach is usually related to quantitative research approaches, and Anderson (2012) states that in order to generalize conclusions, the sample size used in a deductive approach is very large. Conversely, an inductive research approach, which is associated with qualitative research approaches (Bryman, 2012), can accept less generalizable data, as long as it is "deep 'rich'" (Anderson, 2012, p.146).

Concerning the relationship between deduction and induction, it is notable that the process of deduction and induction both involve each other. The last step in the deductive process feeds back the findings into the stock of theory (Bryman, 2012), and this is an inductive process. In addition, an element of deduction is also involved in the inductive process, which refers to the fact that after carrying out 'the phase of theoretical reflection on a set of data', the researcher may like to collect further data, the purpose being 'establish the conditions in which a theory will and will not hold' (Bryman, 2012, p.26). As a result, Bryman (2012) points out that it is perhaps better to treat them as tendencies, rather than as a strict difference.

The objective of this research is to explore graduate employment among Chinese graduates from Bangor University. The investigation of their socioeconomic background, qualifications and career expectations, and their current employment situations are key points of this research. At the same time, the influences of their study experience in UK universities and the degrees they achieved from UK universities on their career expectations and employment reality are a significant part to be explored. In addition, as discussed previously, in the labour market, the relationship between supply and demand concerning Chinese graduates from UK universities needs to be investigated. Moreover, how the background of Chinese graduates from UK universities affects their job destinations, how the labour market segmentation affects the employment of Chinese graduates from UK universities, and how the different political economies influence them also need to be revealed in this research. Based on these, it is better to use a process of observation to generate theories, rather than use a process of testing to develop and refine theories. As a result, this research was predominantly inductive. During this research, 'a weaving back and forth between data and theory' (Bryman, 2012, p.26) was involved, so there was an element of deduction.

Quantitative Approach and Qualitative Approach

According to Rubin and Babbie (2010), quantitative research approaches seek to generate findings which are precise and generalizable, while qualitative research highlights the depth of understanding, seeks to subjectively reveal the deeper meaning of human experiences, and intends to produce 'theoretically rich observations' (Rubin & Babbie, 2010, p. 47). Saunders,

Lewis and Thornhill (2012) point out that one method to distinguish quantitative and qualitative approaches is to differentiate between numeric data and non-numeric data. Numeric data refers to numbers, while non-numeric data includes 'words, images, video clips and other similar material' (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012, p.161). By adopting this method, quantitative research approaches are linked to data collecting techniques (such as questionnaires) or data analysis procedures (such as statistics) which generate or utilize numeric data; while qualitative research approaches are connected with data collecting techniques (such as interviews) or data analysis procedures (such as categorising data) which generate or utilize non-numeric data (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012).

Based on the discussion above concerning positivist and interpretivist approaches, and deductive and inductive approaches, quantitative research is associated with the positivist approach, and conveys a deductive approach regarding the relationship between theory and research, which emphasizes the testing of theories (Bryman, 2012). In contrast, qualitative research is connected with the interpretivist approach, and predominantly entails an inductive approach regarding the relationship between theory and research, which highlights the generation of theories (Bryman, 2012).

Myers (2009) points out that quantitative research approaches are suitable for research which involves a large sample size and generalizes a large population. However, its major disadvantage is that it may ignore social and cultural aspects, or treat them in a superficial manner (Myers, 2009). Rubin and Babbie (2010) also indicate that quantitative research involves less contextual details. A qualitative research approach is appropriate to be used to study a specific subject in depth (Myers, 2009). However, by adopting a qualitative research approach, it is often difficult to achieve the generalization of a larger population, which is seen as a major disadvantage of qualitative research approaches (Myers, 2009).

A large amount of research in the field of graduate employment adopts a quantitative approach, with a broad coverage of participants. Although breadth of research can be achieved, it is notable that lack of depth is an obvious limitation of such research. This research of graduate employment patterns among Chinese graduates from Bangor University adopts the qualitative research approach. As stated earlier, the objective of this research is not to reveal the facts and numbers of Chinese graduates from Bangor University who are adequately employed, or who are suffering unemployment or underemployment. Instead, the aim is to explore the reasons behind, and investigate how their socioeconomic background, their study experience in the UK

and the degrees they achieved from UK universities influence their career expectation and current employment reality; so quantified data is not necessary, but a depth of understanding is essential to this research. Moreover, various factors from the macro-environment, including labour market segmentation and institutional varieties of political economy can affect the employment of Chinese graduates from UK universities, so these factors should be involved in this research. However, a quantitative research lack emphasis on social and cultural aspects and contextual details. As a result, a quantitative research approach will not be appropriate to investigate the graduate employment of Chinese graduates from Bangor University. In addition, according to Myers (2009), qualitative research is well-placed to be utilized when the specific topic is new and exploratory with not much previously published research on that topic. This is another reason why qualitative research will be adopted in this research. As argued previously, although there is numerous literature on graduate employment, unemployment and underemployment, limited literature is found concerning how these issues affect Chinese graduates from UK universities. As a topic which is to some extent new, and without much previously published research related to it, a qualitative research approach is appropriate to be used here in order to generate rich in-depth insights and contributions to knowledge. Besides, a mixed methods approach, which combines both quantitative and qualitative research has also been taken into consideration when chose the research approach. It can achieve the breadth of quantitative research and the depth of qualitative research. However, without much previously published research regarding the graduate employment of Chinese graduate from UK universities, a qualitative research need to be done at the initial stage to explore this issue and generate theories. After that, a quantitative research could be conducted to test the theories. However, because of the practical issue of the limited time at the PhD stage, only a qualitative research was carried out, and for future research, a quantitative research could be conduct in a larger population of Chinese graduates from UK universities to realize the generalization.

Research Strategy

‘Case study research is an inquiry that focuses on describing, understanding, predicting, and/or controlling the individual’ (Woodside, 2010, p.1), and it is this that applied in this research as the research strategy. Yin (2003, p.13) defines a case study as ‘an empirical inquiry that

investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident'. Although Woodside (2010) argues that his definition is intentionally broader than the definition proposed by Yin, Yin's definition more clearly presents the features of case study research, which involves contextual conditions. That is to say, case study research is appropriate to be used when the researcher believes that the contextual conditions are highly relevant to the phenomenon of study, and he/she would like to cover such contextual conditions (Yin, 2003). Compared with other research strategies, the experiment deliberately separates a phenomenon from its context; the history involves the 'entangled situation between phenomenon and context', however, it is often used with 'non contemporary events'; although a survey can try to handle phenomenon and context, the capability of surveys to investigate context is very limited (Yin, 2003, p.13). Therefore, it can be seen that case study research is very suitable for this research to explore graduate employment among Chinese graduates from UK universities, because, in this research, many contextual elements are relevant, such as the labour market segmentation, Chinese market economy and Chinese graduates' current locations, and it is believed that these contextual conditions have a significant influence on their employment. In addition, Yin (2003) points out that case study research involves a logic of design, techniques of data collection, and specific data analysis approaches. It is believed that by adopting this research strategy, graduate employment among Chinese graduates from UK universities can be adequately explored. Case study design, data collection and data handling and analysis will be explained later.

Gerring (2007, p.1) points out that 'sometimes, in-depth knowledge of an individual example is more helpful than fleeting knowledge about a larger number of examples'. Better understanding of the whole could be achieved by focusing on a key part (Gerring, 2007). According to Blaxter, Hughes and Tight (2010), case study research has many advantages. In respect of this research into graduate employment among Chinese graduates from UK universities, the main relevant advantages involve the following four points. First, as the data involved in case study research is generated from the experiences and practices of people, they are persuasive, accessible, and strong in reality; secondly, 'generalizations from a specific instance to a more general issue' are able to be achieved by using case study; thirdly, by utilizing case study, the researcher is permitted to present the complexity of social life; fourthly, case study can benefit further research work, by providing a data source 'from which further analysis can be made' (Blaxter, Hughes & Tight, 2010 p.74). With regard to the disadvantages of case study-based research, Anderson (2012, p.55) points out that 'generalisation is not possible',

which seems, at the first glance, to be contradictory to the second advantage listed above. However, both Blaxter, Hughes and Tight (2010) and Anderson (2012) are right, and their opinions are not contradictory, because Blaxter, Hughes and Tight (2010, p.74) 'generalization' is limited, from a particular instance to a 'more general issue'. Just as Anderson (2012) states, case study research cannot achieved the broad generalisation. For this research, there is another disadvantage of case study, which can also be viewed as a challenge. It is that too much complexity of a case can result in difficulties with analysis (Blaxter, Hughes & Tight, 2010). In fact, complexity exists in this research, as the career expectations and current employment situations of Chinese graduates from UK universities can be affected by their socioeconomic background, education background (including qualifications achieved from UK universities, courses the studied and the year of graduation), their current working locations (including countries and cities), and their working experience. As a result, when analysing the data, it requires more consideration and more patience. Reviewing the advantages and disadvantages of a case study in relation to this research, it can clearly be seen that the advantages are more than the disadvantages, which also indicates that adopting case study as the research strategy in this research is appropriate.

Regarding case study design, Yin (2003, p.21) points out that there are five especially significant components, including 'a study's questions', 'its propositions, if any', 'its unit(s) of analysis', 'the logic linking the data to the propositions', and 'the criteria for interpreting the findings'. Turning to the first component, the questions addressed in this case study research are: *'What is the relationship between the human capital of Chinese graduates from Bangor University and their labour market experience?'* *'How does the background of Chinese graduates from Bangor University affect their job destinations?'* *'What are the qualifications, skills and career expectations of Chinese graduates from Bangor University?'* *'What are the current employment situations and actual labour market experiences of Chinese graduates from Bangor University?'* Regarding the second component, since this is exploration research, with the purpose being to 'seek new insights and find out what is happening' (Anderson, 2012), it has no proposition, but it has a very clear purpose which is to explore graduate employment among Chinese graduates from Bangor University.

Considering the third component, the unit of analysis, Bangor University is selected as the single case in this research. Chinese graduates from Bangor University are involved in this research in order to explore their graduate employment, and some staff from Bangor University

whose work is relevant to Chinese students/graduates and their careers are also involved. There are three reasons for selecting Bangor University as the single case here. First, Bangor university has a long history, and it has 'a long tradition of excellence and exceeds expectations, both for academic standards and student experience' (Bangor University, 2015). It is ranked amongst the top 40 in the UK for research, and the top 10 in the UK for student satisfaction (Bangor University, 2015). In accordance with The Times and The Sunday Times Good University Guide 2015, Bangor University is ranked amongst the top 50 Universities in the UK (Bangor University, 2015). Secondly, Bangor University has a long history of providing HE to Chinese students, and there are a large number of Chinese graduates from Bangor University, which provides this research abundant data to access. Thirdly, as a PhD student at Bangor University at the time of the research, it is relatively convenient to access the data, and help from the International team and the Alumni office at Bangor University can facilitate data collection. Using multiple cases or comparative cases of different UK universities was considered when selected the case. However, the practical issues of getting access to different UK universities and the limited time of PhD stage made a multiple-case study difficult to be conducted. For the future research, involving different UK universities to explore Chinese graduates' employment and comparing and contrasting the findings from different UK universities can improve the generalizability. For this thesis, it is believed that despite using a single case study, generalization is limited, as discussed above, this in-depth investigation can generate valuable information, which can make a contribution to the research area, benefit Chinese students who are considering studying in UK universities, and provide UK universities with valuable information to enhance the employability of the large number of Chinese students.

In order to get access to this single case, relevant staff in the international team and in the Alumni office have been contacted by emails, containing basic information about the research. In their response, the methods to contact the Chinese alumni were provided, and the staff from the Alumni office helped to email the Chinese alumni in order to ask them to be involved in this research. From these, it can be seen that access to Bangor University was achieved.

In addition, collecting the data from employers in the labour market, together with the data from Chinese graduates and relevant university staff members, may provide a more comprehensive picture regarding the employment of Chinese graduates from UK universities. However, as stated at the beginning of the thesis, this study emphasizes on the Chinese graduates view. As

a result, when collected the data, the Chinese graduates were asked about their view regarding how the employers thought about Chinese graduates from UK universities, rather than directly collected the data from employers. In addition, the access to various employers is also difficult as a practical issue, but this indicates the area for future research.

The fourth and the fifth components of case study design indicate data analysis steps (Yin, 2003), which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Data Collection

In order to collect qualitative data in this case study research, semi-structured interviews have been used, by adopting which, the interviewer know the themes and questions in advance (Anderson, 2012). However, the question list is just used as a guide for the interview (Cargan, 2007), and the questions and their order may change according to the flow of the interview (Anderson, 2012). According to Cargan (2007), in order to get more adequate answers from different respondents, questions can be added, deleted, explained, probed, and modified. In addition, besides the list of themes and questions for the interview, the schedule for semi-structured interview will also be likely to include ‘some comments to open the discussion’, ‘a possible list of prompts to promote and further discussion’, and ‘some comments to close it’ (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012, p. 375).

With regard to the advantages and limitations of semi-structured interviews, Walsh (2001) provides five advantages and five limitations. The first advantage refers to the fact that by using the semi-structured interview, too much pre-judgement might be avoided when there are some questions which are not predetermined (Walsh, 2001); the real views and beliefs of the interviewees can be achieved (Walsh, 2001). Secondly, semi-structured interviews give the researchers the opportunity to probe answers from the interviewees (Walsh, 2001); in addition, with the flow of the interviews, some unexpected and unforeseen information can be revealed by researchers, and they are allowed to use this information as it is discovered (Walsh, 2001). Thirdly, semi-structured interview can help to improve the depth of information (Walsh, 2001). Fourthly, presence of interviewers can ‘ensure completion of data collection’, so good response rates can be realized (Walsh, 2001, p.66). Fifthly, semi-structured interviews allow

researchers to provide guidance, help, explanations of questions, and additional information (Walsh, 2001). Regarding the limitations, Walsh (2001) indicates that the first limitation of semi-structured interviews refers to the fact that the validity of the data collected is questionable. The second limitation refers to the difficulty of recording information, as recording by writing is hard and can be disturbed, while tape recording may limit the information provided by the respondents (Walsh, 2001). Thirdly, interviewees usually provide too much information, and most of this is not usable and too much in-depth (Walsh, 2001). Fourthly, the processes of conducting interviews and transcribing what has been said during the interviews to a written record are very time-consuming (Walsh, 2001). The final limitation pointed out by Walsh (2001) refers to the poor reliability of the data collected. Since the interviewees may be asked different questions, they can provide different data, which are then very hard to compare (Walsh, 2001).

As stated above, Bangor University was selected as the single case to be investigated in this research, so the participants involved were Chinese graduates from Bangor University and some staff from Bangor University whose work was relevant to Chinese students/graduates and their careers. Regarding sampling in this research, non-probability sampling was used, which is adopted by most qualitative data-gathering (Anderson, 2012).

In order to collect data from Chinese graduates from Bangor University, two volunteer sampling techniques (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012) were used. The first one was self-selection sampling, which permit each case, usually individuals, to decide whether they would like to participate in the research (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012). In order to encourage Chinese graduates from Bangor University to take part in this research, emails containing the basic information of this research were sent to them twice by the Alumni Office (July 2015 and December 2015). The information included the objective of this research, the contribution, and what would mainly be talked about during the interview. In addition, the contact details of the research were provided within the email, including email address and WeChat account (WeChat is a communication application), and those Chinese graduates who wanted to participate in the research and who had enquiries about the research could directly contact the researcher. Besides self-selection sampling, snowball sampling was also used for data collection, which was the second volunteer sampling technique utilized in this research. Snowball sampling refers to finding new people who 'have had the experience or characteristics relevant to the research' based on the recommendation of the existing participants (Anderson, 2012; Bryman, 2012,

p.424). In this research, some of the participants recommended new sampling units. Because of the ethical considerations, during this recommendation process, the potential new sampling units were first contacted by the existing participants who know them, and if they wanted to take part in the research, they could contact the researcher directly. This process ensured that the personal information of the potential new sampling units was not given to the researcher by the existing participants without their permission.

In order to interview the staff from Bangor University whose work was relevant to Chinese students/graduates and their careers, first, they were identified by the researcher from the website of Bangor University according to their job positions. Then, emails and WeChat were used to contact them and they were asked whether they would like to take part in the research. This is purposive sampling, which means choosing people with perspectives and experience which are significant to the research (Anderson, 2012). The relevant staff from Bangor University were deemed as key informants, because their work was either relevant to Chinese students/graduates or relevant to graduate careers. Their experience and knowledge from their work about Chinese graduates' employment, and their opinion regarding this are important to this research. In addition, one of the staff who participated in this research was recommended by another staff. Here, snowball sampling was used again.

With regard to the sample size involved in this research, it was difficult to set an exact number of how many Chinese graduates should be interviewed before the data collection. Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006, p.76) suggest that for research with the objective of describing a shared perception, belief, or behaviour amongst 'a relatively homogeneous group', twelve interviews will likely be enough. However, if 'a selected group is relatively heterogeneous', 'the data quality is poor', and 'the domain of inquiry is diffuse and/or vague', twelve interviews will likely not be sufficient (Guest, Bunce & Johnson, 2006, p.79). Bryman (2012, p.425) indicates that 'it is impossible to know how many people should be interviewed before theoretical saturation has been achieved'. In addition, Bryman (2012) suggests that a qualitative study, which has a broader scope and requires more comparisons between groups in the sample, needs to conduct more interviews. According to Saunders (2012), for semi structured/in-depth interviews, the minimum sample size is 5 to 25; for grounded theory, the minimum sample size is 20 to 35; for a homogeneous population, the minimum sample size is 4 to 12; and for a heterogeneous population, the minimum sample size is 12-30. In addition, data saturation is another consideration when deciding sample size. This refers to conducting data collection

continually until few, if any, new information or new themes generate from additional data collection (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012).

Considering this research to explore graduate employment among Chinese graduates from Bangor University, since the Chinese graduates had different socioeconomic background (different parental education, social networks and wealth) different educational background (different qualification achieved, different programmes studied and different year of graduation), and they were at different locations when this research was conducted, it can be seen that they were 'heterogeneous', not 'homogeneous' (Guest, Bunce & Johnson, 2006, p.76, 79); in addition, there were many comparisons between groups in the sample, so before data collection, based on the views above about minimum sample size, it was expected to interview at least 30 Chinese graduates from Bangor University, in order get sufficient data to explore graduate employment among Chinese graduates from Bangor University. The exact number of interviews with Chinese graduates from Bangor University should be decided during data collection, in order to see when data saturation was achieved. Regarding the interviews with relevant members of staff from Bangor University, the staff were chosen according to their work responsibilities and their positions.

In total, 39 interviews were conducted with Chinese graduates from Bangor University, and a broad range of interviewees were approached, including graduates with different degrees (Bachelor, Master's and/or PhD), graduates studied different programmes (such as Banking and Finance, Business and Marketing, International Commercial and Business Law, and Education Studies), graduates graduated from different years (between 2003 to 2016), and graduates worked in different countries (China and the UK), different cities in China (such as Beijing, Shanghai, Nanjing, Zhejiang), or different cities in the UK (Bangor, London and Sheffield). All of the Chinese graduates who participated in this research were from mainland China, and among those who were in China when they were interviewed, most of them worked in mainland China, while one worked in Hong Kong. Table 1 provides some basic information of the 39 Chinese graduates from Bangor University who participated in this research. Data saturation seemed to be achieved after 36 interviews, as no new themes emerged in the 37th, the 38th or the 39th interviews.

In addition, 3 interviews were conducted with members of staff from Bangor University, whose work was relevant to Chinese students/graduates and their careers. In order to keep anonymity, it is better not to identify the position within Bangor University of the staff in detail. Among

the 3 staff who participated in this research, one worked in the Chinese office of Bangor University (Staff 1), one worked at the careers and employability service of Bangor University (Staff 2), and one worked as a career and employability officer at a school of Bangor University (Staff 3). All the participants of this research are referred to by numbers in this thesis.

Table 1. Basic Information of the Participants (Chinese Graduates from Bangor University)

Interviewee (Chinese Graduate)	Gender	Graduation Year	Programme	Before this Degree	Degree After this Degree	First Destination after Education in the UK	Following Destination(s)	Current Location	Current Job
01	Female	2013	(MA) Education Studies	Study at a Chinese college (Programme: English Education)		English teacher, in China	Another job in an IELTS training school before the current job, in China	Beijing, China	IELTS Teacher
02	Male	2014	(MBA) Law and Management	Bachelor degree from a Chinese university (Programme: Biology)		Start his own business, in China	Work in CIECC, in China (current job)	Beijing, China	Work in CIECC
03	Female	2012	(MSc) Business with Consumer Psychology	Bachelor degree from a Chinese university (Programme: Business English)		English teacher, in China	Work in a bank, in China, before the current job	Beijing, China	Online marketer (Insurance)
04	Male	2012	(BA) Business Studies and Finance	Study at a Chinese university for 3 years (Programme: Business Management and Practice)	(MBA) Human Resource Management and Financial Management (Cardiff Metropolitan University)	Work in the same enterprise of his current job, but worked as an marketing specialist, in China	N/A	Nanjing, China	Leader of Marketing Department
05	Female	2013	(MSc) Banking and Finance	For Bachelor degree, 3 years in China (Programme: Business), and 1 year in the UK (Plymouth University,		A job related to financial data, in China	Data analyst, in China (current job)	Shanghai, China	Data Analyst

				Programme: International Finance)					
06	Male	2011	(MA) Business and Marketing	Bachelor degree from a Chinese university (Programme: Pharmaceutical Engineering)		Leader of foreign trade department, in China (current job)	N/A	Zhejiang, China	Leader of Foreign Trade Department
07	Female	2012	(MA) Banking and Finance	For Bachelor degree, study at both a Chinese university (Programme: International Finance and Practice) and a UK university (University of Greenwich, Programme: Banking and Economics)		Securities affairs representative, in China (current job)	N/A	Hefei, China	Securities Affairs Representative
08	Female	2011	(MSc) Banking and Finance	For Bachelor degree, study 2 years at a Chinese university (Programme: Logistics Management) and 2 years at a UK university (Bangor University: Banking and Finance)		Flight consultant, in the UK	Sales assistant, in the UK (current job)	Oxford, the UK	Sales Assistant
09	Female	2013	(MSc) Banking and Finance	For Bachelor degree, study 3 years at a Chinese university (Programme: Financial Services) and 1 year at a UK university (De Montfort University,		Payment assistant, in China (current job)	N/A	Shanghai, China	Payment Assistant

				Programme: Business and Finance)					
10	Male	2009	(MSc) Banking and Finance	Bachelor degree from a Chinese university (Programme: Information System)		Translator, in China	A TV director, in China, for the second job; a director for the third job, in China; and then start his business as the current job, in China	Hong Kong, China	Self-employed
11	Male	2013	(MSc) Accounting and Finance	Bachelor degree from a Chinese university (Programme: Accounting); 11-year working experience.		Senior financial manager, in China	Chief financial officer, in China (current job)	Suzhou, China	Chief Financial Officer
12	Male	2013	(MSc) Banking and Finance	Bachelor degree from a Chinese (Hong Kong) university (Programme: Finance)		Work in a financial job position, in China	Speculation in stocks and Sale local specialty online, in China (current job)	Shenzhen, China	Speculation on stocks and Sale local specialty online (treated as self-employed)
13	Female	2013	(MSc) Accounting and Finance	Bachelor degree from a Chinese university (Programme: Accounting)		A job in accounting area, in China	Accountant, in China (current job)	Guangxi, China	Accountant
14	Male	2013	(MSc) Banking and Finance	For Bachelor degree, study at a Chinese university (Programme: Accounting) and 2 years at a UK		Financial consultant, in China (current job)	N/A	Sichuan, China	Financial Consultant (Manager Level; Customer Manager)

				university (Bangor University, Programme: Banking and Accounting)					
15	Male	2011	(MBA) Marketing	Bachelor degree from a Chinese university (Programme: Optomechatronics; also called Measurement and Control Technology and Instrumentation)		Customer manager, in China	Self-employed, in China (current job)	Beijing, China	Self-employed
16	Male	2012	(LLM) International Commercial and Business Law	For Bachelor degree study 2 years at a Chinese university (Programme: Economic Management) and 2 years at a UK university (Teesside University, Programme: Finance)		A job related to foreign trade, in China	A job in financial area as the second job, in China; for the third and fourth jobs, he did a job as translator for gaming and a job as project manager assistant in the same enterprise, in China; his fifth job was his current job.	Shanghai, China	Project Manager
17	Male	2004	(MBA) Banking and Finance	Study at a Chinese technical secondary school (Programme: Finance) and Open University (Programme: Finance); 6-year working experience.		A job in a bank, in China	Another job in another bank, in China, before his current job	Nanjing, China	Associate Director District Investment Advisor

18	Female	2014	(BA) Accounting and Finance	Study at a Chinese university for 3 years (Programme: International Finance)	Fashion and Luxury Brand Management (Called Master, but not at postgraduate level, no degree) (Istituto Marangoni, in Italy)	N/A	N/A	Anhui, China	Unemployed
19	Male	2014	(MSc) Banking and Finance	Bachelor degree from a Chinese university (Programme: Finance)		A job as a dealer, in China	His second job was in a fund company, in China; and his third job was his current job.	Beijing, China	Customer Manager
20	Male	2013	(BSc) Accounting and Banking	Study 2 years at a Chinese university (Programme: in Business Management category)	(MSc) Economic History (The London School of Economics and Political Science)	A job in corporate banking department, in China (current job)	N/A	Beijing, China	Staff in Corporate Banking Department
21	Male	2007	(BA) Management with Banking and Finance	Study 2 years at a Chinese university (Programme: Economics)	(MA) International Political Economy (The University of Warwick)	A job as a diplomat, in China	Senior manager, in China (current job)	Beijing, China	Senior Manager
22	Male	2014	(MBA) Management	Bachelor degree from a Chinese university		A job in financial area, in China	Third-party financial advisor, in China (current job)	Shenzhen, China	Third-party Financial Advisor

				(Programme: Electronic Information Engineering)					
23	Male	2003	(MA) Banking and Finance	Study at a Chinese technical secondary school (Programme: Business Management), a Chinese college (Programme: Calligraphy) and a Chinese university (Programme: English); 10-year working experience.		A job related to real estate, in China	The second job as a translator in financial aspect and an analyst, in China; his third job was an analyst in financial aspect, in China; and his fourth job was an investment manager, in China (current job).	Zhuhai, China	Investment Manager
24	Male	2013	(MSc) Banking and Finance	Study 3 years at a Chinese university (Programme: International finance) and 1 year at a UK university (the University of Sunderland, programme: Banking and Finance)		Work in a consulting firm, in China	Self-employed, in China (current job)	Beijing, China	Self-employed CFO
25	Male	2008	(PhD) Psychology	(BSc) Psychology (Bangor University)		Postdoctor, in the UK	Lecturer, in the UK (current job)	Sheffield, the UK	Lecturer
26	Male	2015	(MSc) Banking and Finance	Study 3 years at a Chinese college (programme: Finance) and 1 year at a UK university (University of Bedfordshire,		Self-employed, in the UK (current job)	N/A	London, the UK	Self-employed Manager

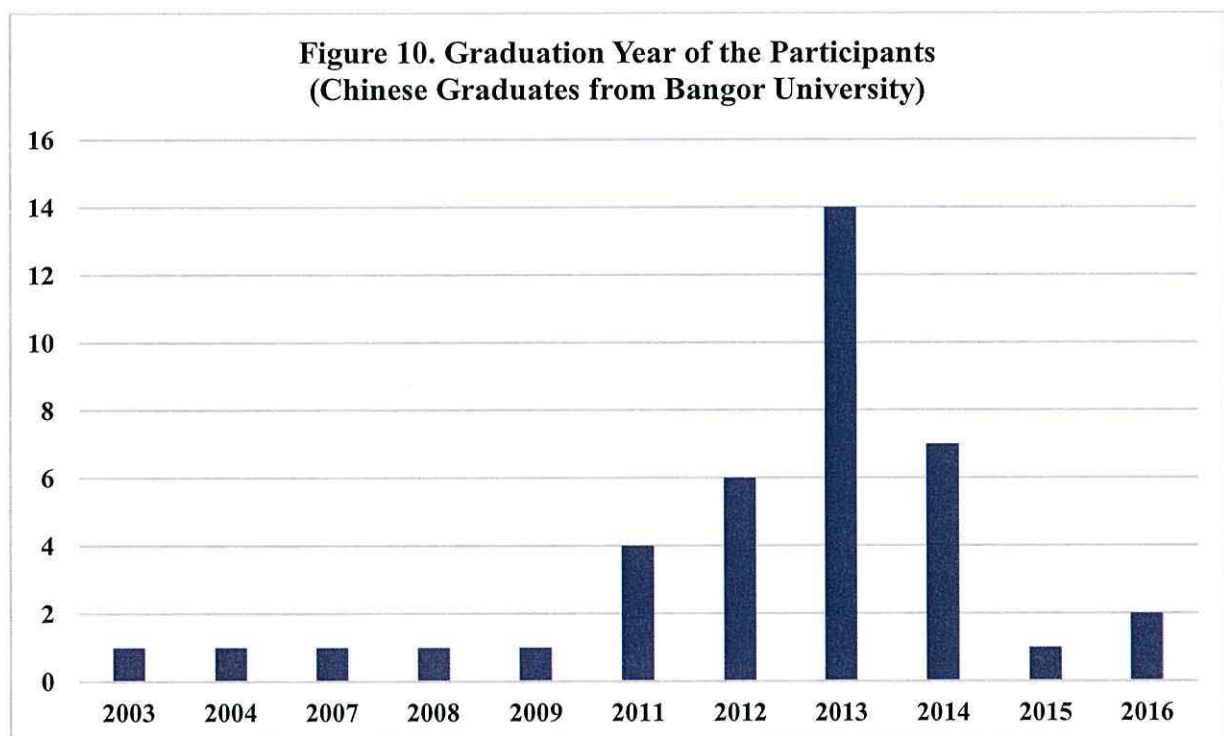
				programme: Business Administration)					
27	Female	2013	(MSc) Banking and Finance	Study 3 years at a Chinese university (Programme: English for International Business) and 1 year at a UK university (the University of Central Lancashire, programme: International Business Communication)		An internship experience in an securities company, in China	She learnt in an enterprise which was related to foreign exchange, in China; then, she had an internship experience in a media company, in China; after that, she did a job related to internet finance, in China; then, she changed to a job related to public relations and brand, in China; and then, she started her business, in China.	Shanghai, China	Not working, preparing for studying in Germany
28	Male	2014	(MSc) Banking and Finance	Bachelor degree from a Chinese university (Programme: Electronics Technology)		Operation Manager, in China (current job)	N/A	Shenzhen, China	Operation Manager
29	Male	2014	(MA) Banking and Finance	Bachelor degree from a Chinese university (Programme: International Trade)		Customer Manager, in China (current job)	N/A	Tianjin, China	Customer Manager
30	Female	2013	(MBA) Marketing	Bachelor degree from a Chinese university (Programme:		A job in media planning, in China	A job in customer management, in China; a job as	Shanghai, China	Account Manager

				Computer Science and Technology); Study 1 year in the UK (Exeter) for language and Diploma			account manager, in China (current job)		
31	Male	2012	(LLM) International Commercial and Business Law	Bachelor degree from a Chinese university (Programme: The Science of Law)		Civic servant, in China (current job)	N/A	Prefer not to say the exact city, but in his hometown, China	Civic Servant
32	Female	2013	(MSc) Banking and Finance	Bachelor degree from a Chinese university (Programme: Marketing)		Industry analyst, in China	After the first job, she worked freelance in China for a period, and then did another job as an industry analyst, in China.	Jilin, China	Not working
33	Female	2013	(MBA) Banking and Finance	Bachelor degree from a Chinese university (Programme: Business English); 1-year working experience.		Senior Risk Consultant, in China (current job)	N/A	Guangzhou, China	Senior Risk Consultant
34	Female	2012	(MA) Business and Marketing	Study 2 years at a Chinese college (programme: Economics, Trade and Management) for Diploma; Study 3 years at a Chinese university for Bachelor Degree (Part-		A job in marketing, in China	Marketing manager, in China (current job)	Shanghai, China	Marketing Manager

				time, programme: Advertisement Science). Have around 10-year working experience.					
35	Female	2013	(BSc) Banking and Finance	Study 2 years at a Chinese university (Programme: Finance)	(MA) Comparative Business Economics (University College London, UCL)	Management Trainee, in China (current job)	N/A	Beijing, China	Management Trainee
36	Male	2014	(BSc) Accounting and Finance	Study 2 years at a Chinese university (Programme: Business Administration Accounting); Study at Sheffield International College for preparation programme	(MSc) International Financial Analysis (University of Glasgow)	Teacher, in China (current job)	N/A	Nanning, China	Teacher
37	Male	2011	(LLM) International Commercial and Business Law	For Bachelor degree, Study 4 years at a Chinese University (Programme: Politics and Administration); For Master's degree, Study 3 years at a Chinese university (Programme: International Law), Dissertation for this Master's degree in		Attorney-at-Law, in China	Another job as attorney-at-law, in China, before current job	Shanghai, China	Attorney-at-Law

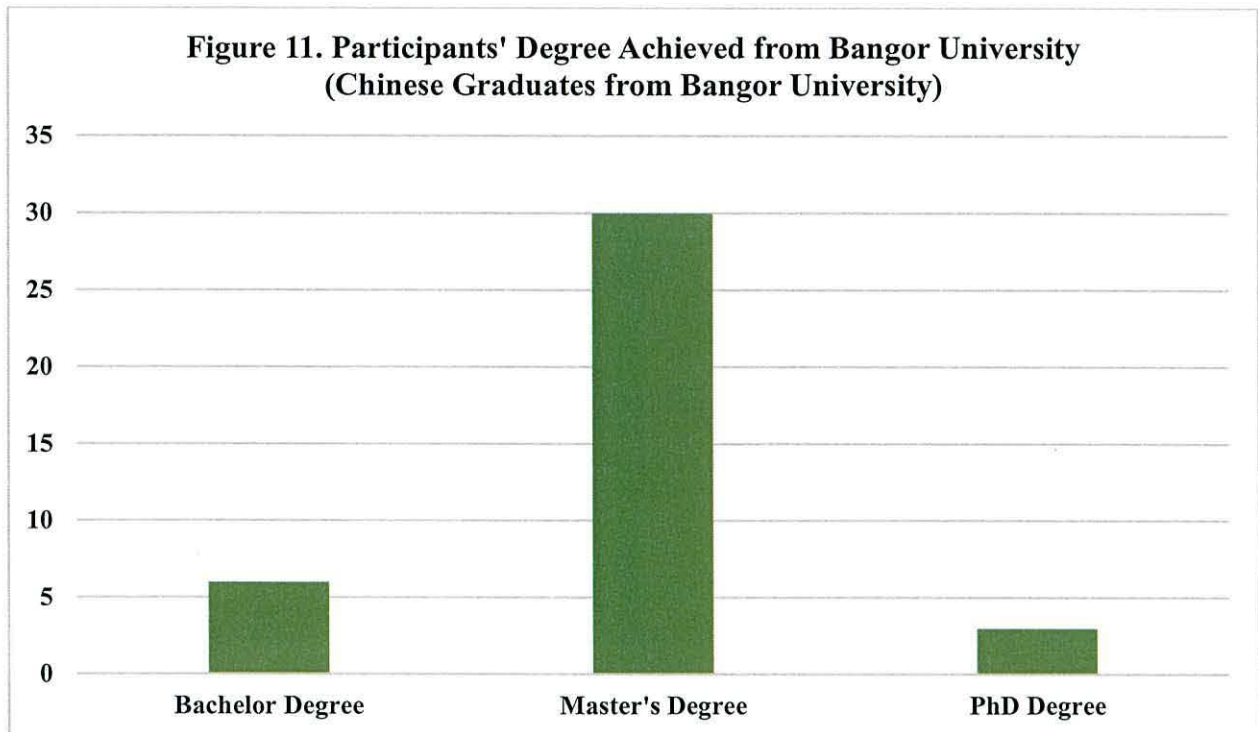
				China was finished after he finished his study in Bangor.					
38	Male	2016	(PhD) Computer Science	For Bachelor degree, study 4 years at a Chinese university (Programme: Computer Science); For Master's degree, study at Bangor University, (MSc) Computer Systems. Have working experience.		N/A (He was looking for job opportunities in the UK.)	N/A	Bangor, the UK	Unemployed
39	Female	2016	(PhD) Finance	For Bachelor degree, Study 4 years at a Chinese university (Programme: Psychology); For Master's degree, Study 3 years at a Chinese university (Programme: Psychology); Study at Bangor University for another Master's degree, (MSc) Finance.		Postdoctor, in China (current job)	N/A	Chengdu, China	Postdoctor

Among the 39 Chinese graduates from Bangor University who participated in this research, there were 24 male participants and 15 female participants. Regarding their graduation years from Bangor University (Figure 10), the majority of the participants graduated after the year 2010, with only 5 Chinese graduates who graduated from Bangor University before the year 2010 taking part in this research. There are two reasons which may explain this phenomenon. First, the number of Chinese students who study in Bangor University in each year from the year 2010 onward is larger than the number in each year before the year 2010. Secondly, the invitation to take part in the research was sent to the Chinese graduates via email by the Alumni Office. The email addresses of the Chinese graduates, especially who graduate in the early years, might have been changed over the years. As a result, they might not see the invitation email.



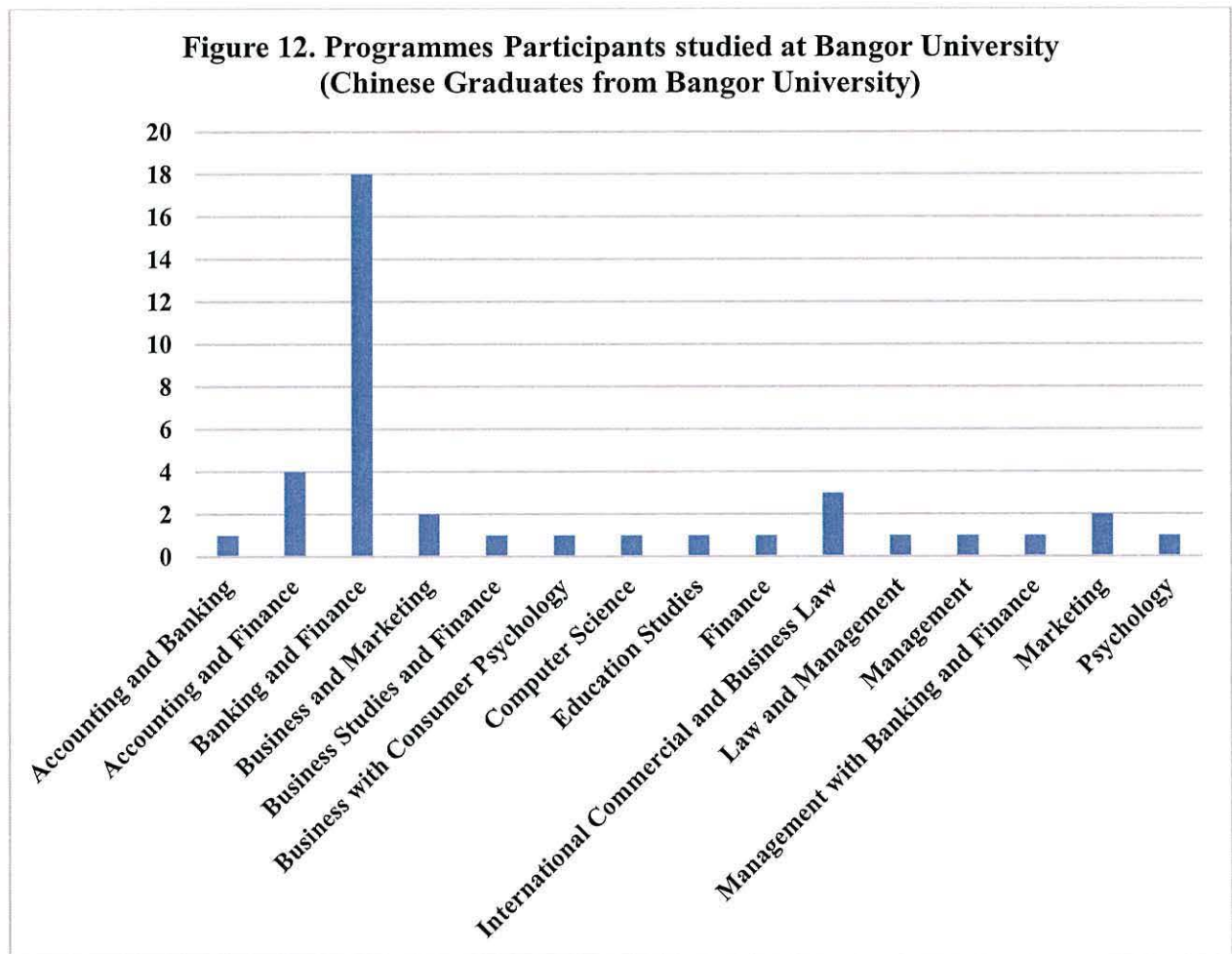
Regarding these Chinese graduates' final degree achieved from Bangor University (Figure 11) there were 6 participants who achieved Bachelor degree, 30 participants who achieved Master's degree, and 3 participants who achieved PhD degree. Among the 30 participants who achieved a Master's degree, 2 Chinese graduates also studied at Bangor University during their undergraduate study period. Among the 6 participants who achieved a Bachelor degree from

Bangor University, 5 of them went directly to other UK universities to study for their Master's degree, and 1 participant chose to study in Italy after study at Bangor University. Regarding the participants who achieved a PhD degree from Bangor University, 1 of them also studied at Bangor University for a Bachelor degree, and 2 of them also studied at Bangor University for their Master's degree.



In terms of the programmes these Chinese graduates studied at Bangor University (Figure 12), 18 of them studied in banking and finance, 4 of them studied in accounting and finance, 3 of them studied in international commercial and business law, 2 of them studied in business and marketing, and 2 of them studied in marketing. For each of the programmes of accounting and banking, business studies and finance, business with consumer psychology, computer science, education studies, finance, law and management, management, management with banking and finance, marketing, and psychology, there was one Chinese graduate studied in one of the programmes. It can be seen that although the population of this research were the Chinese graduates from Bangor University in different disciplines, most of those who would like to participate in this research were in business and finance disciplines, which reflected the fact that a large proportion of the Chinese graduates from Bangor University were in business and

finance disciplines. Wu and Morgan (2011) also point out that in course selection, international students from China target a few ‘hot’ subjects such as engineering, business and banking.



When conducting the interviews, a face-to-face method was adopted, where possible. By using face-to-face interviews, the interviewer can get the richest sources of knowledge not only through the conversation with the interviewee, but also from the interviewee’s facial expressions, gestures and body language (Brinkmann, 2014). However, in this research, most of the interviews were ultimately not conducted via the face-to-face method because of the long distance between the interviewer and interviewees. Under this circumstance, the interviews were conducted using telephone, Skype voice chat, QQ voice chat or WeChat voice message. According to Edwards and Holland (2013), the advantages of telephone interviews are that it is cheaper, faster and safer. In addition, using telephone interviews allows a wider geographical spread between interviewer and interviewee (Edwards & Holland, 2013). However, without face-to-face contact with interviewees, information from their appearance and non-verbal

communication cannot be gained, which is a disadvantage of telephone interviews (Edwards & Holland, 2013). As a result, when using the telephone to conduct the interview, more attention should be paid not only to what the respondent says, but also to their tone and pauses, in order to identify the real meaning of their words. During the data collection stage, it was realized that the communication method without face contact with interviewees had another advantage, which had been mentioned previously. It might enable the participants to feel relaxed and comfortable when talking about sensitive topics or some bad things.

With regard to the length of each interview, Weiss (1994) points out that the interviews conducted in most survey studies should be kept to an hour or less, however, the duration of qualitative interviews can be as long as eight hours with breaks. For this research, considering the contents of the interviews, before conducting the interviews it was expected that each interview would last 30 to 45 minutes, in order to sufficiently collect the abundant information and avoid fatigue of the interviewees and maintain accuracy of the data collected. When contacting the participants before the interviews, they were told the expected length of each interview was 30 to 45 minutes. In order to ensure the interviewees would have sufficient time for the interviews, the time for the interviews was always arranged at the interviewees' convenience. In addition, when the interviewees wanted to talk more, which might make the interviews longer than 45 minutes, the interviewer was very happy to extend the interview time in order to get sufficient information from the interview. In reality, the length of interviews varied depending on the conversation between the interviewer and the interviewee. The shortest interview lasted about 20 minutes, and the longest was over 2 hours. Most of the interviews lasted around 45 to 60 minutes. According to Weiss (1994, p.56), it is hard to 'develop a coherent account in an interview of under half an hour', however, in this research, it was found that the 20-minute interview provided a lot of information for the research.

During the interviews, open questions were mainly asked, as this can give respondents the opportunity to answer in their own terms, and allows for the generation of unusual responses (Bryman & Bell, 2007). In addition, since open questions do not suggest to the respondents any certain kind of answers, it can help to reveal respondents' 'levels of knowledge' and their 'understanding of issues' (Bryman & Bell, 2007, p.259). The questions asked during the interviews with the Chinese graduates from Bangor University included, for example, what skills have you obtained from your study in Bangor University? What was your career expectation when you graduated? Which method did you used to find your job? How do you describe your current employment situation? In addition, closed questions were also used in

the interviews, but following each closed question, there was an open question to explore more information. For example, when discussing underemployment, the interviewee might be asked 'do you think your current job can be done by a person without your degree or by a person without your skills?' and after the response from the interviewee, he/she was asked 'why do you think your job can (not) be done by a person without your degree or by a person without your skills?' The question list used when conducting the interview with Chinese graduates from Bangor University is provided in Appendix 4. The interview questions were initially listed in English, and then the whole question list was translated into Chinese by the researcher, who is competent in both English and Chinese, in order to be used when the participants chose to be interviewed in Chinese. Before conducting the interviews with the Chinese graduates from Bangor University, two pilot interviews were conducted with two friends of the researcher, who were Chinese graduates from two other UK universities, in order to test whether the interview questions were appropriate to be understood by the Chinese graduates and whether the interview questions were sufficient to achieve the data needed. Besides, it was also a process for the researcher to practice the procedure of conducting the interviews, and reveal any potential problems during interviews. The two participants of the pilot interviews were chosen as convenient. After these two pilot interviews, it was believed that the interview questions were suitable and the researcher was ready for conducting the following interviews.

Appendix 5 provides the question list used for the interviews with relevant members of staff from Bangor University. It includes the questions for all 3 members of staff who have different positions and different work responsibilities, so some of the questions may not be relevant to all the staff who participated in this research.

Regarding the language used in the interviews, both English and Chinese were adopted. Although the graduates involved in this research are all Chinese, they can all speak English, because they all have the experience of studying and living in the UK for a period. However, their abilities to fluently use English to fully express their opinions vary. In addition, some graduates may not have the opportunity to use the English language often in their life and work after they graduated, so their English language skills may not be as good as before. What is more, the participants may prefer to use English or Chinese in the interviews for their own reasons. As a result, before the interviews, the participants chose whether they would like to use English or Chinese to communicate during the interview. During the data collection process, all the Chinese graduates from Bangor University who participated in this research chose to use Chinese. According to Yang (2011), by using the mother tongue,

misunderstandings could be eliminated to the greatest extent and the comprehension of issues could be deepened. However, some participants also used some English words or expressions during the interviews. One of the participants chose to use English to answer some specific questions, as that the telephone interview was conducted when the participant was at home with parents, and the participant preferred that the parents did not know the participant's answers to some specific questions. After the interviews, the information gathered was translated into English after transcribing the data. Regarding the interviews with the relevant staff from Bangor University, 1 of the 3 interviews was conducted in Chinese, the choice of the participant. The other 2 interviews were conducted in English.

When recording the data during the interviews, audio recording and notes taking were used together. According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2012), utilizing both of these methods to record interview data is beneficial. Denscombe (2014) points out that audio recordings are relied on by most face-to-face interviewers. As it provides a permanent record, which is fairly complete (Denscombe, 2014). Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2012) indicate that notes taking during the interview provide a back-up in case the audio-recording does not work. Taking notes during the interview can also be helpful to maintain the interviewer's concentration, and show the interviewee that his/her answers are important to the interviewer (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012). In addition, by making notes, the interviewer's own thoughts during the interview can be recorded, and factors that cannot be recorded by audio-recording, such as facial expression or non-verbal cues from the interviewee, can be recorded in the notes (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012). During the data collection process, before each interview started, the interviewee was asked whether audio-recording could be used, and was assured that the only aim of the audio-recording was to maintain a complete and accurate record of data for the research, and it would not be used for any other purpose. If the interviewee preferred not to be audio recorded, then only notes were taken during the interview to record the data.

Regarding the time horizon of this research, this is cross-sectional, 'the study of a particular phenomenon (or phenomena) at a particular time' (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012, p.190). Most of the interviews were conducted between August 2015 and May 2016. However, the last two interviews with the Chinese graduates from Bangor University were conducted in January and February 2017, as it was not easy to get participants who had achieved a PhD degree from Bangor University. Each participant was interviewed once, although there might be a stop within an interview (the stop might be about 1 hour, or even 1 day). Since it is not a longitudinal study, it cannot track what changed and developed during the data collection period regarding

the careers of the Chinese graduates from Bangor University. There is the possibility that some participants may have changed their job after they were interviewed and before this thesis is finished, and participants who were unemployed when they were interviewed may be employed after the interview, the participants who were outside the labour force when they were interviewed may start to look for a job, or they may be employed before this thesis is finished. Although this is a limitation of this research, change and development of Chinese graduates' careers in the past were asked during the interviews. As a result, how the Chinese graduates' socioeconomic background and their knowledge, skills and degrees from the UK can influence the change and development of their careers can be found; and how the different political economies and national labour market institutional contexts affect the change and development of their careers can also be seen. Change and development of the career can especially be found in Chinese graduates who graduated some years ago and those Chinese graduates who had work experiences before they studied in the UK, because they had more labour market experience than recent graduates who did not have any work experience.

Data Analysis

According to Anderson (2012), the data analysis process involves four key steps, which are understanding and assessing the information collected, reducing the information collected into manageable proportions, exploring key themes and patterns, and formulating meaningful conclusions. According to these four key steps, after each interview, the data collected was summarized. The audio-recorded data was transcribed, and since the notes taken during the interview might be too succinct and not easily understood after a long time, and they might in very poor handwriting which might not be identified easily at a later time, it was also necessary to transcribe these notes. After the transcribing process, if the transcribed data was in Chinese as the interviews were conducted in Chinese, the data was translated into English. Then, a summary of the information was generated as understanding and assessing the information collected. For the second step, a memo which included data from the interview and the researcher's thoughts and ideas about the data was produced, with a clear distinction in the memo between these different parts (Anderson, 2012). Concerning the storage of this data, all of the data gathered and the information generated were stored electronically in the computer

and USB memory stick, and a hard copy was also kept in a file, in order to avoid any loss of data. After these, the data was coded and categorised.

Grounded theory was considered here, which is by far the most widely used framework for qualitative data analysis (Bryman, 2012). According to Anderson (2012), by using grounded theory, the categorization and coding of data will be generated from the data itself, rather than being affected by prior theories or frameworks. Bryman (2012) points out that in grounded theory, coding can be seen as one of the most central processes. There are three types of coding practices, which are open coding, axial coding and selective coding, which are different levels of coding (Bryman, 2012), and these could be considered when analysing data. In the end, a conclusion will be formulated. However, there are some criticisms concerning grounded theory. According to Bryman (2012, p.574-575), there are seven points of criticisms. First, whether researchers can ignore the relevant theories or concepts that they have already realized until quite a late stage of analysis process is questionable; secondly, researchers are often required to clearly demonstrate the possible implications of their planned research, which is 'frequently disdained' in grounded theory; thirdly, carrying out a research with grounded theory has practical difficulties; fourthly, 'whether grounded theory in many instances really results in theory' is somewhat questionable; fifthly, although there is a large amount of literature about grounded theory, it is still not clear on certain points (such as the differences between categories and concepts); sixthly, by adopting grounded theory, researchers are invited to 'fragment their data by coding the data into discrete chunks', but some people think this will lead to 'a loss of a sense of context and of narrative flow'; finally, 'the presence of competing accounts of the ingredients of grounded theory does not make it easy to characterize it or to establish how to use it' (Bryman, 2012, p.574-575).

In this research, before data collection and data analysis, a large amount of relevant literature was reviewed which provided ideas, and the relevant theories, human capital theory, institutional theories and social mobility theory, were already discussed which can direct this research; as a result, prior knowledge and the relevant theories informed the data collection and analysis; and the 'pure' grounded theory was not used during data analysis. However, the concept of grounded theory can remind the researcher to keep an open mind when analysing the data, so it can be said that 'partial' grounded theory is applied.

For this research, there are many different categories, such as 'employment situation', which was generated from the aim of this research (Anderson, 2012); 'degree type', which was derived

from the different characteristics of the enquiry (Anderson, 2012); ‘socioeconomic background’, which was resulted from the literature review and ‘will be reflected in the question structure’ that had been used (Anderson, 2012, p.215). Regarding coding the data, for example, the above categories were coded as ‘Emp Sit’, ‘Deg Typ’ and ‘Soc Bac’ in sequence. Thematic analysis was used in this research, and the themes emerged based on the various theories discussed above (human capital theory, institutional theories, and social mobility theory). The Framework approach, ‘an approach that has been developed at the National Centre for Social Research in the UK’ (Bryman, 2012, p.579) was adopted to aid thematic analysis. According to Ritchie et al. (2003, p.219), it is ‘a matrix based method for ordering and synthesising data’. Table 2 shows an example of the Framework approach, taking ‘social mobility theory’ as the main theme. Under this main theme, there are three subthemes, including ‘socioeconomic background’, ‘education’, and ‘socioeconomic attainment’. As a result, the relevant data generated from different interviews can be inserted into the appropriate cells.

Theme: Social Mobility Theory			
	Socioeconomic Background	Education	Socioeconomic Attainment
Interview 1			
Interview 2			
Interview 3			
...			
Interview 30			
...			

Table 2. An Example of the Framework Approach

Ethical Considerations

According to Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2012, p.680), research ethics refers to ‘the standards of the researcher’s behaviour in relation to the rights of those who become the subject of a research project, or who are affected by it’. Overall, since this research is conducted to

understand the phenomenon of graduate employment among Chinese graduates from Bangor University, the potential for harm is relatively low.

One potential ethical issue in this research is if the personal information of the graduates from Bangor University involved in this research were to be revealed. In order to deal with this potential ethical issue, before conducting each interview, the commitment of confidentiality was given to the interviewee, and it was promised that the data gathered from the interview would only be used for the purpose of this research. In addition, 'the nature of the research', including the purpose and progress of this research; 'what participants can expect', including the data to be gathered, methods to be used for data gathering, how long it was expected to take for the data collection with the participant, and the right to withdraw from the research at any time; the 'arrangements with regard to anonymity and confidentiality' and 'subsequent use of data' were all briefly provided to the interviewee (Anderson, 2012, p.81). A study information sheet containing all the above points was provided to the interviewee, and the contact details of the researcher were also provided on the study information sheet, including email and WeChat, so the participant could directly contact the researcher. Appendix 2 shows an example of a study information sheet. Since the data to be gathered in different interviews varies (for example, the questions asked to the Chinese graduates who participated in this research were different from those asked to the university staff members), the study information sheet was tailored for different participants. However, In addition, a consent form was signed by each interviewee before the interview. If the interview was not conducted by face-to-face method, the study information sheet and the consent form were emailed to the participant before the interview.

Bryman (2012) points out that one advantage of informed consent forms is that whereby respondents are provided the opportunity to be sufficiently informed about the relevant information of the research, and researchers can keep the signed records of consent from participants in case there are any subsequently raised issues. However, the main problem concerning informed consent forms is that the requirement to sign the forms may increase the participants' concerns, rather than minimizing their concerns; as a result, the potential is that participants may decide not to be involved in the research (Bryman, 2012). Although there is the possibility of losing potential participants, it is still necessary to use the informed consent forms before conducting the interviews, as it can be beneficial for both the researcher and the participants.

Appendix 3 contains an example of the consent form used during the data collection period. For different participants, the consent form may also be different, due to the fact that some items listed in appendix 3 were not relevant to some participants, for example, item 11 was not relevant to the staff members from Bangor University who participated in this research, so the irrelevant items were deleted from the consent form for those participants.

Concerning the ethical issues during data collection, Gray (2004, p.235) indicates that for interviews, the central ethical issue refers to the fact that 'participants should not be harmed or damaged in any way by the research', and this was always maintained for the research.

Moreover, during the stage of data collecting, data processing and storing, and data analysing and findings reporting, the 'maintenance of objectivity' always existed (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012, p.236), which means that the data was collected, recorded, analysed, and presented accurately and objectively.

Conclusion

This research explored work and employment experience and destinations of Chinese graduates from Bangor University (in Wales, the UK). Their background, their qualification and skills, their career expectations, their current employment situations and actual labour market experience, and their current locations were all explored, in order to conduct in-depth qualitative research.

In this chapter, methodology in relevant research, research approach, research strategy, data collection, data handling and analysis, and ethical considerations have been discussed. This research adopts the interpretivist, inductive, qualitative approach. Bangor University is the single case study unit of analysis in this research. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from Chinese graduates from Bangor University and members of staff from Bangor University whose work was relevant to Chinese students/graduates or their careers.

The next chapter will show the findings generated from this research, and relevant explanation will be provided. Then, based on these findings and the analysis of the relevant existing literature, discussion and conclusions will be generated in the last chapter of this thesis.

CHAPTER 4. FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter provides the findings from 42 interviews (39 interviews with Chinese graduates from Bangor University and 3 interviews with relevant staff members), in order to answer the main research question, *‘what is the relationship between the human capital of Chinese graduates from Bangor University and their labour market experience?’* According to the conceptual framework for this research, which is provided in Chapter 2, this chapter has three parts, which explain the socioeconomic background of Chinese graduates from Bangor University, their educational attainment and career expectations (human capital factors), and their labour market experience and socioeconomic attainment. In the first part, the exploration of the relationship between their socioeconomic background and their education attainment, and the relationship between their socioeconomic background and their socioeconomic attainment can answer sub-question 1, *‘how does the background of Chinese graduates from Bangor University affect their job destinations?’* In this part, the influences from their parents and others on their education in the UK and the influences from their own experience on their education in the UK will be explained. In addition, how the socioeconomic background affects their work experience will be explored, which also includes those Chinese graduates who were self-employed when they were interviewed. In the second part, the exposition of Chinese graduates’ educational attainment and career expectations can be linked to sub-question 2, *‘what are the qualifications, skills and career expectations of Chinese graduates from Bangor University?’* In this part, the reasons why Chinese graduates from Bangor University who participated in this research chose to study in the UK, their expectations from the experience of studying in the UK, their achievements from studying in the UK, their future career expectations after they finished their study in the UK will all be provided. In the third part, an explanation of their labour market experience and socioeconomic attainment is related to sub-question 3, *‘what are the current employment situations and actual labour market experience of Chinese graduates from Bangor University?’* In this part, the job-hunting experience and work experience of the Chinese graduates from Bangor University who participated in this research will be discussed.

This chapter provides the findings based mainly on the interviews. In addition, there is also some secondary data from news articles and statistics. There is no discussion involving the comparison and contrast with existing literature, as this will be provided in the discussion and

conclusion chapter. From these 42 interviews, the information gathered regarding the macro-environment of the labour market, especially about labour market segmentation and institutional varieties of political economy is limited, the reason being that most of the information provided by the interviewees during the interviews focused on their own experience and from a personal perspective. However, based on the limited information gathered from the interviews regarding the macro-environment of the labour market, the interpretation of the impact of political economy factors on the experience of Chinese graduates from UK universities, including changes to the UK visa system, and the legacy of the 2008 financial crisis will be provided. Further discussion regarding the macro-environment of the labour market, including labour market segmentation and institutional varieties of political economy, will be provided in the discussion and conclusion chapter.

Socioeconomic Background

In this part, factors that affect the Chinese graduates' education in the UK will be provided, both from an external aspect (influences from their parents and others) and an internal aspect (influences from their own experience). In addition, the influences of *guanxi* on the labour market experience of Chinese graduates from Bangor University, including both the experience of job-hunting and experience in the workplace, will be explained. At the end of this section, the effect of socioeconomic background on the self-employed graduates will be assessed. The findings in this section can be used to answer sub-question 1, *'how does the background of Chinese graduates from Bangor University affect their job destinations?'*

Influences from Parents and Others on Participants' Education in the UK

Regarding the socio-economic backgrounds which affect the participants' decision to study in the UK, their parents play significant roles. For some of the participants, their parents act as the planners for their education in the UK. For these participants, the decision to study in the UK is mainly made by their parents. For example, a participant said,

'(My) family (i.e. her parents) let me study abroad....I, at that time, had no idea.'
(Graduate 32, Female, MSc, Banking and Finance)

A participant who achieved a Master's Degree from Bangor University said that his parents forced him to study for the Master's degree, and when he talked about what if there was no force from his parents for this Master's degree, he said,

'I definitely would not study for it.' (Graduate 19, Male, MSc, Banking and Finance)

Another participant talked about the reason for his study in the UK as,

'At that time, (I) came here, ...what was thought was relatively, um, a little bit simple. That is to say, the family hoped (I) went abroad, (and) could 'plate gold', (and) then went back after the 'gold plating' ...' (Graduate 26, Male, MSc, Banking and Finance)

He pointed out that the decision regarding his study abroad was mainly made by his parents. His own willingness only occupied a small proportion.

When another participant talked about the reasons why he came to study in the UK, he pointed out his father's opinion first.

'Because my father didn't want me to waste the time in China, ...(so he) sent me there (i.e. to the UK) ...' (Graduate 36, Male, BSc, Accounting and Finance)

Similarly, when he talked about the reasons why he chose the programme of accounting and finance, he also referred to his father's opinion first.

'Because my father thought (it) had a quite good prospect....' (Graduate 36, Male, BSc, Accounting and Finance)

Regarding his father's influence on his education background of accounting, he said:

'That is to say, now, my...background of keeping studying accounting...is also because...he insist. He said (that I) need to keep studying, studying accounting. He is very insistent, so I still keep...studying (accounting).' (Graduate 36, Male, BSc, Accounting and Finance)

It can be seen that his father played an important role in his education.

In addition, parents' attitude towards their children's education in the UK can have a significant influence, although the decision about their children's education in the UK might not purely be made by them. For example, a participant said,

'At that time, after I finished my undergraduate study, ...there was a, ...roommate who decided to come back at that time....(This) influenced my, that is to say, mood, or my goal. I, I also wanted to come back to China. However, that is to say, in my parents' eyes, (they) thought...(If) I came back after I finished my undergraduate study, it was different from finishing the study for a Master's degree. They, they thought finishing undergraduate study, it was, counted as that kind of feeling of accomplishing nothing. Then, because of their, that is to say, this kind of attitude, ...in the end, it was still decided to come back after I studied, studied for the Master's degree.' (Graduate 7, Female, MA, Banking and Finance)

In addition, for some of the participants, their parents act as the supporters for their education in the UK. The decision about pursuing higher education in the UK was made by the participants themselves or made by them together with their parents. The parents provided support for their children's education in the UK. For example, parents provided financial support to their children, especially when their children couldn't afford tuition fees and living fees by themselves. Actually, about 93% of Chinese students attending foreign universities are self-funded (Chen, 2011), so financial support for young Chinese students from their parents is very important for their study in the UK. Even for those Chinese students who had work experience before they studied in the UK, the financial support from parents might still be very important, as tuition fees and living fees in the UK are relatively high.

Regarding the source of fees for the overseas education, a participant, who had worked for over 5 years before he came to study in the UK, said,

'A part from myself, a part from parents, and a part was borrowed. However, the money borrowed has been completely paid back in the first three years of the work.' (Graduate 17, Male, MBA, Banking and Finance)

Another participant, who also had work experience before he came to study in the UK, pointed out the financial support from family. He said,

'Basically, (from) my work, (I) didn't accumulate so much money....It was, (from) the family.' (Graduate 38, Male, PhD, Computer Science)

Financial support from parents can be seen as the economic capital of Chinese graduates from UK universities, which makes their overseas studies possible, when they are self-funded but without sufficient incomes and savings.

Moreover, there is also a 'soft influence' from parents on the participants' decision on their education. Parents may not require their children to study for a degree or in a subject area, and they may not even suggest this. However, what parents said previously or how they behaved may affect their children's decision on their education. This can be seen as the social and cultural capital. A participant who worked as an IELTS teacher when she was interviewed said,

'My mother used to be a teacher for a short period, but this is...one of the reasons why I choose to be...choose the programme of education studies. Because at that time, when I was a child, she implanted the idea that becoming a teacher was pretty impressive.' (Graduate 1, Female, MA, Education Studies)

This participant became a teacher after she graduated from Bangor University. It can be seen that the words or behaviour of parents, which may not be explicitly intended to guide or require their children to choose a certain path in their education or career, can not only influence their children's choice of education, but also the career of their children.

Among the participants in this research, most of them hold a higher level of degree than their parents. The first reason for this phenomenon is that Chinese parents attach considerable importance to their children's education. For example, the parental educational level of the participant (Graduate 19, Male, MSc, Banking and Finance), who was forced by his parents into his Master's degree as mentioned before, was middle school. In addition, a participant, who got a Bachelor degree from Bangor University and a Master's degree from another UK university, said,

'My parents attach great importance to the education. As long as I want to study, they would provide me full support....This is always a very certain thing.' (Graduate 20, Male, BSc, Accounting and Banking)

His father holds a Bachelor degree, and his mother holds a Master's degree. He also said,

'My father even hope me to study for a PhD degree, but I don't want to.' (Graduate 20, Male, BSc, Accounting and Banking)

The second reason refers to the expansion of higher education. There are many people in China who hold a Bachelor Degree or even a Master's Degree. For many people, obtaining a higher level of degree is deemed as an important route to get a better job. Many students and many parents believed that a Master's Degree could enhance the competitiveness in the labour market, and this is one of the reasons for pursuing a Master's degree.

'To study for a Master's degree, it was, (I) considered... (I) wanted to... have a certificate of a Master's degree, (and) it would be easier when looked for jobs, or something...' (Graduate 33, Female, MBA, Banking and Finance)

A participant, who said that both she and her parents would all like it if she studied for a Master's degree, pointed out that,

'Because regarding the situation in China, (if) you don't study for a Master's degree, (it will be) very difficult to find a good job.' (Graduate 35, Female, BSc, Banking and Finance)

However, this is not always the case. Some graduates with Master's Degrees from Bangor University found that when they applied for jobs in China, it was more difficult for them to get jobs than it was for those who had graduated from Chinese universities with Bachelor Degrees. This will be explained at a later stage, when discussing the labour market experience of Chinese graduates from UK universities.

Besides the influences from the participants' parents, other people may also affect some participants' decision on studying in the UK.

'At that time, ...there is no any ideas about going abroad. Then, afterwards, there is, there is a relative who recommended...' (Graduate 14, Male, MSc, Banking and Finance)

'This aspect was also influenced by other, other, ah, ...some people around (me). For instance, (I) have, have a cousin who had gone to the UK, previously. (He) studied abroad there. After (he) came back, he told me many things over there. Then, ...probably, at the time of (studying in the) middle school....at that time, it had a

relatively big influence on me.' (Graduate 31, Male, LLM, International Commercial and Business Law)

Regarding the choice of programme studied at Bangor University, a participant identified the influence from others. She chose marketing at the beginning, but changed to banking and finance in the end.

'Actually, at the beginning when I chose the programme, what I chose is marketing at the earliest....But, but afterwards, because of,...it was, the disturbance from others. It was,...because...none of the people around me studied this programme, and,...that is to say, that, Banking (and) Finance at Bangor (University) is relatively good....the persuasion from others, in addition, plus that at that time, (I) was relatively young, then,...(I) also didn't have too much own opinion, so...(I) changed to this programme.' (Graduate 8, Female, MSc, Banking and Finance)

Similarly, a participant, who studied marketing for her Bachelor degree in China, but changed to study banking and finance for her Master's degree in the UK, talked about the reason why she chose the programme as,

'It was...all the people studied finance, (and) then I also studied finance....Relatively sequacious...' (Graduate 32, Female, MSc, Banking and Finance)

Encouragement from parents and others when pursuing higher education in the UK and the influences from others when choosing the programme of study can be seen as the social capital of Chinese graduates from Bangor University.

In addition, another participant, who had not studied a business related discipline for his Bachelor degree, chose to study banking and finance for a Master's degree.

'This is also related to the time. Don't you know in the year 2007, how popular the stock is at that time?...In the year 2007, many people, many people all thought that, 'wow, there was a good way out by studying finance', so, at that time many people all, all went to study finance.' (Graduate 10, Male, MSc, Banking and Finance)

For this participant, the reason for choosing to study banking and finance was related to the macro-environment.

Influences from Participants' Own Experience on Their Education in the UK

The influences from parents and others on Chinese graduates' decision to study in the UK is more obvious in the case of young people who do not have any labour market experience, which can be seen as 'external factors'. However, for those who have long time work experience, factors affecting their decision to study in the UK may be internal, from themselves. For example, a participant who had over ten years work experience before coming to study in the UK said,

'One reason was that studying abroad was always one of my dreams. Then, ...when I graduated from the university, it should be said that it was not equipped regarding the economic condition. However, after I worked for, er, over ten, ten years, there was an accumulation in...economy. This was the first (reason). The second part was, I personally felt that in my work, it should be said that the, the wish of studying abroad became stronger and stronger, because of the need of the work. One was that, the improvement of my...English language, the other one was the certificate of a Master's degree's that, that, it's power. All of these were the reasons.' (Graduate 11, Male, MSc, Accounting and Finance)

Compared with young Chinese graduates whose education in the UK was planned by parents, those Chinese graduates who had long term work experience were usually clearer about the aims of their study in the UK, the expectations of the achievements from their education in the UK, and the future career after they finished their study. In addition, because of the internal willingness on their part, they could make better use of the study in the UK than those who came to study in the UK relatively aimlessly.

Influences of Guanxi on Participants' Labour Market Experience

Regarding the influences of their socio-economic background on their employment, guanxi has an obvious effect on the employment experience of Chinese graduates from Bangor University. Guanxi, an interpersonal relationship, is a kind of social capital. It can influence both the job-

hunting experience of Chinese graduates from UK universities, and their experience in the workplace.

Influences of Guanxi on Job-hunting

The influences of guanxi on job-hunting may not necessarily only refer to the direct help to get a job, but can also be used to get job information or obtain a reference. Some of the Chinese graduates who participated in this research benefited from guanxi when they obtained their employment. For example,

'My first internship, it was introduced by a friend...my father's friend...' (Graduate 27, Female, MSc, Banking and Finance)

'(My current job) is recommended by the previous colleague.' (Graduate 30, Female, MBA, Marketing)

'...it was...recommended by the client(s). It was, the clients who I serviced previously. Then, when (they) knew some of my thoughts, they would recommended some...attorney-at-laws or...law firms in their...industry...which (they were) familiar with, and have the plan of recruitment...' (Graduate 37, Male, LL.M, International Commercial and Business Law)

'At that time, this job was introduced to me by one of my good friends....Because...one of her friends was...the financial manager in the company, previously. Then...introduced me to have an interview....For me, the action of clicking it on the website and clicking to submit the CV was omitted. Perhaps, I was a step faster than the others, that is to say, (they) interviewed me first...' (Graduate 12, Male, MSc, Banking and Finance)

In addition, some participants knew somebody else who had experience of studying at UK universities, and after that, going back to China and getting a job with the help of parents or others. For example, a participant said:

'(I know) many (people like that)Something similar to the family business make the most of the situation. Then, or having, um, the partnership, such as, it is, maybe having business dealings previously (with the parents), like this, then, maybe help him/her arrange the job, like this. Um...or there are also some (people) who may get some opportunities of internship with the help from parents. Then, um, after his/her internship ends, you can look for some other opportunities. This kind is also possible. There are some (people) can like this.' (Graduate 5, Female, MSc Banking and Finance)

Among the 39 Chinese graduates from Bangor University who participated in this research, there is a participant (Graduate 6, Male, MA, Business and Marketing) who worked in his family business directly after graduating from Bangor University, without experiencing the process of looking for a job.

For some of the participants, although they found their jobs without the help of their parents, they said that their parents had tried to help them to find jobs using their guanxi. Regarding the experience of job-hunting, a participant said that his parents helped him find jobs previously, however, he said:

'(Regarding) the previous a few jobs, I wouldn't like to go (to do) all (of them), so (I) didn't go (to do any of them), (and) then, looked for jobs by myself.' (Graduate 24, Male, MSc, Banking and Finance)

However, for some of the participants, their parents' guanxi did not help them get jobs successfully. Explaining the reason why the guanxi of his parents did not help him secure a job, one participant said:

'Because (I) studied that one year abroad....After (I) came back, many people, may be retired, or, ah, no longer at the positions, or something....Perhaps (they) could provide help previously, however, because after the one year I studied (abroad), when (I) came back, they couldn't help, instead.' (Graduate 12, Male, MSc, Banking and Finance)

Another participant, whose parents also tried to help him find a job, said that:

'...(I was) unwilling to use their Guanxi to get an entry. However, then, I accepted it, (and) also dealt with it through Guanxi. As a result, my parents didn't make it....Anyway, it was very embarrassing. Anyway, in the end, they didn't help even a little

bit....My parents...also thought...the people didn't give face. (They) also...lost face.'
(Graduate 16, Male, LLM, International Commercial and Business Law)

This participant found all of his jobs without help from his parents.

In addition, a participant pointed out that normally, help from parents does not work obviously when applying for jobs in multinational companies. She said,

Under normal circumstances, what I know...what I know is that normally, if the parents help, er...because for myself, I prefer multinational companies....so similar to this kind (of companies), this kind of aspect,...the help is not very big.' (Graduate 5, Female, MSc, Banking and Finance)

The usefulness of guanxi in finding jobs was recognized by the participants, whether guanxi is used to get substantive help, job information or a reference.

For example, when a participant talked about the influence of help from parents in finding jobs, he said,

'Actually, (if the parents) provide help, it will be much easier, to be honest.' (Graduate 12, Male, MSc, Banking and Finance)

When another participant talked about the overseas returnees finding jobs with help of parents' guanxi, he said:

'Like, this kind, this kind, it is very simple. You (have) a...background of overseas returnee, and add your...parents' guanxi,...isn't that a successful matter?' (Graduate 36, Male, BSc, Accounting and Finance)

Regarding getting jobs through the method of internal referral, a participant said,

'Because you, yourself, perhaps, have contacted with many colleagues, and so on. He/she changed to other companies....That company would have the recruitment information, which perhaps hasn't ...been put on the website. Actually...they can know this, internally. So it can be a little bit faster in this way.' (Graduate 30, Female, MBA, Marketing)

Another participant also pointed out the importance of guanxi at the time of applying for a job.

'Very important. It is, if a person, who has much strength and social influence, can refer you, then, you can be at ease, (and) can pass (it).'' (Graduate 37, Male, LLM, International Commercial and Business Law)

Influences of Guanxi in the Workplace

In addition, guanxi can also have influence in their workplaces. For example, a participant who worked in a bank in China said that when he looked for his job, his parents didn't provide him with any help, however, he said:

'After I had already entered into (the bank), then, ... (they) found somebody and informed him/her, it was, to take care of (me).'' (Graduate 29, Male, MA, Banking and Finance)

Another participant (Graduate 13, Female, MSc, Accounting and Finance) who, when she was interviewed, worked in an enterprise where her father currently worked and her mother worked before her retirement, said that in the future years if she worked in the enterprise, there could be a certain influence from her parents on her advancement.

Regarding the influence of help from parents on job-hunting and in workplaces, a participant remarked:

'Indeed, er, the people who look for jobs with the help from parents are a lot. After all, this has ...a great help for the personal development later.' (Graduate 20, Male, BSc, Accounting and Banking)

He pointed out that if in the workplace, there is somebody's own guanxi, the growth of that person can be better. Further, there was a participant who had worked as a freelancer for a period of time, and she said,

'When (I worked) freelance, ...there were other people (who) helped provide projects....Hum, schoolmate(s), and, ah, (my) father.' (Graduate 32, Female, MSc, Banking and Finance)

Self-employed Graduates

Besides those Chinese graduates from Bangor University who seek jobs after their graduation, some Chinese graduates create job opportunities by themselves. They are self-employed. Among the 39 Chinese graduates who participated in this research, 5 of them were self-employed when they were interviewed. For these self-employed graduates, financial support, an economic capital, from their parents is very important, especially for those Chinese graduates without any work experience, incomes or savings. Regarding the support from parents, a Chinese graduate who started up his own business in the UK said:

'That is, ... the most important (one) is a support in the economy.' (Graduate 26, Male, MSc, Banking and Finance)

In addition, he also pointed out other support from his parents.

'Another one, that is to say, (is) in spirit. It is, because, er, after all, there is a little bit feel of leaving my native place....The traditional parents hope the child can go back early...so regarding staying here...because they relatively support (this) ... ' (Graduate 26, Male, MSc, Banking and Finance)

When a participant was asked whether there was any help from his parents in his current business in China, he said:

'No. Ah, except the capital aspect, there was help (from parents) regarding the capital aspect.' (Graduate 24, Male, MSc, Banking and Finance)

When being asked about the source of capital for starting up the business, a Chinese graduate (Graduate 15, Male, MBA, Marketing) who started up his own business in China said a part of the capital came from himself, and a part came from his family.

Another graduates identified the importance of financial support from parents in an opposite way. He wanted to start his own business after he finished his study, but his parents preferred him to do another job. He started his own business after he went back to China, then, he said:

'(My) parents found, ... 'your side (i.e. the business) starts to become better' ... because I just started my business and I needed money, (my parents) stopped the supply of the capital.' (Graduate 2, Male, MBA, Law and Management)

Without the financial support from parents, it became difficult to continue his own business. Then he did the job which his parents preferred.

A participant was self-employed when he was interviewed. Regarding the influence of interpersonal networks in his current business, he pointed out that it was very helpful.

'Currently, the work all comes from these interpersonal network.' (Graduate 10, Male, MSc, Banking and Finance)

To conclude, regarding sub-question 1, *'How does the background of Chinese graduates from Bangor University affect their job destinations?'* the socioeconomic background of Chinese graduates from Bangor University affect their job destinations through two ways. First, their socioeconomic background affects their education in the UK. For young Chinese students who cannot afford tuition fees and living fees to study in the UK by themselves, their parents make their UK education come true by providing financial support for them, no matter whether their education in the UK is planned by their parents or planned by both themselves and their parents. In addition, suggestions from other people can also affect the Chinese students' decision to study in the UK. For Chinese students who have long term work experience, their own previous experience results in their study in the UK. By affecting education, socioeconomic background can indirectly influence the Chinese graduates' job destinations, the reason being that one's education can directly affect socioeconomic attainment. Regarding how education affects the socioeconomic attainment of Chinese graduates from UK universities, further analysis will be provided later, in the next two parts, human capital factors, labour market experience and socioeconomic attainment. The second way in which the Chinese graduates' socioeconomic background affects their job destination refers to a direct influence, where *guanxi* works. *Guanxi* not only affects their job-hunting experience, but also has influences in their workplace. In addition, for the self-employed Chinese graduates, their parents' financial support also directly affects their own business.

Human Capital Factors: Educational Attainment and Career Expectations

In this part, first, the reasons why Chinese graduates prefer to pursue their higher education in the UK will be listed. In addition, their expectations from studying in the UK will also be provided. Secondly, their achievements from studying in the UK will be explained, including degree subject knowledge, understanding and skills, generic skills and career development learning, which are three of the essential components of employability pointed out by Dacre Pool and Sewell (2007). Finally, Chinese graduates' expectations for their future career when they graduated will be provided.

Studying in the UK: Reasons and Expectations

In this section, Chinese graduates' reasons for pursuing higher education in the UK, and their expectations from studying in the UK will be provided.

Reasons for Pursuing Higher Education in the UK

Amongst the participants, a common opinion regarding higher education in the UK is the characteristic of time-saving compared with many other countries. In China, for most programmes, it takes four years to achieve a Bachelor Degree, but in many UK universities, it only takes three years. For a Master's degree, it only takes one year in the UK, which is shorter than many other countries. In addition, because of the advantage of time-saving, the cost of overseas study is smaller, accordingly. These are two of the reasons why they choose to study in the UK.

'It is one year in the UK (i.e. the study for a Master's degree). The time is relatively short, so (I) went to the UK....The main consideration was the matter of the time. (I) didn't want to stay abroad for a very long time.' (Graduate 15, Male, MBA, Marketing)

'Because...after (start to) study for the Master's degree, (in) the UK, the time is short, (and it is) speeded-up.' (Graduate 19, Male, MSc, Banking and Finance)

'Because the time to study abroad in the UK is short....It is fast to graduate.' (Graduate 33, Female, MBA, Banking and Finance)

'At that time, (I) wanted to go to other countries....At that time, (I) wanted to go to Australia, but, but, (I) couldn't go there, because the money was not enough. Then...(I) wanted to go to the US, also because the money was not enough. Then, the UK,...the money...required was not that much...' (The 'money' here refers to the amount required to be held in a bank account in order to obtain the visa.) (Graduate 36, Male, BSc, Accounting and Finance)

In addition, the quality of UK HE is one of the reasons why they prefer to pursue their HE in the UK, and their considerations include the learning environment and the programme, such as rank, reputation, and what can be learned from the programmes.

'That should be, when I was in high school, (I) went to the UK in a summer camp. Then (I) felt, that learning environment, it is...atmosphere and so on, are quite good.' (Graduate 9, Female, MSc, Banking and Finance)

'The programme in this area at Bangor University...the rank is relatively high....This programme is relatively strong...so, (I) chose Bangor (University).' (Graduate 26, Male, MSc, Banking and Finance)

'I think the UK is an old capitalization nation. So, although the marketing there, perhaps, is different from that in the US, regarding the techniques of 'playing', some this kind of, ah, principles of marketing...this kind of knowledge of principles, are the same.' (Graduate 34, Female, MA, Business and Marketing)

Another reason why these participants choose to study in the UK is related to their careers. For example, a participant mentioned that one of his reasons for study in the UK was to enhance his competitiveness in employment, he said:

'Domestic graduates, university graduates' competitiveness gradually decline....So (I) chose to go to the UK....' (Graduate 19, Male, MSc, Banking and Finance)

Another participant, who had around 10 years marketing related work experience before she came to study in the UK, said:

'I...worked on marketing, so, I, in this area, I would like to do a, more, that is to say, more, that is to say, some improvement regarding the principles.' (Graduate 34, Female, MA, Business and Marketing)

Another participant, who also had work experience before he came to study in the UK, said,

'I had always been thinking about finding an opportunity to go abroad, originally. Then, (it was) because I thought, it was,...at that time, my working situation and my, that, expectation, might be somewhat inconsistent. (So) I wanted to...study for a Master's degree....I thought, study for...a qualification abroad...' (Graduate 38, Male, PhD, Computer Science)

Meanwhile, some of the young graduates, who did not have any work experiences, did not take their future career into consideration as much, and some of them did not even think about it when they considered studying in the UK. Pursuing postgraduate study after undergraduate study can be seen as the common route for the Chinese graduates who participated in this research. This can be an explanation for why they may not have a clear view about their future job before their study in the UK. They may not think too much about their future jobs, because they choose to conduct further study. For example, when a participant, who achieved both a Bachelor degree and a Master's degree in the UK, was asked whether he considered his future career when he chose to study in the UK, he said he considered it, but not too much.

'But I didn't consider too much. Because after I studied for the Bachelor degree, there was also the Master's degree. This (was), actually, the thing in the next three or four years.' (Graduate 20, Male, BSc, Accounting and Banking)

He mentioned that at that time, when he arrived at Bangor University, the thing he thought about was where he would study for his Master's degree, and what level his grade should be in order to make sure he had the opportunity to study for a good Master's degree. His consideration for the future mainly focused on his Master's degree as the next step.

Personal improvement through study abroad is also one of the reasons for pursuing higher education in the UK. As one of the participants pointed out,

'... (I) thought that (through) study abroad, ...can...each aspect can be improved a little.'
(Graduate 35, Female, BSc, Banking and Finance)

Furthermore, access to UK universities for a Master's degree is relatively easy, which has been treated as another reason for studying in the UK. In China, in most cases, students need to take exams in order to get the opportunity to study for a Master's degree; in the UK, students make an application to the study for a Master's degree using their educational background and experience.

'(I) couldn't pass the exam(s) in order to study for the Master's degree in China.'
(Graduate 29, Male, MA, Banking and Finance)

When asked about the reasons why many Chinese students would like to study in the UK for their Master's degree, a relevant staff member remarked:

'I think it is (because of) the characteristics of the educational system. Because (if you want to) study for a Master's degree in China, you should take the exams. If (you plan to) take the exams, you need to spend a very long time and energy for the preparation. Ah, then, in addition, it is, the time for the study for a Master's degree in China is relatively longer...' (Staff 1, from the Chinese office of Bangor University)

In addition, it is notable that some participants in this research have the experience of studying in both a Chinese university and a UK university during their undergraduate study period. In recent years, it is common to see cooperation between UK universities and Chinese universities. Within this cooperative relationship, the undergraduate students can study two years in China and two years in the UK, or three years in China and one year in the UK. Regarding this phenomenon, a relevant staff member said:

'...over these years, ...the cooperations are already quite a lot. There may be various cooperative projects, for example, there is this kind of cooperative project of '2+2' (students study two years in China and two years in the UK). Then, then it means that after the students graduate from high schools, maybe (their) families have already made the plan, (and) say that 'you will...study abroad, but I feel worried (if) you go there now. (I'm worried that) what university you can study at, whether your life is safe or not, whether your (English) language is OK or not.' So at first, through a, that, this kind of '2+2' course, (it) let the students make the preparation in China, firstly, no matter

the (English) language, or the independence ability, every aspect...' (Staff 1, from the Chinese office of Bangor University)

It can be seen that this kind of cooperations leaves the Chinese undergraduate students sufficient time to prepare for their overseas study. It is also notable that the cost for the total study is reduced, because the fees for study in China are less than that for study in the UK. In addition, many of the students under these cooperations receive both a certificate from the Chinese university and a certificate from the UK university, which also seems attractive.

Moreover, the history, culture and language of the UK are also attractive to some of the participants. For example, a participant said:

'The UK, (I) like the British culture....' (Graduate 35, Female, BSc, Banking and Finance)

Another participant said,

'...I would prefer the British culture, these sedimentations....Because I relatively like history, ...(I) relatively like here....Actually, I prefer the European culture, (and) then within the Europe, I think the UK is relatively special, so (I) came here.' (Graduate 30, Female, MBA, Marketing)

Compared with study in other European countries, she said:

'Because you still need to study some basic courses. At least, at least, that is to say, (in order to) study for a Master's degree, you may also need to be trained for language, or something.' (Graduate 30, Female, MBA, Marketing)

It shows that the language used during her overseas education period was one of her considerations.

Expectations from Studying in the UK

Successful graduation as the basic expectation is mentioned by some of the Chinese graduates who participated in this research.

'Firstly, it should be, Chinese, ...the students' a very common thought, that is, to get the qualification and the degree.' (Graduate 24, Male, MSc, Banking and Finance)

'Hum...actually, (I) didn't have (too many) expectations....It was...in other aspects, (I) wanted to join a basketball team, or something....(Regarding) the study (aspect), (I) didn't...have expectation at that time....It would be OK if (I) could not fail any exams.' (Graduate 29, Male, MA, Banking and Finance)

'It was, to get a certificate....It was, (I) wanted to get a degree, and that's it.' (Graduate 33, Female, MBA, Banking and Finance)

Achievements related to the study are also mentioned by some participants as the expectations from studying in the UK. A participant, who did not study in a business related area during his undergraduate study period, but came to Bangor University to study banking and finance, said,

'Because before I studied finance, I was still relatively interested in finance...but (it) was not that systematic...It was thought that, through this...programme changing, ...(I could) learn, er, some things in this financial aspect...systematically, ...it was, in a framework...' (Graduate 28, Male, MSc, Banking and Finance)

Another participant said,

'The finance here in the UK...is relatively developed. The financial system, it is, the learning, learning system is relatively good. (I) wanted to, it was, learn more here, (and) then improve some my professional capabilities...' (Graduate 35, Female, BSc, Banking and Finance)

Developing English language ability was also mentioned as an expectation from studying in the UK by some participants.

'This, to be precise, (I) didn't have too big expectation....(I) thought, that is to say, could make an advance in English language....There was nothing else, which was thought further.' (Graduate 26, Male, MSc, Banking and Finance)

'(I) hoped (I) could, one is, regarding the (English) language, (I) could be improved in English language.' (Graduate 37, Male, LLM, International Commercial and Business Law)

Increasing competitiveness in the labour market has been mentioned by some of the participants as an expectation from studying in the UK.

'In China, after all, um, at that time (i.e. when he chose to study in the UK), there was still a preference of LLM, relatively. It can still... 'add score(s)' at the time of getting a job. Ah, although...how many 'scores' can be added specifically...varies from person to person, (and it) includes that it varies because of the differences between each university, at least,...with a LLM, ah, when you apply for a job, it will 'add score(s)', surely.' (Graduate 37, Male, LLM, International Commercial and Business Law)

Getting independence was another expectation from studying in the UK, especially among those Chinese students of a younger age.

'At that time, (I) wanted (to get) independence. It was because I, myself, previously, was a very dependent, a...I was, I was, that kind of typical character of the only child of the generation after 90s. Then, (I) thought (if I) studied in the UK, everything needed to be done by myself, no matter the housework, or going abroad, it was, travelling abroad....If all sorts of things needed to be handled by myself, the independence would be stronger.' (Graduate 35, Female, BSc, Banking and Finance)

Some participants mentioned that before their study in the UK, they hoped they could obtain the opportunity to work in the UK. For example, one participant said that she expected to get some work experience during her study in the UK.

'Besides the study aspect, I also wanted to...in the aspect of work experience,...also get some, some...experience of working abroad....Not long after the study (in the UK), actually, I quite wanted to...find a...part-time job, or internship, or something,...in the UK...' (Graduate 33, Female, MBA, Banking and Finance)

Another participant said that one of the main considerations when she chose to study in the UK was the opportunity to work after her studies. Before the cancellation of the Post-Study Work Visa in 2012, non-EU students who graduated in the UK were allowed to stay on and work in

the UK for two years (Reidy, 2017). Due to the availability of the Post-Study Work (PSW) Visa, it was easier to access work opportunities in the UK. However, before her graduation, this kind of visa was cancelled.

'What I expected was, when I got the Master's (degree) of this programme, I could...stay in the UK and work for two years firstly (to) thoroughly understand...how to do...marketing in the UK. This kind of practical experience. I planned like this, originally. However, at that time, (they) cancelled that...PSW, so I had to return to China....This was my....biggest pity...' (Graduate 34, Female, MA, Business and Marketing)

The cancellation of the Post-study Work Visa in the year 2012 tightened the rules on foreign students staying on once their degrees were completed (Reidy, 2017). Before that, because of a post-study work scheme, students from outside the EU who graduated in the UK were allowed to stay on and work for two years (Reidy, 2017). Under the current rules, non-EU students are allowed to stay in the UK for four months at the end of their courses to search for graduate jobs (Cassidy, 2015; Anon, 2016).

Another expectation from studying in the UK, which is mentioned by many of the participants, is experiencing a different environment and a different culture.

'One is the learning method, ...different learning method, learning style. In addition, a difference of the language environment. And, after all, it is a foreign country, (so) there is also a change regarding, such as, the life style. All of these are (what I) wanted to feel, (and what I) wanted to learn.' (Graduate 13, Female, MSc, Accounting and Finance)

This expectation can be linked to the cultural capital of those Chinese graduates, the reason being that it comes from personal tastes and preferences. It can also be seen as a way to enhance their cultural capital through experiencing the culture of the UK.

Some participants described their expectation from studying in the UK as 'gold plating'.

'(To) achieve...the British culture, the experience in the UK, in addition, the knowledge. Its financial system is different, after all. Mainly, it is...In short, it is plating a layer of

gold. After all, after all, (it is) only, only one year. ' (Graduate 19, Male, MSc, Banking and Finance)

However, some of the participants pointed out that they didn't think too much about the expectations of the achievements from the study in the UK.

'Um...(I) didn't thought that much....It was, because (I) liked (it), (I) would like to do (it), (then I) did it. ' (Graduate 18, Female, BA, Accounting and Finance)

Achievements from Studying in UK Universities

Regarding the achievements from studying in the UK, the degree subject knowledge, understanding and skills, generic skills and career development learnings, which are pointed out as three of the essential components of employability by Dacre Pool and Sewell (2007), have been mentioned by the participants.

Degree Subject Knowledge, Understanding and Skills

The degree subject knowledge, understanding and skills were mentioned by many Chinese graduates who participated in this research as achievements from studying in the UK. In addition, in the UK, students are provided with the opportunity to acquire a broad range of knowledge, through the arrangement of the courses, sufficient opportunities for self-study, and abundant learning materials.

'...it is, some statistics, some (things) in the statistics aspect. Er, then...hum...it is, there are some, some specialized things which are related to, the specialized area of banking, ...(also) includes the aspect of finance. ' (Graduate 23, Male, MA, Banking and Finance)

'Regarding the programme, I think, it was, the understanding of the basic marketing principles has been broadened more widely.... (I'm) clearer about some basic principles of marketing operation in western world, how should it be operated...'
(Graduate 34, Female, MA, Business and Marketing)

'The things in the knowledge aspect, that is the specialized knowledge....It is, accounting and finance aspect, and so on, this kind of ...specialized knowledge....(I) learnt...a...relatively advanced...operation...there. Ah, and, and, and some advanced theories...' (Graduate 36, Male, BSc, Accounting and Finance)

However, due to personal circumstance, the achievement of specialized knowledge might not be obvious among some participants. For example, a participant said:

'For the Bachelor Degree, (I) didn't studied business studies.....So, er, so for the one, the one programme which has such a large span, and then...only one-year study, and then, adding much time of adapting, I think, (in) the knowledge aspect, there is no very, very obvious achievement....only during the time of writing the dissertation, for the dissertation which would be written, spending a little time to study....The others, I think, (in) the knowledge aspect...having classes, and then preparing for dealing with exams...' (Graduate 10, Male, MSc, Banking and Finance)

In addition, how much of the knowledge these Chinese graduates can still remember after graduation varies.

'Actually, I think there is still a large part of the things that can be remembered, but the things, which are not often used, that is, the formulas, that kind, very...the things to be calculated step-by-step, er, they are, really, I think, perhaps, I can no longer remember them...' (Graduate 27, Female, MSc, Banking and Finance)

While some participants can remember some knowledge they achieved from their UK higher education, some participants said:

'Regarding the knowledge, almost all of this is returned to the teachers, now.'
(Graduate 16, Male, LLM, International Commercial and Business Law)

'(Regarding the specialized knowledge achieved) ...when I looked for jobs, I forgot most of it, basically.' (Graduate 29, Male, MA, Banking and Finance)

Generic Skills

Regarding generic skills achieved from their higher education in the UK, the Chinese graduates from Bangor University who participated in this research mentioned English language skills, critical thinking skills, independence ability, adaptability, planning, coordinating and organising ability, problem solving skills, academic writing skills, communication skills and so on.

The development of their English language ability has been recognized by many participants.

'I think from the study at Bangor University, perhaps, it is,...the ability aspects improved relatively fast. It is, maybe language, (and) all aspects....It is, language, and...communication abilities, these, relatively, developed relatively fast.' (Graduate 8, Female, MSc, Banking and Finance)

'I think the bigger aspect is also the improvement of the language aspect, because the environment is different.' (Graduate 13, Female, MSc, Accounting and Finance)

'The English language can be learnt well, this is, this is a relatively good, a, a, the reflection.' (Graduate 16, Male, LLM, International Commercial and Business Law)

'Ah, the (English) language ability was improved. This is for sure. Because regarding your (English) language ability,...in your life, (you) must use English language at all times, such like you read books, read English, this...er, (you) soaked in, soaked in this kind of environment every day, of course, the English language was improved surely...' (Graduate 37, Male, LLM, International Commercial and Business Law)

However, some participants pointed out that the extent to which their English language ability can be applied varies when the Chinese graduates return to work in China. For example, a participant said:

'Actually, indeed, the English language must be developed continuously during...the time of the study. However, after (you) came back, that is to say,...(it) depends on the character of your job. If your job, perhaps, involves,...relatively much communication with the foreigners, maybe you can still gradually reserve (English language skill). But some people...,the job of some people, perhaps,...gradually, after (they) came back to China, the English language was not that, it became not that important,...gradually,

perhaps...the advantage was not that obvious.' (Graduate 30, Female, MBA, Marketing)

This participant said she could use her English language skills in her current job, because she had communication with global customers.

Thinking habits, such as brainstorm and critical thinking, which were developed during their study in the UK are another significant achievement.

'It is, a kind of relatively open, ... (and) then also...relatively dialectical...this kind of thinking habit.' (Graduate 36, Male, BSc, Accounting and Finance)

'...because, it is, the difference between...the Chinese and Western educational structures, ... (I) gained some understanding. Then, er, to be precise, I think, it is, make person's, I think for me personally, it is, a promotion in thinking, er, is very big....It is, perhaps, that, now, it is, perhaps, (when I) think about a question, (I) can be more, er, objective, it is, the so-called...need critical analysis...' (Graduate 3, Female, MSc, Business with Consumer Psychology)

The development of independence abilities was mentioned by some participants as an achievement from their experience of studying and living in the UK.

'All (the things) needed to be done by myself...previously, all (the things) were done with the help from (my) parents. Then, now, it should be counted as...independence ability is relatively strong.' (Graduate 32, Female, MSc, Banking and Finance)

'It is, the independence is improved....Because in these three years, most of...the things were solved on my own....After (I) go abroad, ...my self-confidence can be improved a lot. (I) can be very self-confident. Regarding doing things, it can also be different from the previous. (I) can, can solve many things independently. Then, some, ah, opinions towards some things (I) put forward, can also be relatively unique.' (Graduate 35, Female, BSc, Banking and Finance)

Regarding the independence abilities of Chinese graduates from UK universities, a staff member remarked,

'Because this experience of...study abroad, (which) made them must face the study and life independently. Then, relatively to say,...the students had this experience, their...independence is very strong...' (Staff 1, from the Chinese office of Bangor University)

The staff member (Staff 1, from the Chinese office of Bangor University) pointed to independence as an advantage to Chinese graduates from UK universities, compared with Chinese local graduates.

Regarding adaptive capacity, a participant said:

'The biggest achievement should be...the adaptive capacity is stronger....The adaptive capacity for...the new environment, and the acceptability for the new things is stronger.'
(Graduate 5, Female, MSc Banking and Finance)

Another participant also talked about planning ability, and she pointed out how this ability influences her current work.

'For example, sometimes you write essays, you may have not only one, perhaps, you have two or three essays to write together at the same time...then, their deadlines are also, also very close. Then, as a result, at that time, you, you may need to consider which one you need to do first, which one takes you more time, or the words requirement of which is more....you need to judge and weigh, to have some consideration. For your work, it's also the same. Similarly, when you have some things at hand, you need to consider which one is more important and need to do it immediately, and which one can wait a little bit...' (Graduate 9, Female, MSc, Banking and Finance)

She also pointed out team working and coordination ability achieved from her study in the UK, which could also influence her current work.

'For example, when you write an essay, previously, you have group essay, right? Then, team working is a very important thing....In your daily work, there are also many things that are needed to be done with colleagues. How you need to coordinate, you need, ah, at the same time of you listen to others' opinion, how you will express your own style, or, or letting others accept your thought,...these, actually, are all have, ah, something

in common with something you have used during the time of your study.' (Graduate 9, Female, MSc, Banking and Finance)

One participant, who has already worked in China for about 10 years after achieving his MBA from Bangor University, remarked:

'I think the (the achievements in) the ability aspect is more than (the achievement in) the knowledge aspect....I think the biggest skills learnt from there, one is learning, how to learn; one is problem solving, how to solve problems. For me, both of these two skills are very important for the survival in future, or even for my survival until today. Then, the third skill is presentation....It can be counted, because my current job may...have many needs of presenting. Ah, in the university, there is some... improvement of this....Then regarding the part of the knowledge, to be honest, it is not bad if there is still ten percent remains from the total one hundred percent now...But for some knowledge, I still could, I still learnt some. However, most of the things which can help me for a lifetime, maybe something, as the three points I just said. Something about learning, problem solving, and presentation. These, perhaps, you cannot forget later.' (Graduate 17, Male, MBA, Banking and Finance)

In addition, a participant pointed out that her ability to deal with pressure was developed from her study in the UK.

'Actually, the courses in the UK belong to that kind (of learning method). Many (things) need to, tend to be learnt by oneself....Then, many, for the foreigners, ...reading this large number of...things, actually I think (it) is, ...there were a lot of pressures. Then, actually, the anti-pressure ability, it was, being developed continuously.' (Graduate 30, Female, MBA, Marketing)

Another skill mentioned by some participants as an achievement from their study in the UK is the ability to write reports. Utilization of the relevant research methods and writing skills are valued by some participants.

'For example, ...researching some industries, ...or do, do something else....it is, at the time of writing research reports, ...there is some help....Because after all, ...(I) learnt some...research methods. Those, ...(regarding) some (things like) writing essays...those are all, ...(I) have (my) own, own, a complete set of things. It is, relatively, relatively

easy to get started, ...at the time of writing research reports. ' (Graduate 28, Male, MSc, Banking and Finance)

'That writing skill, also after I start my work, when (I) write some reports, ...or something..., it still has a quite big role, actually. ' (Graduate 33, Female, MBA, Banking and Finance)

Regarding communication skills, a participant valued the usefulness of this in her current work.

'Now, because we have some international cases, ah, it is, still very useful. The communication with those, some foreign people, is more, more internationalized. It is, this point is relatively important. You can, communicate some projects with the foreigners with facility, relatively. There are some, ah, projects, (which) are like this. It (i.e. communication skill) is still useful, I think. ' (Graduate 34, Female, MA, Business and Marketing)

Career Development Learning

Regarding career development learning, the careers and employability service of Bangor University should be mentioned, as this provides careers guidance and employment support services (Bangor University, 2017).

'The Careers and Employability Service provides assistance to students throughout their degree, and to graduates for up to 3 years after graduation. This is delivered in the form of face-to-face clinic appointments, a programme of employer talks and presentations, and a variety of online resources (offering advice, guidance and information about CVs and application forms, interview techniques, job search skills, career planning and understanding the labour market). ' (Bangor University, 2017)

In addition, there are job-hunting skills workshops, employer-led skills development sessions and presentations, and fairs all of which are run by the careers and employability service (Bangor University, 2017). They also provide tailored and customized services for international students.

Besides the career experts in the careers and employability service of Bangor University, different schools also have academic staff who have both knowledge about employability and the relevant industries, for the reason that,

'...they (i.e. careers and employability service) don't have some specific knowledge in each school....so for each school that they have the coordinator, all that person are academic staff that you can get in contact with them....Ah, for each school, ...they have a career contact, employability contact, this means that for each school, they have some people, like some staff, that to promote employability, ...specialize in this school...'
(Staff 3, a career and employability officer at a school of Bangor University)

Among the 39 Chinese graduates from Bangor University who participated in this research, some of them were more familiar with the careers and employability service of Bangor University and had used the career services. However, the extent of this usage varies. For example, when a participant talked about the careers and employability service, he said,

'They can often provide us the training regarding some, some of the workplace aspect, er....some skills, and so on.' (Graduate 24, Male, MSc, Banking and Finance)

He said he attended some of the training courses, but not many. In addition, he also got an internship opportunity with the help of Bangor University. He said,

'I made a request for this (i.e. internship opportunity) to the university, (and) the university helped me arranged this, an internship, an opportunity.' (Graduate 24, Male, MSc, Banking and Finance)

Another participant who utilized the relevant services provided by the careers and employability service of Bangor University said,

'I went there often....That CV template I used at that time, and that, it was, the cover letter template, they are, taken from them, over there. Then, sometimes, (I) could consult them about how to write the CV....It seemed that, they provided me that, employment information.' (Graduate 35, Female, BSc, Banking and Finance)

When a participant evaluated the service he used from the careers and employability service of Bangor University, he said,

'I think (it is) quite helpful....at least, he/she could have a look at your CV, (and) then gave you some, professional advice, (and) then, taught you how to write (it).' (Graduate 38, Male, PhD, Computer Science)

However, some of the participants had never heard about it, or knew about it, but never used any services provided by it.

'I have read the relevant materials, but to be specific, (I) haven't sought for any help.' (Graduate 13, Female, MSc, Accounting and Finance)

'I have heard about it from others, but I have never went there.' (Graduate 15, Male, MBA, Marketing)

Regarding the reason why he knew about the careers and employability service of Bangor University, but did not use any careers related services provided, a participant said:

'Because I, at that time, I wanted to go back to China. I didn't want to stay abroad. To be honest, I didn't want to stay abroad.' (Graduate 16, Male, LL.M, International Commercial and Business Law)

When this participant looked for jobs in China, he experienced about two-month unemployment. He identified the reason as:

'At that time, (I) didn't have experience, didn't know (how to) submit the CV, also didn't know (how to) modify the CV, also didn't know (how to) interview. That is, I took many detours.' (Graduate 16, Male, LL.M, International Commercial and Business Law)

In fact, the services provided by the careers and employability service of Bangor University are not only useful for those who would like to work in the UK, but can also benefit those Chinese graduates who work in China.

Another participant, who was unemployed when she was interviewed, said:

'(I'm) very anxious (to find a job), but (I) also know this kind of thing...It is, a little messy...now. It is, the career planning is not planned well...' (Graduate 18, Female, BA, Accounting and Finance)

Without sufficient career development learning, some graduates may not know how best to search the job market to find available opportunities, or how to effectively present themselves to employers. Such issues might account for why some graduates find it difficult to get their first job, or why it takes them a long time to find their first job.

Expectations for Future Career When Graduated

In this research, the majority of the participants didn't have formal work experience before they came to the UK for their education. When they graduated, some of them were clear about what they would like to do for a future career. For example, when a participant talked about the reason for choosing the programme to study, he said:

'Because (I) would like to go to (work at) a bank after the graduation, ... (so I) chose this programme.' (Graduate 29, Male, MA, Banking and Finance)

This indicates that he had a consideration of his future career before he studied in the UK. Then, when he graduated, his expectation was still to work at a bank, and finally he got a job which met his expectation. However, some participants did not think too much or did not have a clear view about their future jobs. For example, when a participant, who achieved her Bachelor degree from Bangor University, was asked whether she considered her future career when graduating from Bangor University, she said:

'At that time, (I) didn't consider.' (Graduate 18, Female, BA, Accounting and Finance)

She chose to continue to pursue education after she finished her study at Bangor University. In addition, even after some graduates achieved their Master's degrees, they still were not clear or did not give too much consideration to their future career.

'At the beginning, it was still, it was still relatively perplexed.' (Graduate 14, Male, MSc, Banking and Finance)

'At that time...it seems that (I) didn't think too much...at that time, (I) just thought, perhaps, (when I) came back, (I) should, (Because I) studied in this aspect, maybe (I) would also went to an organization which was related to financial aspect and stayed

there, or something. So I...didn't think too much, ...(and) came back.' (Graduate 12, Male, MSc, Banking and Finance)

When a participant talked about his considerations for his future career at the time around graduation, he pointed out his unrealistic consideration and inaccurate self-positioning.

'At that time, some things (I) thought are all unrealistic....That is, at that time, (you) hadn't graduated, or just graduated....That is, (you) left the university; (you) walked out of the campus; you, you know nothing about this unknown world; (you) don't know anything. Perhaps, (you) know nothing, (and you) consider yourself always right. This is, ...a common problem, a common problem of young people. (You) consider yourself always right, (and) then, have great ambition but few abilities. As a result, during the graduation period of time, looking for a job was a big headache. (You) didn't know what yourself should do, and (what yourself) can do.' (Graduate 24, Male, MSc, Banking and Finance)

There was a participant who said that his career expectation when he graduated, which was 'working on some financial industry related jobs', was influenced by his parents. He said:

'That was arranged by my parents. (My) parents thought this industry was good. (My) parents brainwashed me.' (Graduate 16, Male, LL.M, International Commercial and Business Law)

Some graduates did not have a clear view about their future career, even for a period of time after they had graduated from UK universities. This result was that their labour market search was relatively aimless. For example, a participant said that she did two jobs before she considered what she would like to do.

'At that time...maybe I didn't give a specific consideration into what I would do in future. Then my schoolmate asked me, 'ah, here, we have an offer here for you, would you like to come to do it first?' Then I said, 'OK, OK', and I did the job. At that time, I became an English teacher, just a teacher in a training institution. Then, after that, my families thought, oh, it seems not, this is not a thing for long. Then they asked me, 'how about go to that bank to have a try?' Then, this is the thing in the second year, and then, I worked in the bank for a period.' (Graduate 3, Female, MSc, Business with Consumer Psychology)

For graduates, lacking knowledge about the labour market might mean that even though they knew what they would like to do, they did not have an idea about the salary or the job position. When a participant was asked about their expectation for a future job after graduation, she said:

'It seems (I) didn't think too much at that time. It was thought that finding a job in future is OK....I have thought about the type of the job. I want to be a teacherthe reason for why I studied Education Studies at that time was I, myself, might feel very interested in the education sector. But after that, regarding the issue of the salary, since at that time what I know about the society is very superficial actually, I even didn't think about how much I want to earn in the future, (I) even didn't think about those.' (Graduate 1, Female, MA, Education Studies)

In addition, there are some Chinese graduates who had long-term work experience, who participated in this research. They came to the UK for their Master's degree in order to enhance their abilities in their chosen working areas. As a result, when they graduated, they would also do a job in their previous working area, but might expect better opportunities than those of previous jobs, whether in the same company they worked before or in another company. For example, there was a participant who had more than 5-year work experience before he studied in the UK. When he talked about his consideration for a future career when he chose the programme to study, he said:

'I, myself, had always studied finance, and worked in the bank. Then, for future, I didn't intended to develop (myself) in another industry...' (Graduate 17, Male, MBA, Banking and Finance)

He said that before he went to study at Bangor University, he had planned to continue to work in banks. After he finished his study, he looked for jobs in retail banking, he said:

'Because my work experience in the past were all about retail banking, I estimated that perhaps, I still would work in the 'circle' of retail banking. So after I came back, I also always submitted the CV in the 'circle' of retail, ...banks.' (Graduate 17, Male, MBA, Banking and Finance)

After he came back to China, he always worked in banks, although there were changes in his jobs.

When considering their future career, various political economy factors were also taken into consideration by some participants. For example, when a participant talked about his expectation for a future career after he achieved his PhD degree in the year 2008, he mentioned that,

'The year 2008 was a relatively special year...in that year, that, the domestic (and) the international, er, economic situations were both not very good. Regarding in China...at that period of time, the whole trend of the economic downturn was very obvious, (and) then, that, so at that time, ...some of my ideas...became not very realistic. In addition, here, in the UK, because...the economic situations around the world are all not good, so here, in the UK, the employment was more difficult....' (Graduate 25, Male, PhD Psychology)

The 2008 financial crisis caused a serious increase in unemployment in the UK. According to the Anon (2015), a few months after the start of the recession in the year 2008, unemployment started to increase acutely. When the Global Financial Crisis hit the UK, the unemployment rate was a little more than 5% or 1.6 million (Anon, 2015). Towards the end of 2009, the unemployment rate was almost a million higher at 2.5 million, or 8% (Anon, 2015). At the end of 2011, it peaked at almost 2.7 million, its highest level for 17 years (Anon, 2015). Widespread unemployment in the UK made it even harder for an international student to find a job there. In China, unemployment in rural areas also increased and the economic growth encountered 'downward pressure' (Anon, 2009). However, the registered unemployment rate in Chinese urban areas between 2006 and 2012 was stable, which was 4.1%, 4.0%, 4.2%, 4.3%, 4.1%, 4.1%, and 4.1%, in sequence (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2008, 2012, 2013). Even though the unemployment rate was stable, it did not mean that urban employment in China was not affected by the Global Financial Crisis. According to Anon (2015), 'In 2008, when the financial crisis erupted, state media estimated that as many as 45m people returned to their rural homes, alleviating pressure on urban employment.' Because urban employment in China was negatively affected by the Global Financial Crisis, finding a job there was also not easy.

Some Chinese graduates who participated in this research said they considered looking for jobs in the UK before they went back to China after they finished their studies, however, while some of them took action, others gave up this idea. A participant, who considered looking for jobs in the UK after he finished his study, but did not take any action, mentioned the political economy factor of widespread unemployment after the financial crisis as the reason.

'But it was not very realistic....For me, that was the thing in the year 2009, 2010, that was immediately after the financial crisis....That was the time of a widespread unemployment. ' (Graduate 21, Male, BA, Management with Banking and Finance)

Another participant, who also considered looking for jobs in the UK, but did not take any action, said:

'Because I thought it was not very realistic. Because the families, this side, were all in, in China. Then, they also relatively objected that (I) looked for jobs over there.' (Graduate 14, Male, MSc, Banking and Finance)

The family factor can be seen as a kind of cultural capital, which affected this participant's job destination.

When another participant talked about the consideration of looking for a job in the UK, she said:

'Actually, at the beginning, I had thought about this, but (I) gave up then. Because regarding the UK, the policy is more and more tightened, now....It was very difficult to find a job as a person with a Master's degree....Although it was not...impossible, ...there was relatively big risk. Because if I looked for jobs in the UK, (I) might miss the autumn recruitment in China. The autumn recruitment for the fresh graduates in China is a very, very, it is the best opportunity to find a job.' (Graduate 35, Female, BSc, Banking and Finance)

After she compared these two choices, she chose the autumn recruitment in China, because the possibility of getting a job in the UK was smaller.

There are some participants (eg. Graduate 9, Graduate 20, Graduate 30) who had the experience of looking for jobs in the UK; however, most of them were unable to achieve this aim. The reasons, which are mainly the language barrier and the difficulty in obtaining a visa, will be explained later when discuss their job-hunting in the UK in the section on labour market experience and socioeconomic attainment.

To conclude, regarding sub-question 2, *'What are the qualifications, skills and career expectations of Chinese graduates from Bangor University?'*, it can be seen that most of the Chinese graduates who participated in this research achieved a Master's degree. In addition,

they achieved both degree subject knowledge, understanding and skills and generic skills from UK higher education. However, how much they can remember after graduation, and how much knowledge they can apply to their job, varies. Besides, some of the participants took advantage of the careers and employability services of the university to get relatively good career development learning, while some participants had never heard about these kind of services. The lack of sufficient career development learning resulted in some Chinese graduates suffering avoidable difficulties when they entered the job market. Pursuing postgraduate study after their undergraduate study can be seen as a common route for the Chinese graduates who participated in this research. Regarding expectations for a future career when they finished their study in the UK, although some young Chinese graduates had a consideration for their future career before they came to study in the UK, some were less clear about this even after they finished their Master's degree. The graduates who had long term work experience before studying in the UK often had a clearer view. Some Chinese graduates who participated in this research considered looking for jobs in the UK, however, some of them did not take any action for many reasons, including the widespread unemployment after the 2008 financial crisis, consideration of the family, and the smaller possibility of getting a job in the UK compared with that in China. Even though there were Chinese graduates who took action to apply for jobs in the UK, the number of people who successfully got a job was very small. Among the 39 Chinese graduates from Bangor University who participated in this research, 14 Chinese graduates took action to look for job opportunities in the UK. 3 Chinese graduates had the experience of looking for internship opportunities in the UK, including one Chinese graduate who also took action to look for job opportunities in the UK. However, only one Chinese graduate got an internship opportunity in the UK, and another 2 Chinese graduates got their jobs in the UK after their graduation. Besides, there was one Chinese graduate who had the experience of working part-time for about two or three months during her postgraduate study period. The Chinese graduate who took action to look for both internship and work opportunities in the UK did not get any opportunity. In addition, there was a Chinese graduate who was self-employed in the UK when he was interviewed.

Labour Market Experience and Socioeconomic Attainment

In this part, the job-hunting experience of the Chinese graduates from Bangor University who participated in this research will be outlined, including their job-hunting methods, and their experience of job-hunting in China and in the UK. Then their work experience will be explained, and the explanation will focus on their current employment situation, the influence of the UK education background on their employment, underemployment among them, and the relationship between supply and demand in the Chinese labour market for Chinese graduates from UK universities.

Job-hunting Experience

According to Junankar (1996, p.241), unemployment is ‘not being employed, and available and looking for work’. During the job-hunting processes, most of the participants who sought jobs in China experienced short term unemployment, especially when looking for their first job. One of the main reason for this is due to the fact that they only started to look for jobs after they went back to China, or even later than that. There are some participants who started to look for jobs and applied for jobs before they went back to China. Therefore, they could start to work earlier when they arrived in China.

‘I submitted my CV before I came back to China. Then, at that time, there was a company which invited me to (attend) an interview. After I came back to China, ... (I) only had a rest for one day, (and) then I went to (attend) the interview. Then I was accepted there.’ (Graduate 1, Female, Education Studies)

Another participant (Graduate 15, Male, MBA, Marketing) who started to work about 5 days after he came back to China said that he started to apply for the job approximately two months previously.

However, one of the participants, who had a very high expectation about his future career, was unemployed for a year after he went back to China, because of the financial crisis. Although graduates holding a degree from UK universities had competitiveness in the Chinese labour market, during the financial crisis, it was also difficult to secure a job.

'At that time, (the expectation) was very, very, the expectation was very high, at that time. However, (I) should also considered...at that time, the world environment at the end of year 2008, and at the beginning of year 2009. The financial crisis was very, very serious....I saw in London...the people there lost their jobs and went back home....Then...(I) was unemployed after (I) went back to Shanghai. (I) was unemployed for a year...' (Graduate 10, Male, MSc, Banking and Finance)

The negative influence of the Global Financial Crisis on urban employment in China, which has been discussed before, could be the reason that this participant found it difficult to get a job in China. In addition, as this participant mentioned, his expectation was very high at that time, this might also be a reason for his one-year unemployment. During that period of time, finding a job which could meet his high expectation was even harder.

Before he went back to China, this Master's graduate had tried to seek job opportunities in London, but he was not successful. At that time, he had the opportunity to apply for a Post-work Visa, however, he did not apply. He said:

'I saw this circumstance of London, I didn't want to...Because...(I) would like to apply for this PSW, originally, but because (I) went to London and stayed there for one month,...(I) thought, forget it...' (Graduate 10, Male, MSc, Banking and Finance)

Because of the influence of the Global Financial Crisis, unemployment in the UK increased seriously, as shown before. In these circumstances, it was even harder for an international student to find a job in the UK. Obtaining a Post-work Visa could certainly provide the opportunity to look for a job in the UK, however, it did not guarantee work opportunity. There was a possibility that even though a person held a Post-work Visa, he/she could not successfully get a job in the UK.

Job-hunting Methods

Most of the participants found their jobs by themselves, through online methods, campus recruitment, social recruitment, headhunters and so on. Both in the UK and in China, there are websites for job-hunting, such as Zhilian Recruitment and Ganji Wang in China, Jobs.ac.uk in

the UK, which were mentioned and used by the Chinese graduates from Bangor University who participated in this research. In addition, some organizations have their own websites. As a result, candidates can get job information there and make applications. Campus recruitment was emphasized by some participants as a very important method for the fresh graduates to find a job in China.

'(I found the jobs) all through Zhilian Recruitment, submitting the CV.' (Graduate 19, Male, MSc, Banking and Finance)

'The first job was on their, that, ah, the company's official website...' (Graduate 5, Female, MSc, Banking and Finance)

'...(I find the job through) campus recruitment. The meaning of campus recruitment is, it is, recruiting...the fresh graduates who don't have work experience. It is the recruitment like this.' (Graduate 28, Male, MSc, Banking and Finance)

'(The methods I used when I looked for jobs are) to attend that recruitment talk, and online recruitment.' (Graduate 35, Female, BSc, Banking and Finance)

A participant, who had accumulated work experience, was contacted by headhunter(s), and they recommended jobs to her.

'The jobs after (I) came back to China are via headhunter(s), basically. Only the current one is found by myself.' (Graduate 34, Female, MA, Business and Marketing)

Another participant, who also found one of his jobs through a headhunter, said:

'Headhunter(s) can call us proactively. Because after we have worked in this field, (we) can receive some calls from headhunter(s) often. They can recommended some job positions. If (we) think that is OK, (we) can make, make an appointment, ah, have a face-to-face contact, interview, and so on.' (Graduate 37, Male, LL.M, International Commercial and Business Law)

Some of the participants found their jobs with *guanxi*, including through their parents, friends, clients and previous colleagues, as discussed above. *Guanxi* has an obvious effect in the Chinese labour market. Among the large number of job-seekers in the Chinese labour market, holding this kind of social capital may make it easier to get job information earlier, secure a job or obtain

a better position. Because of the large population in China, competition in the labour market is fierce. If a candidate holds unique knowledge and skills and something essential to the job, which are not held by many people, the candidate can get the job more easily. However, for most people, they compete for ordinary jobs which can be done by a large number of people. As a result, Guanxi can be one of their advantages in the competition with many other candidates, as a means of getting job information earlier, being referred by an influential person, or achieving direct help to get a job.

Job-hunting in China

When Chinese graduates from UK universities compete for jobs in the Chinese labour market with Chinese local graduates, they are equipped with obvious advantages given their UK education background. However, there are also some disadvantages. The detailed explanation of their advantages and disadvantages will be provided below based on the opinions of the Chinese graduates from Bangor University and the relevant staff members who participated in this research. Then, whether the education in the UK was these Chinese graduates' 'knocking brick' in their job-hunting process or a restriction to their job-hunting scope will be analysed.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Chinese Graduates from UK universities

There are five advantages of Chinese graduates from UK universities compared with Chinese graduates from Chinese universities.

First, Chinese graduates from UK universities have broad horizons, as they have lived and studied in a different country, and experienced a different culture and a different lifestyle. The experience in the UK, one of the most advanced countries, helps the Chinese graduates to know more about the world. The education obtained from the UK is recognized widely in China. This advantage has been mentioned by many participants. For example:

'Perhaps, it is, because he/she is an overseas returnee, his/her horizon or his/her knowledge and experience should be a little wider and a little broader.' (Graduate 9, Female, MSc, Banking and Finance)

'Actually, now, many enterprises, or something in China, all, ah, recognize those certificates from the UK, very much, so actually, ah, the gold content of that certificate from the UK...is still relatively high, actually...' (Graduate 33, Female, MBA, Banking and Finance)

When a staff member talked about the Chinese graduates from UK universities who did not have any work experience, the value of their overseas education experience was pointed out.

'Through this, such an experience of study abroad, they make them(selves) have a certain advantage when (they) compete in the labour market. But (it is) not absolute. That is to say, (it is) still, still need to see your real abilities. However, at least, having this experience, you can be, ah,...relatively, a little bit richer (i.e. in experience), compared with...the ordinary domestic graduates.' (Staff 1, from the Chinese office of Bangor University)

Secondly, Chinese graduates are believed to have better English language skills, which are especially useful when the job requires using English.

'They generally approve of (the English) language (of overseas returnees). It is, the English of overseas returnees...is OK.' (Graduate 34, Female, MA, Business and Marketing)

'...regarding some...jobs which have the requirement about English language, (they) prefers overseas returnees.' (Graduate 35, Female, BSc, Banking and Finance)

Thirdly, Chinese graduates from UK universities have knowledge from abroad. This is especially highlighted by international companies or foreign-invested enterprises. Some enterprises prefer to recruit people who have experience of studying abroad for some job positions.

'According to what I, myself, get in touch with,...If, actually, (regarding) some companies which relatively tend to be global, they, actually, would like to recruit, that

is to say, (the people) with the background of study abroad... ' (Graduate 30, Female, MBA, Marketing)

Fourthly, the alumni network of Chinese graduates from UK universities, which can be seen as a guanxi network, has been pointed out as another advantage.

'In my work, ah, my schoolmates, or...the friends I met in the UK previously, actually, in many...to different extent, all can give me a certain help. Then, ah, ...the help that given to me can be greatly shown in my work efficiency, or..., ah, the aspect of work quality, these, these aspects. ' (Graduate 33, Female, MBA, Banking and Finance)

Fifthly, the family economic background of most Chinese graduates from UK universities is relatively good, otherwise, they cannot afford the tuition fees and living fees for their study in the UK.

'I think, a large proportion of the people who study abroad, after all, the fees for study abroad is much higher than that in China. So, it results in that overseas returnees, that, family background is generally better than the domestic graduates. Also, perhaps, this results in, that is to say, work opportunities, perhaps, are different....There are some, (like,) you may not be better than him/her, but your parents, perhaps, have a certain ability, you can get a better work opportunity...' (Graduate 38, Male, PhD, Computer Science)

There are seven disadvantages for Chinese graduates from UK universities compared with Chinese graduates from Chinese universities, according to the Chinese graduates from Bangor University who participated in this research.

First, some Chinese graduates from UK universities have higher expectations than reality.

'I think...the one-year Master (i.e. the one-year study for a Master's Degree), for, for the improvement of the academic and research level is really too, too weak. Then, instead, (it) fosters...the expectations of the overseas returnees. Instead, it makes the overseas returnees, when they just come to (the labour market), relatively to say, relatively overly ambitious, relatively proud....In addition, ...the overseas returnee who went to the UK...the conditions of his/her family are all good, all not bad, so he/she

very easily...he/she can have this sense of superiority.' (Graduate 10, Male, MSc, Banking and Finance)

However, the reality for the graduates in the labour market might not meet their expectations.

'When you go to any one unit, any one job, at the beginning, (they) will all give you a relatively junior, a job. Not, not saying that (they) must belittle you, or something, but saying that actually, your senior (people) would hope to watch you for a period of time, how you perform in the job of this occupation, how (your) learning ability is, and, ...how (your) abilities to communicate and get on with others are... ' (Graduate 17, Male, MBA, Banking and Finance)

Another participant also pointed out that:

'There is a part (of them) who could think that, the investment is very high, because...the tuition fee for a year study abroad is very high. To a return of the investment, they, they have an extravagant hope... ' (Graduate 27, Female, MSc, Banking and Finance)

As a result, their requirements for salaries or for job positions might make the employers feel it is hard to accept them.

Secondly, some knowledge learnt from UK universities is not suitable for Chinese situations, and Chinese graduates from UK universities may lack the required knowledge which needs to be applied in workplaces in China.

The legal system in your country (i.e. China) and the legal system in their country (i.e. the UK), (the accounting standard in your country, and) the accounting standard (in their country) are different. (Graduate 21, Male, BA, Management with Banking and Finance)

'Once, an interview...that, the interviewer, ...took my CV, took my, this study experience, (and) then, asked me some questions. (He/she) said that, the knowledge you learnt were very good, ...but it was not applicable in China. ' (Graduate 24, Male, MSc, Banking and Finance)

'The disadvantage is... (they are) not that familiar with the... domestic actual situation and specialty as the domestic graduates.' (Graduate 36, Male, BSc, Accounting and Finance)

Thirdly, a large number of Chinese graduates from UK universities lack internship experience, while many Chinese local graduates gain internship experience during their study period. A lack of this kind of experience reduces the competitiveness of Chinese graduates from UK universities in the labour market. For example, a participant pointed out that the Chinese graduates who studied in China for their Bachelor degree can get a great deal of internship experience, while in the UK, he said,

'The internship (experience) is relatively a little. Because the internship experience provided to the most of the Chinese students by the experience of study abroad in the UK is really so little.' (Graduate 20, Male, BSc, Accounting and Banking)

Another participant also pointed out that,

'The domestic...students who study for their Master's degrees, ah, they can do a large amount of internship work during the three years (of their study).' (Graduate 28, Male, MSc, Banking and Finance)

However, regarding the lack of internship which was mentioned by many Chinese graduates who participated in this research, a staff member from Bangor University pointed out that,

'Ah, in (the) UK, you have various, um, opportunities, actually. It depends on whether you (are) going to utilize these opportunities....And these international working experience would be a big plus...' (Staff 3, a career and employability officer at a school of Bangor University)

Fourthly, the gains from the one-year Master's study in the UK are queried by some employers, as it is shorter than the Master's study in many other countries. The characteristic of time-saving is viewed by the students as an advantage of studying in the UK for the Master's Degree. However, in the labour market, it might not always be favourable. For example, a participant said,

'Because (the study for) a Master's degree (in the UK) only takes one year,... many enterprises don't approve of it very much.' (Graduate 35, Female, BSc, Banking and Finance)

Fifthly, there is a difference between the scoring system in the UK and in China, and therefore, some employers who do not know this may undervalue Chinese graduates from UK universities. In the UK, a student who achieves a score of 70 is excellent; while in China, a score of 90 means excellent. As a result, students in the UK who are deemed to be at the same level as the students in China actually get much lower marks. If Chinese employers do not know about this difference, when they view the CVs of Chinese graduates from UK universities, they may not even process them to the interview stage, because of the 'low marks' achieved from higher education.

'...it is the issue of the scores....in the UK, it is, the score of 70 is excellent. Then I...two modules, are, the results for the academic year are only above 6, 60. Then there are some employers who cannot understand, (and) said you just get a 'pass'. But...' (Graduate 22, Male, MBA, Management)

Sixthly, because of the time spend studying in the UK, some Chinese graduates from UK universities may not be familiar with the traditional ways of people in China. This disadvantage might be more obvious among people who come back to China after studying in the UK for a couple of years. For example, a participant remarked:

'The foreign people can be a bit (more) direct,...but Chinese people, they are, can be a bit (more) implicit.' (Graduate 22, Male, MBA, Management)

This cultural difference may affect the overseas returnees, making the overseas returnees tend to be more direct than the local people in China.

'(It) can be counted as an advantage, and also can be counted as an disadvantage.....Sometimes, it is, being a bit more direct, (can) a little better understand the aims, (and can) makes a bit more clear....the disadvantage is that, some people, (their) psychological endurance is not good.' (Graduate 22, Male, MBA, Management)

This disadvantage refers to the fact that some local people might find it hard to accept the direct expression of the overseas returnees. In addition, he said:

'Some, perhaps, Chinese people, perhaps, cannot understand some thoughts of the overseas returnees, (and) some of their, that is, that is, wording. Because, maybe, (they) were used to contacting with foreign people previously, ... (they) still haven't changed...' (Graduate 22, Male, MBA, Management)

Further, a staff member pointed out that,

'The disadvantage, I think, also depends on individuals.... That is to say, somebody, perhaps, he/she is relatively suitable for this kind of free environment abroad. Then, he/she, perhaps, ... has good insight and development. However, perhaps, (he/she), perhaps, doesn't know very much about, ah, some relatively traditional ways people in China. Ah, maybe under some circumstances, (he/she) may also have this kind of inappropriate performance. Then, there may be also a certain influence on him/her he/she was out of this environment. (When) he/she come back, he/she need to have a period of time of the connecting process...' (Staff 1, from the Chinese office of Bangor University)

Finally, a lack of social networks in China is another disadvantage facing Chinese graduates from UK universities. For example, when a participant talked about the disadvantage of the lack of interpersonal connections with schoolmates in China, he said,

'Maybe this is ... not very obvious for me After all, I studied for my Bachelor degree ... in ... China I have some ... 'circles' of the schoolmates ... However, if ... (the people) go to study abroad very early ... they perhaps, it is, then, then after (they) graduated, it is equal to coming to a, ah, totally new city. Then, it is, it is equal to, ah, perhaps (they) don't know anybody (there). It is, there are many things ... (they) should solve everything by themselves.' (Graduate 28, Male, MSc, Banking and Finance)

Since schoolmates in China may study in the same discipline when they at a university, and work in the similar fields after they graduate, the contacts and help between them may benefit their work. The participant above, who identified the lack of interpersonal connections with schoolmates in China as a disadvantage, also pointed out that through having interpersonal connections, some communication in the work can be more convenient.

Degree from UK Universities: a Knocking-brick or a Restriction for Job-hunting Scope?

The positive influences of studying in UK universities on the job-hunting process have been recognized by some participants. A participant, who was not confident about her previous educational background, said,

'It is really quite helpful. If I didn't have that experience of studying at Bangor (University), I think when I submitted the CV, I didn't dare to...I mean I couldn't try everything. I, perhaps, could, firstly, think of my own..., because my own, um, education background from China...I think it doesn't have a relatively strong competitiveness. So when I came back after I studied abroad, I thought my competitiveness was relatively increased, (and) then...I was relatively self-confident at that time...So, then I was relatively self-confident. So, (I) dared to be relatively bold to submit (CV) for every job that I liked and I thought I can be satisfied.' (Graduate 1, Female, MA, Education Studies)

The self-confidence brought to them by their education in the UK has been recognized by some participants. Similarly, another participant recognized the help from the UK education background as,

'I think the biggest help is reflected in, internal, that is I dare to try many things. For example, I can try what I want to try, without hesitation. Regarding the others, the others, there must be, for this, um, the entry threshold aspect, there must be some help.' (Graduate 5, Female, MSc, Banking and Finance)

Another participant valued his experience of studying in the UK as,

'The experience, better equip me...Firstly, perhaps, I have a certain learning ability.... In addition, I, perhaps, in all aspects, (no matter) the social contact, (or) my, er, some volunteer experience, (or) my, some, which can be counted as some team working related activities...It feels that me, overall, is relatively complete....This is one aspect which is relatively emphasized at the time of recruitments.' (Graduate 20, Male, BSc, Accounting and Banking)

Although the number of people who have the experience of studying abroad has been increasing rapidly in recent years, their overseas education background can still benefit them in the Chinese labour market, as a participant said:

'After all, the graduates in China, are too many. Then, the graduates from abroad, anyhow, in the surrounding, are still in, very much in the minority.' (Participant 14, Male, MSc, Banking and Finance)

A participant proved this. When he talked about the help his UK education background played when he looked for jobs, he said:

'Regarding the particular (thing) which is helpful to me, I estimate that is, that, the halo of the overseas returnee with a Master's degree. This halo may be a little better. If put this halo aside, actually, (I'm) an average person.' (Graduate 19, Male, MSc, Banking and Finance)

Many participants said that a degree from a UK university can be seen as a 'knocking brick', which can attract prospective employers, make them stand out from the large number of competitors, and help them get jobs. 'Knocking brick' is a Chinese expression, which refers to a brick to knock on the door. It is used to refer to a preliminary means to obtain fame and gain. A participant said:

'After all, the degree, the degree, that, that certificate, it is still a knocking brick, after all. 'Without' and 'with' are two states...' (Graduate 24, Male, MSc, Banking and Finance)

Similarly, another participant said:

'The competitiveness is very strong...I can stand out among a large number of graduates with Bachelor degrees.' (Graduate 19, Male, MSc, Banking and Finance)

He also said that his Master's degree can directly make him outstanding among the people with a Bachelor degree. In addition, people who achieve a Master's degree abroad have more advantage than people who achieve a Master's degree in China, except when compared with the people from the prestigious Chinese universities, such as Peking University, Tsinghua University, Fudan University and so on.

Another participant pointed out that the element with the greatest usefulness from his overseas study was the certificate achieved. He said:

'At the time of looking for jobs, at the time of submitting the CV...they (i.e. the employers) can ask you to go there to (attend) the interviews...' (Graduate 19, Male, MSc, Banking and Finance)

When a participant talked about the usefulness of the degrees, knowledge and skills achieved from the UK when she found jobs, she said:

'(They) can be considered as the knocking brick...Because...the knowledge learnt from the university is all theoretical knowledge, mainly. It is, in reality, that is to say, er... in your job, maybe, that is to say, cannot be used directly. However, because of this knowledge which you have learnt, you can attend these exams (and) these interviews.' (Graduate 7, Female, MA, Banking and Finance)

Another participant (Participant 14, Male, MSc, Banking and Finance) pointed out that the specialized knowledge learnt from Bangor University was useful when he attended an interview in order to get a job. During the interview, some questions regarding the specialized area were asked. Similarly, when another participant talked about the help of the specialized knowledge and abilities she achieved from the UK when she applied for her job, she said,

'I could talk to him/her (i.e. the employer) about what the things were I learnt from the UK, (and) then, what opinions (I) have about the market, these things.' (Graduate 35, Female, BSc, Banking and Finance)

When a participant was asked whether her company attached importance to her education background and her degree from the UK at the stage of applying for the job, she said:

'Now, (the company) relatively attaches importance (to these)....Because I have a colleague who told me that, that is to say, previously, ah, perhaps, at the previous time...there were not that many people studied abroad, or had a Master's Degree, or...so previously, maybe...graduating with a Bachelor degree is OK. However, now, it is, besides graduating with a Bachelor degree, if he/she possesses more, better things, then it is better, of course.' (Graduate 9, Female, MSc, Banking and Finance)

She identified the educational background as the 'knocking brick', but also pointed out the importance of the abilities and performance within the work.

'The education background, it is your, a 'knocking brick', which can let you enter into this company or this system...but whether you can do well afterward, actually, it still depends on yourself.' (Graduate 9, Female, MSc, Banking and Finance)

Another participant, who did three jobs in China after studying at Bangor University, also identified the certificate as a 'knocking brick'. However, he pointed out that after the first job, the employers would also highly value other aspects besides the certificate.

'Actually, this one, this graduation certificate, I think may be at the time of (looking for) the first job, can help relatively more....Maybe at the time of (looking for) the first job, it could really help you as a knocking brick...' (Graduate 17, Male, MBA, Banking and Finance)

Regarding his second and third jobs, he said:

'The help was not that much, because he/she (i.e. the employer) would also looked at your, actual, one is the word of mouth in the industry, one is your actual performance...' (Graduate 17, Male, MBA, Banking and Finance)

Similarly, regarding the knowledge achieved from study in the UK, compared with the fresh graduates who used the knowledge when they applied for jobs, a participant who had around 10 years marketing related work experience before she came to study in the UK mentioned that when she applied for jobs in China after she finished her study in the UK, the knowledge achieved did not help too much. She said,

'Because I am a, I am (a) mature...this kind of, candidate. So when I went to the interview, they couldn't say 'ah, what you learnt?'' Because I am not a new, a totally fresh person,...to this job market. As a result, they would surely ask you, (about) your previous work experience, 'how to launch a new product in, in your market?''...Basically,...there is this kind of things. Therefore, I can only say that in communication, there may be a help...' (Graduate 34, Female, MA, Business and Marketing)

A graduate who directly went to his family business after studying at Bangor University said that when he recruited people, under the same conditions, he would prefer people who have the experience of studying abroad, but actually, more attention was paid to other aspects. He said employers could have a preference for overseas returnees rather than the Chinese local graduates, but an overseas educational background was far from the only significant consideration.

'But actually it is still...how to say, the employers, would consider more about that, er, the comparisons of other factors. If you are under the same conditions in the comparisons of other factors, (they) would, that, prefer (you, the overseas returnees). But it has to be at the time of that your personal abilities still need to be, must be fully shown.' (Graduate 6, Male, MA, Business and Marketing)

Similarly, a participant said:

'In fact, many jobs, if you look for, they (i.e. the employers) still need to see your actual abilities, not saying that, you hold a certificate, (and) then they would accept you. You still need to have some actual work abilities, or some work experience. Then these may be still some more important factors.' (Graduate 23, Male, MA, Banking and Finance)

In addition, a participant pointed out that whether an overseas educational background can benefit Chinese graduates to a large extent might depend on what type of enterprises they look for jobs in.

'If we talk about the competition (between the overseas returnees and the Chinese local graduates), actually I, I think the competitive advantage (of the overseas returnees) is not very big, for now. Unless, that is to say, for example, you would like to go to a foreign company. Then, perhaps, you studied and graduated from a foreign country. Maybe, that, you have some advantages. Maybe your English language is a little better, and then, maybe (you) know more about the culture in foreign countries. Maybe foreign companies would need more, need this kind of, this kind of person more....However, if you want to enter a state-owned enterprise, or a private enterprise, a domestic enterprise, they don't have too many needs of English language, and (they) also don't have too many needs of foreign culture. (Then) they won't need (overseas returnees).' (Graduate 15, Male, MBA, Marketing)

As discussed above, many people believe that holding a higher degree is helpful to get a job. However, some participants pointed out that this is not always the case from the employers' perspective.

'Actually, many companies, their first reaction, which is really strange now, (is that) they will have this kind of thought, that is to say, 'ah, you are a graduate with a Master's degree. Why you come to our company to find a job?' or 'ah, you have a Master's degree. So good. Why our position can come into your sight?' (or) 'ah, you are a graduate with a Master's degree, ...your requirements must be very high.' It is, at first, they will give this kind of reaction immediately...' (Graduate 12, Male, MSc, Banking and Finance)

This participant also pointed out that this kind of reaction might often exist among regular enterprises, rather than big, leading enterprises. A participant also mentioned that the stability of people with an overseas Master's degree may be a cause for concern of the prospective employers. She pointed out that if an overseas returnee with a Master's degree enters a company at the same time as a person who just has a Bachelor degree, and then does the same job and gets the same salary, employers might think that:

'...you are the one come back from abroad, and what you paid out is more, compared with, that is to say, that person who graduates with a Bachelor Degree from China, no matter effort, time or money. Then, after you, ...stay there for a short period, you may feel 'I'm unconvinced'. 'Why I have to, that is to say, be at the same, the same starting line as the people with a Bachelor degree?' ...After stay there for a short period, you will resign. He/she (i.e. the employer) think you will resign or job-hop.' (Graduate 7, Female, MA, Banking and Finance)

She also believed that in the Chinese labour market, employers would prefer local graduates in order to reduce the cost.

'They...(are) more, it should be said, prefer the local graduated (people). Because...(they) think...your, that is to say, the education background, normally, a large proportion of (the people) who studied abroad are graduated with Master's degreesA small number (of people) ...come back after finish the undergraduate study. Then, as this, your education background, perhaps, that is to say, in China, it can be

considered, that is to say, a little bit, can be considered, also can be considered a little higher. Then, you come back like this, ... (you) submit a CV, then...they cannot, that is to say, recruit a people without any work experience for a senior position, or saying that, that is to say, (for) a higher job level. Normally, (they) are all the very common job positions....That is to say, under the same conditions, they would rather prefer to recruit the local (people), or (the people) with Bachelor degree, which makes the salaries they paid lesser. ' (Graduate 7, Female, MA, Banking and Finance)

Similarly, another participant pointed out the influence of the educational background of an overseas returnee with a Master's degree, in the Chinese labour market:

'Um, when looking for jobs, looking for some relatively a little high-end (companies)....It is not high-end, just, hum, state-owned enterprises, or saying that some relatively good private enterprises, there will be some help....for some middle and small-sized enterprises, if you want to learn some knowledge from it, and do the job from the beginning, ...the other people might not accept your background....There are some small enterprises, they will, in order to, just reduce the labour cost, they...won't have such a high requirement to recruitment people...' (Graduate 13, Female, MSc, Accounting and Finance)

However, some graduates from Bangor University do not have very high expectations regarding salary when they look for their first job after graduation, which might be very different from what some employers thought. They would like to learn from the job. For example, when a participant was asked whether she had any expectation about the salary or the job position for her job before she started to look for a job in China, she said:

'No. Because I think at the very beginning, perhaps, you cannot,...at least, I mean myself,... (I) didn't target at the salary....At beginning, I hold the thought of learning (from the work). ' (Graduate 9, Female, MSc, Banking and Finance)

Similarly, another participant said:

'At that time, (I) didn't have any too high expectations. I didn't think the people who had studied abroad should have a high salary...' (Graduate 16, Male, LL.M, International Commercial and Business Law)

When a participant was asked whether he was satisfied with the salary of his first job, he said:

At that time, I thought, it was having a look and learning something first, anyway. At that time, (I) didn't thought, ah, what an important thing the salary was. ' (Graduate 12, Male, MSc, Banking and Finance)

Some employers might think Chinese graduates from UK universities have high expectations regarding the salary. In order to reduce labour cost, employers might prefer to recruit local Chinese graduates. However, some participants said that they did not have a high expectation regarding salary when they entered the labour market. The different thoughts between them might mean that Chinese graduates from UK universities find it is difficult to obtain a job in some enterprises.

Job-hunting in the UK

From interviews with the Chinese graduates from Bangor University and the relevant university staff members, it can be seen that there are two main advantages for Chinese graduates from UK universities compared with UK local graduates or other international graduates in the UK.

First, having Chinese language skills is an advantage, and the ability of bilingualism (English language and Chinese language) is especially important when the enterprises have some Chinese business. In addition, because of the economic growth of China, in the UK, there is increasing trade with China, the advantage of having Chinese language skills becomes more and more obvious, thereby enhancing the Chinese graduates' competitiveness in the UK labour market.

'Now, that is to say, ...there are more and more economic and trade contacts between China and the UK, (and) then, the possibility of the (Chinese) students who study abroad in the UK getting job opportunities there locally can also be increased gradually. ' (Graduate 37, Male, LLM, International Commercial and Business Law)

'I think the advantage, if it is now, because there are many Chinese enterprises that make investment there, or saying that, China is stronger and stronger now, like that.

Then there may relatively need somebody who know Chinese, or Cantonese, like this.'
(Graduate 9, Female, MSc, Banking and Finance)

'Regarding the advantage, it is, having, Chinese market, Chinese background, and Chinese language. Because China is a very big market, ...if there are, there are some British enterprises want to expand Chinese market, they need to recruit Chinese people. So this is a very big advantage.' (Graduate 19, Male, MSc, Banking and Finance)

'...especially for those that with strong links in China, so some UK firms that they have very strong links with Chinese firms, and some of the UK firms that they invest in China, so for all of these kinds of firms, ...they (i.e. Chinese candidates) can speak both languages, and something the both the cultures, of course, they would be that, er, have the big comparative advantage compare with other candidates.' (Staff 3, a career and employability officer at a school of Bangor University)

'I have a friend, who is in, an, enterprise here (i.e. in the UK). He/she is responsible for the Asian-Pacific region regarding such a work handover, or something, ah, the business development area...if it is not because of, that is, the advantage of bilingualism, actually, they (i.e. the employers in the UK) would prefer to recruit the local, this kind of students...' (Graduate 26, Male, MSc, Banking and Finance)

'Previously, I had a friend who got PSW (visa) previously, (and) then...worked in the UK. It was because at that time, that is to say, he/she needed to...work in the UK for a year, and after that (he/she) would be transferred...to the branch in China...' (Graduate 30, Female, MBA, Marketing)

The second advantage for Chinese graduates from UK universities compared with UK graduates refers to the perception that they are hardworking. This may be the traditional impression of Chinese people.

'The Chinese people, also have an advantage, it's, being relatively hardworking, I think....For the overtime work and so on, (they) do with no complaints.' (Graduate 9, Female, MSc, Banking and Finance)

Regarding the disadvantages of Chinese graduates from UK universities compared with UK graduates, three were identified from interviews.

The first disadvantages refers to English language skills. Although their English language skills are often treated as an advantage when they look for a job in China, whether their English language is good enough to enable them to work in the UK is questionable. One of the relevant staff members from Bangor University pointed out:

'...within the academic environment, you are excused a certain amount, or you are given flexibility in relation to your English language, so if an academic understands what you are trying to say, he(/she) will not criticize your English language overly...That is not the same in the business world, so if you are filling out, um, an application form for a job, your, your grammar, your English, if it's, if it's an application, English has to be perfect. There is no room for error, um, that's very, very difficult for, you know, a, a lot of Chinese students...' (Staff 2, from the careers and employability service of Bangor University)

It can be seen that regarding the English language, what is accepted in the academic environment is different from what is required in business.

Regarding English language ability, many graduates who participated in this research said that it was a disadvantage for Chinese graduates if they would like to work in the UK.

'The language...relatively to say, is a disadvantage, because it is not your first language, after all. As a result, if you (go) to a very professional environment, maybe it can also have influences.' (Graduate 9, Female, MSc, Banking and Finance)

Secondly, because of the culture differences between China and the UK, it is difficult for Chinese graduates to really fit into society in the UK.

'In the communication aspect, Chinese people are relatively, not as open as the foreign people. Relatively, relatively restraining, and relatively implicit.' (Graduate 10, Male, MSc, Banking and Finance)

In addition, a relevant staff member from Bangor University pointed out that when the Chinese students fill out a personal statement, they would like to tell a story about themselves, for example, who they are, where they come from, which is a cultural difference in terms of how to approach a job from a western point of view.

'A western point of view tends to be more direct.' (Staff 2, from the careers and employability service of Bangor University)

Thirdly, it is now difficult for Chinese graduates to get visas to work in the UK after their graduation. After the cancellation of the Post-study Work Visa, international students are allowed to remain in the UK for four months to look for graduate jobs, which has already been argued by the critics as being too harsh compared with the US, Canada and Australia (Cassidy, 2015). These countries allow 12 months (Cassidy, 2015). Besides the short time for job-hunting in the UK, there are also difficulties regarding the rules on moving from a student visa to a work visa for international students. Having a graduate job, with a graduate salary, with a licensed Home Office employer is essential, it is also difficult (Reidy, 2017). It is a requirement that international students who wish to stay on in the UK should work for a single employer and earn at least £20,800 per annum (Adams, 2015). This graduate salary is quite difficult for a first job, especially outside London (Reidy, 2017).

'...it's become, very difficult for them in the last, um, as I say, last four or five years, after the Post - (study) Work visa. It was even difficult for them with the visa...' (Staff 2, from the careers and employability service of Bangor University)

'For the Chinese students, like visa, that's the most difficult, ah, barrier for the, all the international students, not only Chinese students, that if they couldn't find a job within a certain time, that they won't have the visa, then they have to travel back to China.' (Staff 3, a career and employability officer at a school of Bangor University)

Work Experience

This section will provide the findings regarding current employment situations of the Chinese graduates from Bangor University who participated in this research, discuss whether the experience of studying in the UK is a halo or a source of pressure for Chinese graduates from UK universities, analyse their underemployment, and discuss the relationship between supply and demand in the Chinese labour market for Chinese graduates from UK universities.

Current Employment Situations

Among the 39 Chinese graduates who participated in this research, there are 2 who were unemployed at the time they were interviewed. There are another 2 who are outside the labour force, but they are not unemployed. Unemployment is about 'not being employed, and available and looking for work' (Junankar, 2003, p,241). Since these 2 Chinese graduates are not seeking work, (one is preparing to study abroad again, another one is at rest,) they cannot be deemed as unemployed people. The other 35 participants in this research were employed when they were interviewed.

Among these 35 participants, some of them work in fields which are relevant to their education from the UK. For example, a Chinese graduate (Graduate 34, Female, MA), who studied in the programme of Business and Marketing when she studied at Bangor University, and was working as a marketing manager in China when she was interviewed, is deemed to be working in a field relevant to her study at Bangor University. Another Chinese graduate (Graduate 37, Male, LL.M), who studied in the programme of International Commercial and Business Law, and was doing a job of an attorney-at-law in China when he was interviewed, is also deemed to be working in a field relevant to his education from Bangor University. However, some of the Chinese graduates in this research worked in fields which were not relevant to their education from the UK at all. They are deemed as underemployed regarding their job fields, which will be explained later in the section of underemployment. The majority of these 35 participants worked in fields which were relevant to their education from Bangor University when they were interviewed.

Among these 35 participants, 33 of them were doing full-time jobs when they were interviewed. One of the participants (Graduate 12, Male, MSc, Banking and Finance) was not formally employed, but he dealt with his online store and speculated in stocks. Regarding his situation, it is not clear whether it was full-time or part-time. The job of a graduate (Graduate 8, Female, MSc), who studied in the programme of Banking and Finance at Bangor University, and was working as a sales assistant in the UK when she was interviewed, was part-time. In the beginning, the job was full-time, and then she changed it to a part-time one. She did the part-time job voluntarily, for the reason that:

'It is, because the full-time one (makes me) too tired, ...the time is a little, a little tense.'
(Graduate 8, Female, MSc, Banking and Finance)

Regarding salary, many of the participants mentioned that people with a Master's Degree can receive extra payment, when compared with people with a Bachelor Degree. This is called 'certification pay' in some enterprises. 'Certification pay' refers to the additional salary received by the staff who have a higher degree level or professional qualifications. It may exist in both Chinese local enterprises and international companies. For example, when a participant who worked in a Chinese enterprise for his first job talked about his salary at that time, he said:

'The basic salary was related to the education background, but the difference was very small. For example, the difference between the people who hold a Bachelor degree and the people who hold a Master's degree may be only three or four hundred RMB.' (Graduate 15, MBA, Marketing)

Another participant who also worked in a Chinese enterprise said:

'The starting point of your qualification is higher, as a result, the base of your salary is RMB250 higher than the others every month.' (Graduate 4, Male, BA, Business Studies and Finance)

When a participant, who was working in a Chinese bank when he was interviewed, talked about the difference in the basic salaries between people with a Master's degree and people with a Bachelor degree doing the same job, he said,

'It seems that (the people who hold a Master's degree) get 500RMB more (than the people who hold a Bachelor degree), I remember.' (Graduate 29, Male, MA, Banking and Finance)

Another participant, who was working in an international accounting firm in China when she was interviewed, pointed out that,

'I was, in the first year, (I) had a, that, certification pay. Then, it was, ah, 1000 RMB higher than those, ah, the colleagues with a Bachelor degree, ah, every month...Now, ah, ...the certification pay is, that CFA, or that CPA, it is not...that of the certificate (of the degree).' (Graduate 33, Female, MBA, Banking and Finance)

In addition, there is no 'certification pay' in some enterprises, so people with a higher degree do not receive more salary for their educational background.

It is noticed that in the workplace, performance and abilities are even more important, and can result in higher salaries. For example, a participant (Graduate 1, Female, MA, Education Studies) said that she had a colleague who was better than her regarding education background, but the salary of that person was lower than hers. That person also studied in the UK for a Master's Degree, and the rank of the university is higher than that of Bangor University. Regarding the reason, she said:

'I think it is relevant to the character. I think maybe he/she himself/herself doesn't adapt very well to work in this kind of education environment, so when he/she works, um, it cannot be said (he/she) doesn't work hard, just, I think he/she doesn't strive like us, so perhaps there are some differences.' (Graduate 1, Female, MA, Education Studies)

This participant (Graduate 1, Female, MA, Education Studies) also pointed out that she had a colleague whose qualification was not as high as hers, but whose salary was higher than hers. Regarding the reason, she thought that the colleague had stronger capability than her.

Regarding the utilization of education and skills, there are participants who applied the knowledge achieved from their education in the UK. However, other participants said they only use some knowledge from their UK education in their work. Further some of the participants said they almost did not use any knowledge from their UK education. Detailed analysis regarding this will be provided later in the part of 'underemployment'.

In fact, work-related knowledge 'on the job' over time or through training provided by the employer has been highlighted by some participants. A participant who has work-related knowledge and skills obtained from UK higher education said that:

'To be honest, after work, even though (somebody) doesn't have the specialized abilities like me, after half a year, ...he/she has the work experience, he/she can also be competent for the job gradually. I think most of the jobs, jobs are like this; all of them involve a process of gradual learn. Of course, except that kind which is very professional, like IT, or saying that, like medical science, this kind. Most of the work, as long as you has the willing to learn after work, it is still OK to keep up with....I also want to emphasize here, it is, ...the training after the entry is very important....So...what you achieved before your entry is not, saying, as a very big determinant for your own development later...' (Graduate 20, Male, BSc, Accounting and Banking)

Regarding their locations when they were interviewed, some of them chose to work in the big cities like Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou. An important reason refers to the reason that there are more opportunities in the big cities.

'How good Beijing is. (It's) the capital. (There are) many people, (and) many opportunities.' (Graduate 19, Male, MSc, Banking and Finance)

'The opportunities in Beijing can be more, and (it is) also not far from (my) home.' (Graduate 20, Male, BSc, Accounting and Banking)

A participant who was working in Shanghai when she was interviewed, pointed out that in the case of her specialized area, there are more work opportunities in Shanghai.

'Marketing, such a specialty, all, are all in the most developed cities, generally, all around the world. As a result, ah, (no matter) the big-brand companies, (or) now...like our private...enterprises, their marketing are all in Shanghai, generally....The head offices of marketing are all established in Shanghai, generally. So...(regarding) this specialty of mine, there is no way of going to work in other places for me.' (Graduate 34, Female, MA, Business and Marketing)

A participant, who was self-employed when he was interviewed, was from Shanghai, but he registered his company in Hong Kong, the reason being that,

'...Hong Kong becomes a distributing centre of the resources, then, the interpersonal network you build here is worldwide. This is what I emphasized...' (Graduate 10, Male, MSc, Banking and Finance)

A participant who was from Anhui, but worked in Beijing, said that,

'Normally, (when) overseas returnees come back, (they) all go to Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou....Then, regarding Beijing, the friends are more, so (I) choose here...' (Graduate 35, Female, BSc, Banking and Finance)

This participant (Graduate 35, Female, BSc, Banking and Finance) worked in a private enterprise, but she said at the beginning she would like to work in a foreign-funded enterprise. This is caused by Beijing hukou, as the private enterprise she worked in can help her achieve a Beijing hukou.

A participant who was from Shandong, but worked in Shanghai for his first job, said one of the considerations when choosing to work in Shanghai was,

'Because some of my parents' Guanxi are all in Shanghai...Anyhow, (in) Shanghai, um, there are more resources...' (Graduate 16, Male, LLM, International Commercial and Business Law)

A participant who was from Dalian, but was working in Shenzhen when he was interviewed, said that,

'Now, you know, the economies, the economies in the Northeast are all, are all, are all declining, are all not very good. But...the coastal cities in the South, Shenzhen is relatively, relatively good....The country is also, policies are all, more in favour of, the South....It is driven by the big environment.' (Graduate 22, Male, MBA, Management)

A graduate chose to work in a city near her home, with the reason being that,

'In my family...there is only me as the one child, like this, near the parents.' (Graduate 7, Female, MA, Banking and Finance)

Another graduate who worked in Guangzhou previously, but moved back to her home city gave the reason as:

'...my parents want me back.' (Graduate 13, Female, MSc, Accounting and Finance)

In addition, the living cost might be another consideration for some Chinese graduates when choosing a the city in China after they finish their study in the UK. For example, when a graduate was asked why he chose to go back to his home city rather than go to one of the big cities, like Beijing, Shanghai, and so on, he said,

'(It's) cheap.' (Graduate 36, Male, BSc, Accounting and Finance)

Experience of Studying in the UK: a Halo or a Source of Pressure?

Having reflected on their experience of studying in the UK, some participants realized the benefits it brought to their current job. For example,

'In our sector, there is a preference for the people who have the experience of study abroad. Because no matter about the culture or about the habit of using the language...at least they thought that the teachers who have the experience of study abroad are more excellent than the teachers who stay in China. So the students also prefer to trust the words from the teachers who studied abroad before.' (Graduate 1, Female, MA, Education Studies)

A participant who achieved her PhD degree from Bangor University said,

'Regarding the people with a PhD degree, now, surely, it looks like that people still prefer the people who achieved the PhD degree abroad.' (Graduate 39, Female, PhD, Finance)

To explain the reasons, she mentioned the research quality abroad, and in addition, said,

'You, achieve your PhD degree abroad. At least, your English language,...and your, that kind of, networking,...the new thoughts you bring, all (of these) can be more attractive to these domestic universities.' (Graduate 39, Female, PhD, Finance)

However, carrying the halo of overseas returnees is not easy, as a participant said,

'The halo carried is too heavy. Since you come back as overseas returnees, then you have to be better than the others. But actually, we, we are not better than the others. That is, in reality, we are not better than the others, however, we carry that '(we are) better than the others' on the back.' (Graduate 16, Male, LLM, International Commercial and Business Law)

It means that employers might expect that overseas returnees are better than the others, but this is not always the case. They may give more responsibilities to the overseas returnees with higher expectations. Similarly, when a participant talked about her experience in one of her previous workplaces, she said,

'Whatever things you did, it was, you, no matter what you did...even though it was the things that out of your domain, you couldn't say you couldn't. Because once you said (you) couldn't, your leader would say, 'Didn't you study abroad? Don't you came back from the UK? Why you even can't do this?'...' (Graduate 27, Female, MSc, Banking and Finance)

This also reflects the possibility that some employers might expect too much of graduates who have experience of studying abroad.

In addition, as more and more Chinese students pursue their higher education in the UK and then go back to work in China, the halo of the overseas returnees becomes faded. When a participant, who had around 10 years work experience before she came to study in the UK, talked about the overseas returnees ten or twenty years ago, she said,

'In those years, my colleagues were overseas returnees. Then, that...speed of their development was faster than me...It was, because at that time I also felt (I) was disadvantaged...So at that time, I thought having a background of oversea returnee was...useful for the long-term development. Then, also because more than a decade ago, I thought this, I also decided to go abroad to study for a...overseas returnee.' (Graduate 34, Female, MA, Business and Marketing)

When comparing overseas returnees from the UK with Chinese local graduates, a participant who finished his study in the UK in 2004, said that,

'The difference, in my understanding, the difference cannot be that big. Hum, because, which is very simple, it is still need to have a look at some of your personal background. It is still a little different from the year I graduated. Because now, overseas, overseas graduates are really too many. In addition, there are some people good, and there are also some people not good....Then, so, relatively to say, that golden halo, basically, has already begun to fade.' (Graduate 17, Male, MBA, Banking and Finance)

He pointed out that when he graduated from Bangor University, the number of overseas returnees was not small, but not as large as it is now. Another participant also pointed out that in the Chinese labour market,

'Nowadays, the graduates who studied abroad are not so popular as before. Now, the people who return to China are many.' (Graduate 39, Female, PhD, Finance)

Underemployment

According to McKee-Ryan and Harvey (2011, p.963), underemployment is about 'working in a job that is below the employee's full working capacity'. Based on McKee-Ray and Harvey's (2011) eight underemployment dimensions, it can be seen that underemployment exists among the Chinese graduates from UK universities who participated in this research.

Regarding pay/hierarchical underemployment, which refers to the employees who are underpaid or at a lower level of hierarchical positions than their former jobs (for laid-off workers) or similarly skilled employees (for new graduates and other workers) (McKee-Ray and Harvey, 2011), many participants pointed out that their Master's degree can bring extra payment in their salaries. However, pay underemployment exists among the participants. For example, a participant pointed out that because of his Master's degree, the base of his salary is RMB 250 higher every month. Although he recognized the advantage regarding his salary which was brought to him by his Master's degree, he still said that his salary was similar to people without a Master's degree in the enterprise, because the difference of RMB 250 was not too much. In addition, he also said that,

'To be honest, ...the salary is not very high, so the people who come here is not many....It (i.e. the salary) can be considered as a relatively low one in the same industry. That is to say, among my schoolmates, my salary is very low.' (Graduate 4, Male, BA, Business Studies and Finance)

In addition, in many enterprises, salaries are related to the performance of individuals, not just a fixed amount. As a result, it might be possible that an individual who has a lower level of qualification and works at a lower level of hierarchical job position receives a higher salary. For example, a participant (Graduate 17, Male, MBA, Banking and Finance) was working as an associate director district investment advisor in a bank in China when he was interviewed. He pointed out that in the bank, the incomes of the salesmen, whose job positions did not require

a very high level of qualification, might be higher than his, as long as they had a good performance of selling which resulted in them being able to draw a very big percentage from that.

However, there was a Chinese graduate who participated in this research whose company provided a little bit lower salary, but the extent of freedom was relative high. He said,

'Your freedom is also a part of your whole, this, reward. You chose this, that is, this kind of freedom is also a kind of salary....This was chosen by myself.' (Graduate 21, Male, BA, Management with Banking and Finance)

Besides, there is no clear evidence that any participant in this research was underemployed for the job position when they were interviewed. When the fresh graduates start their first jobs, normally, they get the junior level job positions. Then, as their experience accumulates, they can advance to higher levels. For example, a graduate (Graduate 33, Female, MBA) who studied Banking and Finance at Bangor University, got a job as a risk consultant in an accounting firm in China after studying in the UK. When she was interviewed, her job position was advanced, which was senior risk consultant. Regarding the Chinese graduates who had long term work experience before they studied in the UK, when they were interviewed, their job positions were normally at senior level, which largely depended on their work experience. From this, the role of a degree from the UK can be seen as a 'knocking brick', which was mentioned by some participants. It works when securing a first job for a fresh graduate who does not have any work experience. However, for the job after that or for getting a higher level of job position, accumulated work experience plays an important role. For example, regarding the role a degree achieved from overseas education might play in her future career, a participant remarked:

'I think it still will occupy an important part, but I think it may not be like the time when I just graduated...Because at that time, a new graduate is like a piece of white paper after all. Your certificate is your only proof. However, I have some work experience now, and the experience is accumulating. As a result, when I look for a job, besides my certificate, people will also consider my work experience.' (Graduate 1, Female, MA, Education Studies)

Regarding working hours underemployment, which means that people currently are working less than full-time, but they would like to obtain more working hours (McKee-Ray and Harvey

2011), of the 35 Chinese graduates who were employed when they were interviewed, none of them was underemployed regarding working hours, because 33 of them did full-time jobs when they were interviewed, and one (Graduate 8, Female, MSc, Banking and Finance) worked part-time voluntarily and another (Graduate 12, Male, MSc, Banking and Finance) dealt with his online store and speculated in stocks, also voluntarily.

Regarding work-status congruence, which indicates a match between employees' preferences and their actual working conditions (McKee-Ray & Harvey, 2011), there is no strong evidence to show that any of the participants were underemployed regarding work-status congruence.

In respect of the job field underemployment, which occurs when a person works in a field which is not relevant to his or her formal education or training (McKee-Ray & Harvey, 2011), as the examples given previously illustrate, a Chinese graduate (Graduate 8, Female, MSc) who studied in the programme of Banking and Finance at Bangor University, but was working as a sales assistant in the UK when she was interviewed, is deemed to be working in a field which is not relevant to her study at Bangor University. Another Chinese graduate (Graduate 16, Male, LLM) who studied in the programme of International Commercial and Business Law, and was doing the job of a project manager in the game industry in China when he was interviewed, is also deemed to be working in a field which is not relevant to his education from the UK, although he pointed out that his current job was what he was interested in and he felt satisfied with his current employment situation. These two participants, whose jobs were not relevant to their educational background, were underemployed according to the definition.

Regarding over-education/underutilization or skill/experience underutilization, it is not easy to make this judgement. According to McKee-Ryan and Harvey (2011), over-education represents to what extent an employee is required to apply his or her education at work, and skill/experience underutilization indicates that a person has greater skills and/or more work experience than his or her job demands. These two dimensions are included in overqualification, which is a circumstance under which an individual possesses excess knowledge, skills, education, abilities, experience, and other qualifications which are not required by or used on the job (Erdogan et al., 2011). Among the Chinese graduates who participated in this research, many of them recognized the utilization of their knowledge and skills achieved from their UK education in their work. For example, one of the participants, who was an IELTS teacher when she was interviewed, talked about one of the modules she studied at Bangor University:

'... it was (my) first time to contact with that kind of module, and that kind of teaching method, the way of thinking...when I teach the classes here (i.e. in China), I can even use his thoughts sometimes.' (Graduate 1, Female, MA, Education Studies)

Another participant valued the use of the skills achieved from his study at Bangor University in his work, he said:

'There will always be (some) help...For example, presentation (skill), because I'm an investment manager, so I often come out to present...Problem solving....and learning...because we also need to have a look at some investments of the entire bank, some portfolios, ah, some directions. The market is always changing every day, then we are learning about the market every day, (we are) learning every day... (we) must catch up with (the market), and then provide some solution.' (Graduate 17, Male, MBA, Banking and Finance)

He pointed out that these skills were always used by him after the graduation. However, this participant also experienced underutilization in his first job after he finished his study in the UK and went back to China. After the accumulating and learning while he did that job, he got better opportunities in his following jobs to better utilize his knowledge, skills and experience.

It should be noted that the knowledge and skills achieved cannot always be used. For example, a participant pointed out:

'I fully utilize SWOT analysis, which has been very fully utilized, basically. Then, financial statement analysis, these two have been very fully utilized. The others, have been involved, but, are not important.' (Graduate 4, Male, BA, Business Studies and Finance)

A participant, who had around 10 years marketing related work experience before she came to study in the UK and was doing a marketing related job when she was interviewed, recognized the utilization of the knowledge achieved from her study in the UK in her work. However, she also pointed out the utilization was not one hundred percent. She said:

'Of course, (I) can use (it). Because there are some, this kind of, some things of marketing....It is not said that one hundred percent, but you have an overall picture about these marketing principles. Then, combining your marketing experience, (and)

then it (i.e. the knowledge) can be used.' (Graduate 34, Female, MA, Business and Marketing)

It is questionable whether a person can completely apply his/her education and skills at work in reality. The knowledge and skills achieved from higher education are comprehensive and involve different aspects in a subject area. However, in a job, especially for a new graduate doing a job at junior level, it might not be possible to apply all the knowledge and skills the graduate possesses. It is believed that at a senior level or even higher level job positions, the person might apply more knowledge and skills he/she achieved from higher education; however, whether all of the knowledge and skills can be fully used is still worthy of consideration.

Even for a job as an academic, which is thought to be very closely connected with the knowledge and skills achieved from higher education, there is still the possibility that things learnt are not fully utilized. A participant, who was a lecturer in a UK university when he was interviewed, said:

'Perhaps, at some period of time, you felt the things you learnt could not be fully applied, ah, you felt that you need to learn some other things, instead, which was slightly different from what was understood and imagined, previously. It was this kind of circumstance....Regarding this circumstance, there would be, it would occur once from time to time.' (Graduate 25, Male, PhD, Psychology)

He did a job directly relating to his specialty, and pointed out that things he learnt from the universities were used a lot in his job. However, the circumstance he has identified shows that full utilization of knowledge and skills is not always possible. He also pointed out that his current job required continued self-learning and self-improvement, indicating the importance of learning on the job. In the case of his job as an academic, he pointed out that even though the above circumstance existed in his job, it was possible to ensure that opportunities arose to use his specific skills and knowledge,

Besides the participants who had jobs in academic areas, most of the Chinese graduates from Bangor University who participated in this research worked in industries in China when they were interviewed. For them, the fully utilization of the knowledge and skills achieved from their study in the UK was even harder.

'To be honest, actually I think they are all some things which are quite theoretical. If you say the practical value, I think it is not high. If I purely do the paper work, the value is quite high, actually.' (Graduate 27, Female, MSc, Banking and Finance)

A participant, who studied for his Master's degree in banking and finance, and then did finance related jobs, talked about the reason why he cannot apply much of the knowledge he achieved in his work:

'Because (regarding those) in that knowledge learnt, are all some, theoretical things...' (Graduate 19, Male, MSc, Banking and Finance)

Currently, the things used in his jobs are quite practical. He also mentioned that if he could get promotion in his career, perhaps he could use the knowledge learnt previously.

Similarly, when another participant talked about the knowledge from study at Bangor University, he said:

'Regarding the knowledge aspect...it is those from the UK, it is the knowledge from the textbooks. Perhaps...temporarily, perhaps...(it) cannot help me, but (it) perhaps can help me later....What I do in my current job is finance, that is to say, (it is) not used often. Temporarily, perhaps, (it is) still not used often. But later, maybe getting promotion again, maybe, like promotion, leading a team, and so on, (like being) a boss, being, a president...starting a company, hum, maybe...it can be met.' (Graduate 22, Male, MBA, Management)

However, another participant, who had long term work experience before he studied in the UK, and worked for many years after he finished his study at Bangor University, also talked about the utilization of knowledge and abilities achieved from Bangor University in his work:

'It is, partially, fully utilized, cannot saying, completely.' (Graduate 23, Male, MA, Banking and Finance)

His job is as an investment manager, and he said his current job required abundant experience of investment, and in general, should have a relatively higher qualification. However, he said:

'Investment is just one aspect of my abilities. Then, I, perhaps, still have abilities in other aspects, (but) then, in fact, I, I, perhaps, cannot utilized as well....If (the abilities)

used in the investment aspect, it should be fully (utilized).’ (Graduate 23, Male, MA, Banking and Finance)

Similarly, another participant said that:

‘The things learnt and in life...you learnt many things...but when (you go out) into the society, you can’t utilize that many things.’ (Graduate 16, Male, LLM, International Commercial and Business Law)

In addition, there are some participants whose educational background was more complex. For example, a participant (Graduate 29, Male, MA) who studied the programme of Banking and Finance at Bangor University, was working in a bank in China when he was interviewed. It can be seen that his job relates to his education in the UK. However, for his Bachelor degree, he studied international trade in China, so his job when he was interviewed was not relevant to his undergraduate study. As a result, although he worked in a field which was related to a part of his formal education, his knowledge and skills relating to international trade couldn’t be applied in his work.

Moreover, when Chinese graduates from UK universities work in China after their graduation, the differences between the knowledge gained from UK higher education and the reality in China can be seen as another reason why knowledge cannot be completely applied at work. After recognizing the attainment of knowledge from study in the UK, a graduate also pointed out the barriers to application in the workplace in China.

‘In the knowledge aspect, surely, in the specialized courses aspect, there must be...um...achievement....compared with (the things) in China, there is something...um...when really start to work, there are some barriers....For example, maybe after you come back, (you) contact with...hum...for example, you learnt finance. After (you) come back to China, maybe much more of what (you) contact with is some...some things within domestic financial capital market (i.e. Chinese financial capital market), but what you learnt abroad may be more international. It doesn’t have too much involves Chinese market. Like this. For example, what I’m currently doing is about the bond aspect. For the bond, perhaps, it focuses more on Chinese bond market currently. Then perhaps those things you learnt previously, hum, may be cannot be used

completely. You need to absorb some other specific things in China.' (Graduate 5, Female, MSc, Banking and Finance)

Regarding the utilization of the knowledge achieved previously in her current job, she said,

'I only use a small part of the knowledge that I used when I studied at the university previously.' (Graduate 5, Female, MSc, Banking and Finance)

A participant, who studied at Bangor University for 2 years for a Bachelor Degree in Banking and Accounting, and 1 year for a Master's Degree in Banking and Finance, worked in a securities company in China when he was interviewed, said:

'It feels that there is a big distance between the knowledge learnt and the work in China...' (Graduate 14, Male, MSc, Banking and Finance)

Similarly, a participant also identified the fact that:

'If talking about (the knowledge) in the area of Banking, actually, regarding the big domestic market (in China), (according to) my experience after I come back, I think, there is no a very big...that is to say, influence and a practicality. Because you can see that the domestic financial market and the British financial market, er, are two, two worlds, fundamentally.' (Graduate 27, Female, MSc, Banking and Finance)

When a participant was asked whether she could fully utilize the knowledge achieved from Bangor University, she said,

'Um...actually, (it is) not fully (utilized). Because...perhaps, (it is) related to the Asian market....(There are) many brands (that) they actually, they cannot listen to your those theoretical things.' (Graduate 30, Female, MBA, Marketing)

She pointed out that those brands would like to rely on their previous experience.

The utilization of specialized knowledge achieved from UK universities in work can also be determined by the contents of the Chinese graduates' current jobs. For example, a participant said:

'(Regarding) the specialized knowledge aspect...this is used relatively a little bit less at the current stage....Because...after all, what I studied is (about) international,

international aspect...Until now, I, I haven't involved in the work in this aspect...'
(Graduate 31, Male, LLM, International Commercial and Business Law)

Regarding the sources of knowledge and skills used in current work roles, a participant who studied in China for her Bachelor degree before coming to study in the UK, said:

'I think it should be a kind of process of gradual accumulation. All the study in each stage can be a little supplement, a little advancement. Then, it is also gradually accumulated from life. Um...for the current job, after all, it is in China, the majority (i.e. the majority of what she used in her current job) also mainly takes what has been learnt from the undergraduate study as the principal thing. Then, the abilities learnt from Bangor (University), in general, is used for some generalization, some summarizing for myself, and reading some materials...' (Graduate 13, Female, MSc, Accounting and Finance)

Further, the extent to which knowledge and skills gained in the UK can be applied to the job might also be determined by the types of enterprises Chinese graduates from UK universities worked in. In international and foreign companies, people with the experience of studying in the UK can better apply their knowledge and skills. However, if people work in state-owned enterprises or indigenous enterprises in China, there may not be so many opportunities for them to apply the knowledge and skills obtained from UK universities. A participant said:

'...State-owned enterprises, then, central enterprises, and then, for example, er, private enterprises, foreign companies...maybe they are different regarding the properties. So...this leads to that in reality, this kind of work pattern, work style, ...including the method of problem handling are all different. So...if I'm in a state-owned enterprise, and I want to bring the abilities from my study in the UK into full play, this is almost impossible....For example, you want to go to a foreign company. Because your study experience, er, and this kind of culture in the foreign company are relatively close, you can very easily blend into the company, and then, the company can also well blend you. As a result, I think maybe there are some relationships between the employment and the categories of the enterprises.' (Graduate 15, Male, MBA, Marketing)

A participant was working in a private enterprise in China as a marketing manager when she was interviewed. When asked whether she can fully utilize her knowledge and skills in her current work, she said,

'I can utilize (these), but the one hundred percent full (utilization) was limited by the so-called development of a private enterprise.' (Graduate 34, Female, MA, Business and Marketing)

Regarding private enterprises, she remarked,

'Private enterprise take the orientation of the boss, mainly. As a result, (if) the boss think it is like this, you probably need to go to this direction. In addition, ...the letting go and the grip on power of the boss of a private enterprise, this, this, (is what) you need to understand. That is to say, for this area, whether the boss would like, would very much like to let go of the whole, one hundred percent, to let a professional manager to do it, or...he/she only hope you to deliver a part of, ah, what ability...They are different.' (Graduate 34, Female, MA, Business and Marketing)

This participant said that she would like to work in an international company, however, before her current job, she had the experience of a layoff. When she finished her study in the UK and went back to China, she worked in a Swedish company. However, the whole marketing team was laid off. In order to enter the working state as soon as possible, she decided to take her current job. Regarding her current salary, it was lower than the salary in international companies.

For those Chinese graduates who started their own business, the utilization of the knowledge achieved from their education in the UK varies, depending on what business they are in. For example, a participant who studied at Bangor University for an MBA in marketing, and started a business with partners dealing with rescue equipment, said:

'Actually, I, I have used what I learnt....At that time, what I studied for MBA was marketing. Then I, I studied...I also learnt how to write a business plan. I also, I also know this kind of industry, ...a new product, how to do the promotion, how to do the publicity, and how to do the creation....I, maybe, it is related to my programme. Then, in addition, I currently do this kind of international trade. Ah, my products are imported

from Germany, which means that I also have, have contact with foreign people.'
(Graduate 15, Male, MBA, Marketing)

Another participant who studied at Bangor University for his Master's degree in banking and finance, and started a business of early childhood education with some partners, said:

'Regarding my current work environment and work status, it (i.e. the knowledge achieved) doesn't play a role, basically.' (Graduate 24, Male, MSc, Banking and Finance)

However, he also said:

'Although, saying that, I'm doing this early childhood education, ...our vision is put very far away. Early childhood education is only a, a, er, main motivation to work, at the current stage. In the future, we have a more, huger, a, a development plan. At that time, (I) can use ...there are some relevance with the things I learnt, or the knowledge learnt.'
(Graduate 24, Male, MSc, Banking and Finance)

Moreover, most of the participants with a Master's degree said that their job position did not require a Master's degree. They had colleagues with a Bachelor degree, or even without a Bachelor degree. Some participants said that their job could be done by a person without their level of degree or without their knowledge or ability. These participants can be deemed as underemployed, because they are over-qualified relative to their job role.

'In our company, there are two hundred...about two hundred forty staff. There are only four with Master's degree.' (Graduate 4, Male, BA, Business Studies and Finance)

'Most of the colleagues around me hold a Bachelor degree.' (Graduate 14, Male, MSc, Banking and Finance)

A graduate said she had colleagues who held a Bachelor degree, and she pointed out that:

'Actually I think in many times, a job, it, except the job that really need a very high education background as, as the foundation, actually many (jobs), no matter the people with a Bachelor degree do them or the people with a Master's degree do them, the effects are similar....Especially, for, um, the junior level positions at the starting point of the work, there are no many differences....Sometimes, it seems that the experience is

the better thing to offer. Of course, maybe after you work for some years, maybe your qualification will come in handy, ...for the promotion... (Graduate 5, Female, MSc, Banking and Finance)

Another participant, who thought her current job could be done by a person without her high academic qualification, overseas educational background, or her abilities, said:

'Because...the junior jobs in any company are all very...simple. So actually, anybody can do these.' (Graduate 35, Female, BSc, Banking and Finance)

The participant (Graduate 8, Female, MSc, Banking and Finance), who has been mentioned before, who studied 2 years for her Bachelor degree and 1 year for her Master's degree at Bangor University in banking and finance, and was working as a sales assistant in the UK when she was interviewed said that neither her manager nor her assistant manager had studied at university.

A participant who worked in an accounting firm in China said that a Master's degree was not required when she applied for the job, however, she said,

'It can also be (applied by) the person with a Bachelor degree,...the CV can be submitted to (there). However, ah, whether (the company) can give...the opportunities of interview and written test (to the person with a Bachelor degree), it also depends on how the company...think about this.' (Graduate 33, Female, MBA, Banking and Finance)

She also pointed out that most people in her department had a Master's degree. This may explain why many Chinese students and their parents believe that having a Master's degree can enhance competitiveness in the labour market. Even though a job does not require a Master's degree, whether a person who only has a Bachelor degree can obtain the job may depend on how the employers think, and what degree level his/her competitors hold.

With regard to perceived overqualification, which means a person perceives that he or she is overqualified for the job, and has more education or skills than the job demands (McKee-Ray & Harvey, 2011), as many participants realized that they held a higher degree than the job required, and they had more knowledge and skills from their education than the job demands, perceived overqualification would exist among them according to McKee-Ray and Harvey

(2011). However, as discussed above, whether it is possible for a person to fully utilize their knowledge and skills in a job is questionable, so perceived overqualification needs more discussion, which will be provided in the next chapter. Similarly, relative deprivation, which includes both 'the perception that a job is lacking in some way' and 'the belief that the job should be better than it is' (McKee-Ray & Harvey, 2011, p.974), will also be discussed in the next chapter. From this research, it is found that experiencing objective underemployment may not lead to the feeling of subjective underemployment. For example, a participant said that she had colleagues who only had a Bachelor degree or who earned a similar salary to her but did not have as high level of qualification or as strong abilities as she did. However, she did not express anything related to subjective underemployment. She said,

'Because I think until now, ...the thing what I'm doing is the thing I need to do at present. I think if I want to find a better one, I need, at present, need, need to...accumulate.'
(Graduate 3, Female, MSc, Business with Consumer Psychology)

Supply and Demand in the Chinese Graduate Labour Market

Regarding supply and demand in the Chinese labour market for graduates from UK universities, one participant who said that currently there is a balance between supply and demand, pointed out that,

'I think, for the moment, it should be at a stabilization, that is, supply and demand is equal. Because for me, that is to say, according to the circumstance around me...I have known that many (graduates from UK universities) don't come to (the labour market to) work on their own initiative. Many of them have, that is to say, have their own, start their own businesses, or work in family businesses, or for some of them, that is to say, their parents prepared the jobs (for them). Some arrangements like these, ...it seems that, among most of the people I know, (the number of the people who) really come out to apply for jobs is relatively small.' (Graduate 13, Female, MSc, Accounting and Finance)

Similarly, another participant who said this relationship between supply and demand for overseas returnees in Chinese labour market was relatively balanced gave the reasons as,

'One (reason), it is, many overseas returnees, after they come back, they not always go to look for jobs by themselves. Hum...a large part of them, they, ah, choose to start their businesses as soon as they come back....Now, there are many, overseas returnees entrepreneurship, or something, these programmes, ah, and the country also provides subsidies, or something. These support a large part of the...overseas returnees to do the things what they themselves would like to do, to start businesses....Then, another part is, ...ah, it is also a very large part....The overseas returnees, before (they) go abroad, actually, their parents, or somebody, ah, their family, ...have a certain expectation on him/her. Ah, for example, he/she, he/she come back to his/her family's...company, parent(s)' company, to work there...' (Graduate 33, Female, MBA, Banking and Finance)

Another participant believes that the demand for graduates from UK universities in the Chinese labour market exceeds the supply, because not many of them enter the labour market to look for jobs.

'I think, it is half, it is estimated that there are half (of them) belong to that kind of arrangement by the family. After (they are) sent abroad, (they are) gold-plated. Then after (they) come back, (they) take over the family's, for example, enterprise or factory, and so on. It is a small number (of them) directly...after (they) come back, enter the job market....Most of, for example, like this kind of units or companies, all will have a kind of preference for the graduates who have the background of overseas returnees...' (Graduate 14, Male, MSc, Banking and Finance)

However, most of the participants believe that in general, the supply of Chinese graduates from UK universities exceeds the actual demand, because there are not many jobs especially for graduates who have experience of studying abroad, and the number of this kind of graduates is very large.

'Actually, now, there are many students study abroad....Actually, there is a little bit saturation in the (labour) market. It is, not exactly the same as before.' (Graduate 9, Female, MSc, Banking and Finance)

The relationship between supply and demand for Chinese graduates from UK universities depends on city size. Many participants agree that in big urban cities in China, like Beijing or Shanghai, there are more work opportunities.

'... (it) also depends on cities, the opportunities in big cities are more.' (Staff 1, from the Chinese office of Bangor University)

'My opinion is, regarding the big cities, perhaps, it can be relatively... relieved a little, however, for the small cities, it should be the supply exceeds the demand, obviously.' (Graduate 32, Female, MSc, Banking and Finance)

When a participant was asked whether there were more opportunities for overseas returnees in big cities, like Beijing, compared with smaller places, he said,

'Maybe there are more (opportunities). After all, the large, large enterprises are more (in big cities, like Beijing).' (Graduate 15, Male, MBA, Marketing)

These work opportunities are certainly not only for the overseas returnees, but more opportunities mean more possibilities. In addition, as discussed before, large enterprises and overseas returnees might be more attractive to each other. Even though the competition is fiercer, the greater existence of work opportunities there can reduce some of the pressures of finding a job. For example, when a participant talked about the opportunities and pressures of finding a job in Shenzhen, he said:

'I...thought...opportunities are more, relative to some second, second-tier cities....I think, ...relative to, relative to small cities, the pressure of finding a job...I think it is smaller, anyway. After all, ...work opportunities are, are, are there....Otherwise, ...if...that kind of job positions which you want, that kind of positions of the employment orientation which you want...are all no longer in existence, ...then this pressure is, is, is cannot be said...' (Graduate 28, Male, MSc, Banking and Finance)

In addition, the relationship between supply and demand in the Chinese labour market for graduates from UK universities also depends on the subject areas the Chinese graduates from UK universities studied. A participant pointed out,

'For example, the Chinese people who go the UK to study business studies can be relatively more, (who) study finance can be relatively more, and (who) study accounting

can be relatively more.....Actually, it is, (regarding their) employment after go back to China, ...I believe there are also very good (employment). Ah, however, (the Chinese people) who study, this, finance, study finance and business studies in the UK, can be too many, too many, so it is said that, supply over demand...' (Graduate 37, Male, LLM, International Commercial and Business Law)

However, if dividing Chinese graduates from UK universities into different groups according to their knowledge and abilities, the relationship between supply and demand in the Chinese labour market for graduates from UK universities cannot be simply concluded. A participant, who worked as a marketing manager when she was interviewed, said:

'Because I, myself, could recruit people....(If) some overseas returnees are not qualified overseas returnees, I certainly cannot...I would rather choose a, domestic (graduate). I only can say like this.' (Graduate 34, Female, MA, Business and Marketing)

She pointed out that if an overseas returnee comes from a relatively good university abroad, and has broad horizons and knowledge, this overseas returnee has a competitive edge in the Chinese labour market. She would like to recruit this kind of overseas returnees. Another participant also recognized the demand for good overseas returnees in China.

'There are some students, who actually, are really graduated from very good universities, and they learnt very well....Then I think actually, there is this demand in China. There must be this demand. Because many enterprises are seeking a way to connect with abroad, or a way to make the local things international. Then, for them, ... (there are) a native, and a, and a person who has the dual characters of both home and abroad, it is certain that the latter is in a little bit greater demand.' (Graduate 27, Female, MSc, Banking and Finance)

To conclude, regarding sub-question 3, *'What are the current employment situations and actual labour market experience of Chinese graduates from Bangor University?'* It can be seen that, regarding job hunting experience, most of the participants found their jobs by themselves, through online methods, campus recruitment, social recruitment and so on. In addition, some participants found the job with their guanxi. Whether they hunted for jobs in China or in the UK, Chinese graduates from UK universities have their own advantages and disadvantages. Among the 39 Chinese graduates from Bangor University who participated in this research, 35 of them were employed when they were interviewed. Underemployment exists among these 35

participants, but it is generally believed that most of them were adequately employed when they were interviewed. Regarding the relationship between supply and demand of Chinese graduates from UK universities in the Chinese labour market, it is generally thought that supply exceeds demand, especially in small cities and for those Chinese graduates who studied business related disciplines, such as accounting and finance. However, there is still a demand for very good Chinese graduates from UK universities.

Conclusion

This chapter analysed the findings generated from 42 interviews with Chinese graduates from Bangor University and relevant university staff members. Regarding the influences of Chinese graduates' socioeconomic background on their education in the UK relating to research question one, their parents may act as planner or supporter for their studies in the UK. In addition, other people may also affect their decisions with regard to studying in the UK. For those people who had long-term work experience before they came to study in the UK, the factors that drive them to study in the UK may be their own experiences and opinions. Regarding the influence of Chinese graduates' socioeconomic background on their labour market experience, *guanxi*, a kind of social capital, can affect both their experience of job-hunting and their experience in their work. For the self-employed graduates, financial support from their parents, which is a kind of economic capital, is very significant for their business.

Turning to sub-question 2, for Chinese graduates from Bangor University, the reasons for studying in the UK include the characteristics of time-saving and cost-saving, the leading position of UK higher education and the quality of the programme, the consideration of their careers, and the relatively easy access to UK universities for a Master's Degree. The Chinese graduates' expectations from studying in the UK include successful graduation, increasing their competitiveness in the labour market, obtaining the opportunity to work in the UK, and experiencing a different culture. Their achievements from studying at UK universities include degree subject knowledge, understanding and skills, generic skills and career development learning. When they graduated from UK universities, some of them did not have a clear view

about their future jobs, especially the younger graduates. The Chinese graduates who had long-term work experience had a clearer view with regard to jobs after graduation.

Finally turning to sub-question 3, regarding Chinese graduates' labour market experience and socioeconomic attainment after their graduation from UK universities, during their job-hunting experience most of the participants who sought jobs in China experienced short time unemployment. Most of the participants found their jobs by themselves, through online methods, campus recruitment and so on. Some of the participants found their jobs with the help of others. Guanxi, the social capital, plays an important role in this situation. When the Chinese graduates look for jobs in China after their graduation from UK universities, their knowledge, skills and degrees bring them positive effects. However, these can also make them feel under a lot of pressure in the labour market. As overseas returnees in China, Chinese graduates from UK universities have the advantage of broad horizons, better English language skills, better adaptive capacity, and having networks between the overseas returnees. In addition, some enterprises prefer to recruit people who have experience of studying abroad. With respect their disadvantages, some of them have higher expectations than reality; some knowledge learnt from the UK is not suitable for Chinese situations; many of them lack internship experience; the gains from one-year Master's study in the UK might be queried by some employers; how long they would stay in their enterprises was a concern for some small enterprises; the difference between the scoring system in the UK and in China may cause them troubles; and Chinese graduates from UK universities may lack social networks in China. In addition, some Chinese graduates would like to work in the UK after they graduated from UK universities. For them, their advantages include the ability of bilingualism, being good at mathematics, and being hardworking. Their disadvantages refer to their English language skills, difficulties fitting into society in the UK because of the culture differences, and the difficulties getting a visa to work in the UK.

Among the 39 Chinese graduates who participated in this research, there are 3 Chinese graduates who were unemployed at the time when they were interviewed. There are another 2 Chinese graduates who are outside the labour force, but they are not unemployed. The other 34 participants in this research were employed when they were interviewed. Underemployment exists among these 34 participants. For Chinese graduates from UK universities, regarding supply and demand in the Chinese labour market, most of the participants believe that in general, the supply of Chinese graduates from UK universities exceeds the actual demand.

In order to answer the main research question, '*what is the relationship between the human capital of Chinese graduates from Bangor University and their labour market experience?*' it is generally believed that their human capital accumulated from their educational experience in the UK can enhance their competitiveness in the labour market. Most of the Chinese graduates from Bangor University who participated in this research were adequately employed when they were interviewed. However, among the participants in this research, there are Chinese graduates who were unemployed or underemployed when they were interviewed. It can be seen that the halo of the overseas returnees has become faded in recent years, so the things of great importance are knowledge, skills, capability, and performance of the graduates, not just the UK educational background and a certificate from a UK university.

In the next chapter, further discussion, which included comparing and contrasting these findings and existing literature, will be provided.

Chapter 5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Introduction

Chinese students occupied the largest proportion of students from non-EU countries of domicile in UK HEPs from 2010/11 to 2014/15. Their employment is of great importance not only for themselves, but also for UK universities, as good employment of alumni can help keep universities attractive to potential students. The exploration of their work and employment experience can also help UK universities to identify the areas that need to be improved in order to enhance the employability of the large number of Chinese students. In addition, it is also valuable for UK policy-makers, as current policies in the UK regarding the work-visa are quite tight for international students. Besides, a better understanding of the competitiveness of Chinese graduates from UK universities can guide employers to a better utilization of these talents, whether in the UK or in China. Furthermore, the overall picture regarding the employment of Chinese graduates from UK universities can also provide potential Chinese students with a reference when they consider pursuing their higher education in the UK.

However, the employment studies focusing on Chinese graduates from UK universities are rare. In addition, the academic literature regarding graduate employment largely adopts a quantitative approach, which achieves breadth but lacks depth. This is due to the characteristic of the quantitative approach, producing generalizable findings from a large sample to a relevant population, rather than generating deep contextual understanding, which is a characteristic of qualitative approach. In order to address these gaps, this qualitative research used semi-structured interviews to investigate the work and employment destinations of Chinese graduates from Bangor University (in Wales, the UK) after completing their education in the UK. Their considerations before they studied in the UK and their experience of studying in the UK are also explored. A single case study has been conducted, with Bangor University being the single case. The participants of this research include Chinese graduates who achieved their Bachelor, Master's and/or PhD degree from Bangor University, and relevant staff members of Bangor University.

The conceptual framework underpinning this research is built on human capital theory, social mobility theory and institutional theories, and especially based on and developed from Blau and Duncan's (1967) model of the socioeconomic life cycle. Human capital theory emphasizes the supply-side importance of education as a method to generate economic benefits. Social mobility

theory indicates that not only education, but also socioeconomic background, can affect an individual's socioeconomic attainment. In addition, institutional theories form a macro political economy environment for this research. From this study, it can be seen that these theories together provide a comprehensive view regarding the influential factors of an individual's socioeconomic attainment, which includes not only education, but also an individual's socioeconomic background, segmentations in the labour market and political economy factors. Figure 13 provides the conceptual framework based on these three theories, together with the research findings, which can apply to Chinese graduates from UK universities in terms of their employment. The Chinese graduates' economic capital, social capital and cultural capital form their socioeconomic background, which can directly and indirectly affect their socioeconomic attainment, and results in their adequate employment, underemployment, unemployment and being outside the labour force. The direct influences (relationship C) refers to the influences of their *guanxi* on their job-hunting and in the workplace. In addition, the experience of the Chinese graduates who were working in family business or who were self-employed is also under the direct influence of their socioeconomic background. The indirect influences ($A \times B$) refers to the influences of Chinese graduates' socioeconomic background on their socioeconomic attainment as mediated by their educational attainment. The educational attainment of Chinese graduates from UK universities includes degree subject knowledge, understanding and skills, generic skills and career development learning. The influences of their socioeconomic attainment on their educational attainment (relationship A) may come from their parents, others or themselves, and the influences of their educational attainment on their socioeconomic attainment (relationship B) may be embodied in their job-hunting process or in their workplaces. In addition, the macro-environment factors can also affect the work and employment experience of Chinese graduates from UK universities, including institutional varieties of political economy and labour market segmentations. The influential factors of the former found in this research are factors affect their education (differences between education in the UK and in China and popular programme of the time) and factors affect their employment (the immigration rules in the UK, the cancellation of the Post-Study Work Visa in 2012, and the 2008 financial crisis). The influences of labour market segmentations may come from institutional segmentation, regional segmentation, restrictions of industries, restriction of work experience, and time segmentation.

In this chapter, first, the main findings related to the work and employment experience of Chinese graduates from Bangor University are outlined below, and they are compared and

contrasted with existing literature. Based on this, the overall conclusion of the study is drawn. Then, theoretical, methodological, practical and policy implications are generated. In the end, a discussion of the limitations of this study and recommendations for potential future research are provided.

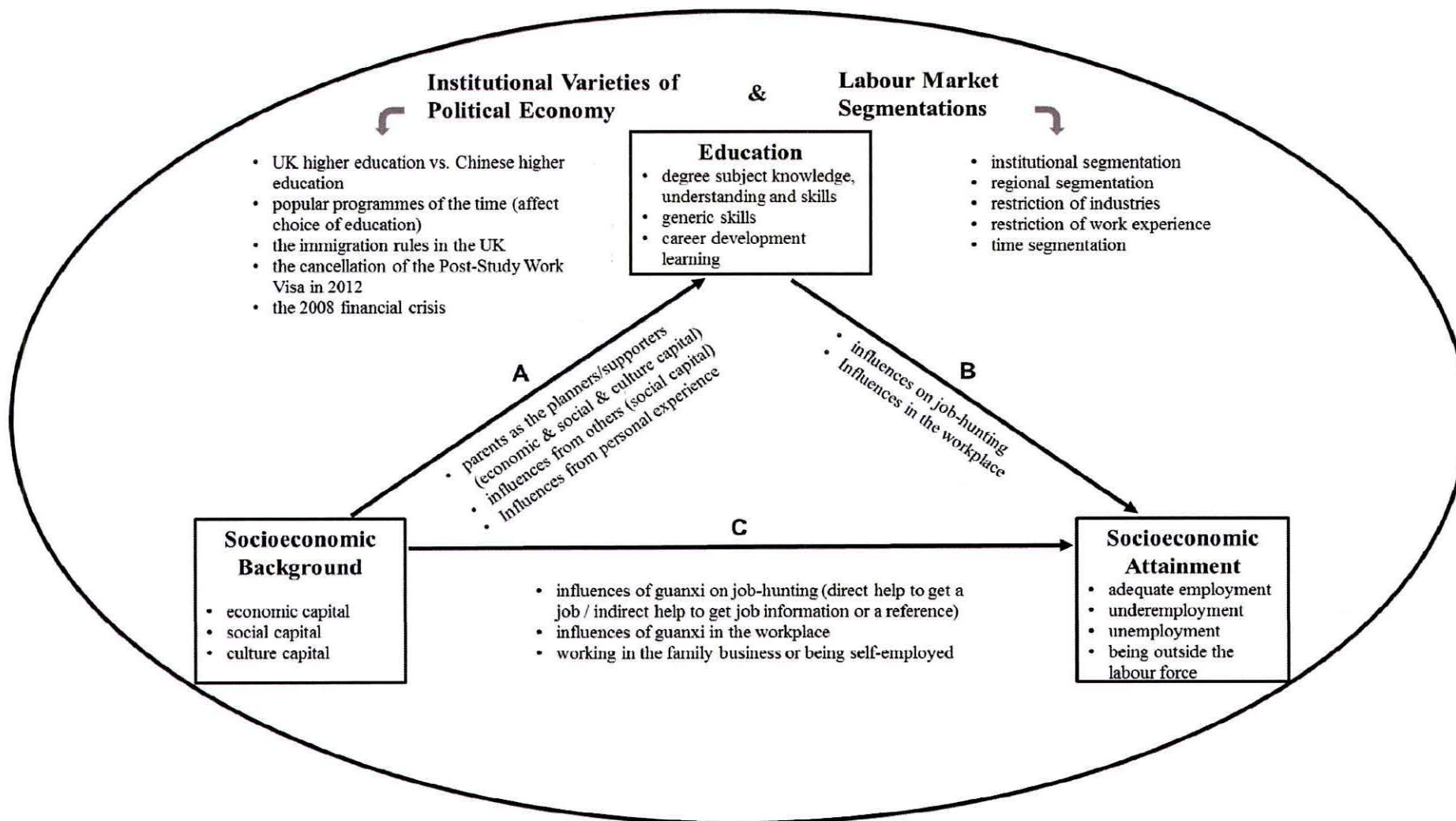


Figure 13. Conceptual Framework Apply to Chinese Graduates from UK Universities

Discussion of Findings

This section provides the discussion regarding adequate employment, unemployment and underemployment of Chinese graduates from Bangor University (in Wales, the UK), their socioeconomic background and job destination, their educational attainment and career expectations, and their current employment situations and labour market experience.

Adequate Employment, Unemployment and Underemployment

The main research question is '*what is the relationship between the human capital of Chinese graduates from Bangor University and their labour market experience?*' Li, Morgan and Ding (2011, p.94) indicate that in China, investing in higher education is treated by individuals and families as a way to 'secure both a higher income and status in society'. From this research, it can be seen that many Chinese students and Chinese parents believe that obtaining a higher degree can enhance competitiveness in the labour market, and treat it as a route to getting a better job. This reflects what is conveyed by human capital theory: individuals make investment into their education, expecting greater 'output' and 'profits' (Fevre, 1992, p. 27). In addition, from an organization's perspective, the value and uniqueness of human capital can affect employment decisions (Lepak & Snell, 1999). This research finds that the investment into Chinese graduates' higher education in the UK cannot always directly generate economic outcomes for them, and employers value other factors not only overseas educational background. Among the 39 Chinese graduates from Bangor University who participated in this research, 35 of them were employed, 2 of them were unemployed, and 2 of them were outside the labour force when they were interviewed. Regarding adequate employment and underemployment, it is preferred not to provide numbers here, because underemployment is very complex. Although many of the Chinese graduates from Bangor University who participated in this research can be defined as underemployed according to McKee-Ryan and Harvey's (2011) eight underemployment dimensions, a conclusion cannot be simply made. Detailed discussion will be provided later.

Adequate Employment and Underemployment

According to Feldman (1996), although there are some conceptually different dimensions regarding underemployment, most previous research only involved univariate measures of underemployment. In order to explore the adequate employment and underemployment of the Chinese graduates from UK universities from a comprehensive view, the discussion is based on their salaries, hierarchical positions, working hours (full time/part time), educational background, job fields, skills, experience, and their subjective feelings, which are derived from McKee-Ryan and Harvey's (2011) eight underemployment dimensions. An individual who is employed without these dimensions of underemployment is deemed to be employed adequately. From this research, it was found that there were Chinese graduates from Bangor University who were underemployed with regard to their salaries, education, job fields, skills and subjective feelings, according to McKee-Ryan and Harvey's (2011) underemployment dimensions. However, the reality regarding their employment experience is more complex. Their underemployment defined according to McKee-Ryan and Harvey's (2011) underemployment dimensions might not simply related to negative labour market experience. As a result, the employment of the Chinese graduates in this research cannot be judged simply by providing the number of Chinese graduates who were underemployed. More discussion of their labour market experience should be included.

Many Chinese graduates with a Master's degree who participated in this research and worked in China when they were interviewed pointed out that their degree resulted in extra payment in their salaries, compared with people with a Bachelor Degree, although a Master's degree was not required when some of them applied for their jobs. This finding is consistent Brynin's (2002) suggestion that possessing excess education for a job by and large positively influenced wages. When overqualified people are compared with those who do the same job as them but hold lower qualifications, their rewards are higher (Brynin, 2002). Although this kind of degree-related extra payment in salaries does not exist in all enterprises, some of the participants who recognized the extra payment brought by their Master's degree worked in international companies in China when they were interviewed, while some of them worked in Chinese local enterprises. It can be seen that their investment into their education brings them more economic benefits regarding salary compared with those without a Master's degree. This reflects the argument put forward by human capital theory that individuals generate economic benefits from investing in people (Sweetland, 1996). However, if the companies provide relative low salaries in the industry, the amount received by the employees is relatively low, even though receiving

this extra payment brought by a Master's degree or working at a higher level of hierarchical position. It means that educational background is a factor that can influence the salary of an individual; however, it was not the only determinant. There are also other factors which can affect salary, such as the circumstance of the company an individual works in.

One participant chose to work in a company which provided a relatively low salary, but a high level of flexibility. He treated the freedom also as part of the 'salary'. It can be seen that it is possible that an individual can accept a job which provides a relatively low salary to get something else that is valuable to him/her, such as flexibility. This finding is partially consistent with what pointed out by Elias and Purcell (2004): some graduates take up non-graduation occupations as lifestyle choices, although the participant's job was not a non-graduate occupation.

In addition, in many enterprises, salaries are related to the performance of individuals, rather than being just a fixed amount. It might be possible that two fresh graduates with similar educational backgrounds do the same job, but one gets a much higher salary than the other. It cannot be said that the one getting a lower salary is underemployed regarding pay, because their performance is not as good as the one getting the higher salary. Performance might not only be determined by the educational background or skills an individual possesses, but also be influenced by one's attitude towards job tasks, the efforts an individual puts into the job, or one's interpersonal connections or *guanxi* (as discussed in the findings chapter, such as the network between Chinese graduates from UK universities, or their lack of social networks in China). As a result, an individual who is seemingly underpaid in comparison with similarly skilled employees should not be simply defined as experiencing pay underemployment. In reality, salary is not only related to one's education and experience, but also affected by one's performance in the workplace.

Among the 35 Chinese graduates from Bangor University who were employed when they were interviewed, one of them chose to work part-time voluntarily, for the reason that working full-time in that job was too tiring and time was a little tense. It can be seen that an individual may like to do a part-time job rather than a full-time one in exchange for something else that is valuable to him/her, such as less tiredness and more flexible working time.

Turning now to job fields, some of the Chinese graduates from Bangor University who participated in this research worked in fields which were not relevant to their formal education at all. For example, a participant (Graduate 16, Male, LLM, International Commercial and

Business Law) worked as a project manager in the game industry when he was interviewed. His job field was neither relevant to his undergraduate study nor his postgraduate study. As a result, a job field underemployment (McKee-Ryan & Harvey, 2011) occurred according to the definition. However, this participant said that his current job was what he was interested in, and he was very satisfied with his current employment situation. There is a large body of underemployment related literature linking underemployment to a negative labour market experience. For example, Feldman and Turnley (1995) and Burke (1997) explore underemployment among business school graduates, and both studies link underemployment to negative work outcomes. Feldman, Leana and Bolino. (2002) examine underemployment among re-employed executives, and their results indicate that underemployment is relevant to some negative attitudes toward jobs and careers. Nabi's (2003) study examines the opportunity for skill use and career experience among business graduates. The key findings indicate that those graduates who were underemployed 'reported significantly lower opportunity for skill use, and significantly lower intrinsic (job, career and life satisfaction) and extrinsic career success (salary)' than their counterparts who were appropriately employed (Nabi, 2003, p.379). Cassidy and Wright (2008, p.181) point out the harmful effects caused by underemployment on 'psychological and physical health, social support, optimism and achievement motivation'. McKee-Ryan and Harvey (2011) indicate that the experience of workers who are suffering underemployment is more similar to the experience of workers who are unemployed, than to the experience of workers who are employed adequately. However, in the case of this participant, it can be seen that his voluntary job field underemployment did not negatively affect him. Working in the field which he was interested in made him feel happy in his job. Although he was underemployed regarding job field, his experience more closely reflected the experience of workers who are employed adequately than that of workers who are unemployed. Erdogan et al. (2011) point out that people may take jobs for which they are overqualified but still obtain a deep sense of satisfaction from the jobs if they are consistent with their interests and values. From the findings of this research, it can be seen that people may also take jobs which are not related to the fields of their formal education but still feel satisfied if the jobs are consistent with their interests. In addition, among those Chinese graduates from Bangor University who were self-employed when they were interviewed for this research, most of the businesses were in areas not related to their formal education. However, among these self-employed Chinese graduates whose business were not related to their formal education, most of them did not subjectively feel underemployed. It shows that although these people were underemployed

regarding job field, working in a field in which they were interested reduced or even eliminated subjective underemployment.

Glyde (1977) points out credentialism as one of the factors which result in underemployment. This is where employers emphasize 'a degree, diploma, or other certified skill' and discount 'informal, or uncertified, human capital' (Glyde, 1988, p. 253). Accordingly, if a vacancy is applied for by two workers who have equal amounts of human capital, the one who has more formal training may often be chosen (Glyde, 1977). The employer's emphasis on formal certification could also explain why so many Chinese students and Chinese parents believe that having a higher degree is more competitive in the labour market. However, the findings of this research indicate that the Master's degree achieved by some Chinese graduates from UK universities is not always required for their jobs, and degree related knowledge and skills obtained from UK universities is not always used in their workplaces.

In this research, about half of the employed Chinese graduates who gained their Master's degree from the UK said that a Master's degree was not required to enter their current jobs. This reflects the credential gap (Livingstone, 2004), which refers to 'the difference between education attained and education required for entry into the job' (Weststar, 2009, p.725). However, some of them did not express anything related to subjective underemployment (Livingstone 2004), which is 'workers' sense of whether or not their knowledge and abilities are being adequately utilized in their jobs' (Weststar, 2009, p.725). This is similar to the findings of Weststar's (2009, p.734) study, which shows that holding educational attainment beyond what is needed for the job entry is reported by a portion of the labour force, however, among the labour force who are credentially underemployed, 'only about half report subjective feelings of underemployment'.

Regarding the reasons for this phenomenon, there is a possibility that some Chinese graduates with a Master's degree from the UK actually only held the minimum abilities and skills required in order to obtain a Master's degree from UK universities. This can be reflected by the situation that some of the Chinese graduates with a Master's degree who participated in this research said that their achievements of knowledge or skills from their study in the UK were limited. As a result, they didn't reach the average level of Master's graduates. For these graduates, their qualifications meet the requirement of the jobs which need a Master's degree, but, their knowledge, abilities and skills may not be sufficient to make them competent to do those jobs. As a result, when they did the jobs which did not need a Master's degree, their knowledge, abilities and skills could be utilized appropriately and fully. These graduates need to develop

themselves in order to achieve a real match between their knowledge, abilities and skills and their qualifications. This links with heterogeneous skills theory (Green & McIntosh, 2007), which indicates that an individual can be over-qualified in terms of the formal paper qualification only, and the skills held by the individual are completely appropriate for his/her job. Green and Zhu (2010) separated the situation of overqualification into two categories, depending on whether the overqualification is linked with under-utilization of skills. They term the two categories as 'Real Overqualification' and 'Formal Overqualification' (Green & Zhu, 2010, p.751). The former refers to the individual who is both overqualified and overskilled, while the latter refers to the individual who is overqualified but his/her skills are fully utilized (Green & Zhu, 2010). Those participants with a credential gap and at lower levels of knowledge, abilities and skills compared with their degrees fall within the 'Formal Overqualification' (Green & Zhu, 2010, p.751).

However, those participants with a credential gap but without subjective underemployment were not all at lower levels of knowledge, abilities and skills compared with their degrees. From heterogeneous skills theory (Green & McIntosh, 2007), there is also a possibility that a job requires a person with certain abilities and skills, which are not expressed in terms of a formal paper qualification. This is also reflected in the findings of this research. A participant (Graduate 33, Female, MBA, Banking and Finance), who had a Master's degree said that there was no rigid requirement for a Master's degree in her job. However, she pointed out that most of the staff members in her department had a Master's degree. It can be seen that this participant seems over-qualified, but, in reality, this might not be the case.

In addition, accumulation in a job and learning from a job were both expressed by some participants who had a credential gap but did not feel underemployed subjectively. As some of the participants pointed out that the knowledge learnt from UK universities was theoretical, and some knowledge was not suitable for the situation in China, therefore, accumulation in the job and learning from the job were important. In addition, some participants said that lack of work experience was one of the disadvantages of Chinese graduates from UK universities, so accumulating work experience is also of great significance for their long-term career development. This finding is consistent with what Scurry and Blenkinsopp (2011, p.646) concluded from Alpin, Shackleton, and Walsh (1998) and Batenburg and De Witte's (2001) study: 'underemployment can be a temporary transitional period for acquiring additional skills and experience, a stepping stone or bridge into more desirable situations, or a 'stop gap' before career decisions are made'. In addition, Hartog (2000, p.140) points out that from the

perspective of human capital, overeducation might be caused by a deliberate choice, for the reason that 'the low level job is a good investment opportunity'. Moreover, Blenkinsopp and Scurry (2007) suggest that significant benefits can be brought by graduates in non-graduate occupations to organizations. Erdogan et al. (2011) indicate that besides the drawbacks overqualification causes for both organizations and workers, overqualification may also bring some positive outcomes for both employers and employees. For example, being overqualified for a lower level job position may prepare an individual for a higher responsibility job position within the same organization, and organizations can also benefit from a highly qualified pool of employees for promotion to higher level job positions (Erdogan et al., 2011). Consistent with this point of view, in this research, it is found that accumulation in an overqualified job position can also prepare an individual for a higher job position in other organizations.

Although there are participants with a credential gap but without subjective underemployment, most of the participants with a credential gap said that they could not use their knowledge or skills in their jobs, or they could only utilize a little. These participants can be defined as having both a credential gap and subjective underemployment, according to the definition, and they are related to 'Real Overqualification' from Green and Zhu (2010, p. 751). However, for some of them, it was normal to not fully utilize the knowledge and skills, because the differences between academic learning and real work, the differences between learning in the UK and the reality in China, and the difference between one's whole knowledge, abilities and skills and his/her specific job field are all unavoidable in reality. As a result, their subjective underemployment is different from the feeling of 'somehow as an inferior, lesser, or lower quality type of employment' (Feldman, 1996, p.387), and it does not lead to a negative labour market experience. Even though some participants without a credential gap (they held a Master's degree and their jobs required a Master's degree) also expressed that they did not adequately utilize knowledge and skills for the reasons above, Ren, Zhu and Warner (2011) point out that university education does not only rely on skills training, which differs from vocational education. It is questionable therefore whether the broad knowledge (especially theoretical and academic knowledge), abilities and skills achieved from higher education can be adequately applied in a specific job position in reality.

Yue and Zhou (2017) provide a trend study on the employment of Chinese college graduates based on the data collected in 2003, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2011, 2013, 2015 and 2017 by the Institute of Economics of Education of Peking University, and indicate that there is an overall upward trend regarding the percentage of the college graduates whose present educational level

equals to the required level of their jobs. Nearly seventy percent of college graduates realize a matching between educational level and job requirement in their employment (Yue and Zhou, 2017). In addition, there is an overall downtrend regarding the percentage of the college graduates who are over-educated, and the lowest point is 14.2% in 2017 (Yue and Zhou, 2017). However, they do not provide the percentage and the trend of over-education among college graduates with different educational level. In this research, it is found that about half of the employed Chinese graduates who gained their Master's degree from the UK said that a Master's degree was not required to enter their current jobs, it seems that the over-education rate found in this research among the Chinese graduates from Bangor University is higher than the over-education rate of the Chinese college graduates in Yue and Zhou's (2017) study. According to Tian and Ji (2017, p.364), in China, 'the higher the level of the degree, the more likely the incidence of over-education', which provides a possible reason for this. Most of the Chinese graduates who participated in this research achieved a Master's degree, while Yue and Zhou's (2017) study involves Chinese college graduates at different educational levels, and the majority are under the postgraduate degree level.

In this research, it is found that the younger and more recent Chinese graduates from UK universities were more likely to be underemployed than the older ones or the ones who achieved their degrees from UK universities earlier. This is consistent with the findings of Burke's (1997) study, which explored underemployment among business school graduates. Both age and graduation year were significantly relevant to self-reported levels of underemployment, with higher levels of underemployment reported by younger, more recent graduates (Burke, 1997). Similarly, Tian and Ji (2017, p.364) indicate that in China, 'the occurrence of over-education decreases with age, while younger workers are more likely to be over-educated than middle-aged and older workers'. According to Burke (1997, p.633), possible reasons for this may include 'the more difficult times more recent business school graduates have had in generally obtaining jobs and full-time permanent jobs more specifically', and the possibility that 'older, less recent graduates have 'grown' into their jobs' with 'some sort of adaptation or self-selection having taken place with the passage of time'. Similarly, in this research, the fiercer graduate-related labour market in recent years can be seen as one of the reasons why the younger and more recent Chinese graduates from Bangor University are more likely to be underemployed than the older ones or the ones who achieved their degrees from Bangor University. In addition, as some Chinese graduates from Bangor University who participated in this research pointed out, the halo of the people who had experience of studying abroad was fading, and they were

not always at an advantage in the labour market, which can be seen as the second reason. Many years ago, when there were not many overseas returnees, those people who had studied abroad were very competitive in the labour market. However, it is not the case now, because more and more Chinese people have had the experience of studying abroad. The third reason is the same as that identified by Burke (1997): labour market experience of the older, less recent Chinese graduates, the growth in their jobs, their adaptation or their self-selection, has helped them to reduce the possibility of being underemployed. Besides, in this research, it is also found that the older, more recent graduates are less likely to be underemployed, because they had accumulated certain work experience before they came to study in the UK.

To conclude, in this research, among the 35 Chinese graduates from Bangor University in the UK who were employed when they were interviewed, some of them encountered underemployment regarding their salaries, education, job fields, skills and subjective feelings. However, among these underemployed Chinese graduates from UK universities, some of them were voluntarily underemployed for their own reasons. In addition, it was also found that underemployment is not always related to negative labour market experience; on the contrary, it might have some potential benefits not fully identified in existing literature.

Unemployment and Being outside the Labour Force

Among the 39 Chinese graduates from Bangor University who participated in this research, there are two who were unemployed and two who were outside the labour force when they were interviewed. One of the unemployed Chinese graduates was looking for job opportunities in the UK, while the other unemployed Chinese graduates and the two Chinese graduates who were outside the labour force were in China.

With regard to looking for job opportunities in the UK, even though the unemployed Chinese graduates looking for job opportunities in the UK had achieved a high degree from university, it was not easy to obtain a job in the UK. It was widely agreed among the participants, not only the graduates, but also the relevant university staff members, that the current UK visa regime was a big barrier for the Chinese graduates who would like to work in the UK. In fact, it is not a barrier only for Chinese graduates, but for all international students who would like to work in the UK after their study at UK universities. In addition, many Chinese graduates from Bangor

University who participated in this research believed that, regarding employment opportunities in the UK, if there are two candidates, one is Chinese and one is British, who have equal amount of human capital, the employers in the UK prefer to accept the British candidate. One of the reasons for this refers to the possibility that the Chinese cannot integrate with other employees in the organization, which is similar to what was found by Pang (1996). Cultural differences and English language ability were also mentioned by some participants as reasons, and these might be the fundamental reasons. They cause that some Chinese cannot integrate into British organizations, and subsequently result in some British employers preferring to accept British candidates rather than Chinese candidates when they hold on equal amount of human capital. The finding of cultural differences and English language ability as major reasons for this is consistent with the communication problems of some Chinese pointed out by Pang and Lau (1998).

The unemployed Chinese graduate (Graduate 18, Female, BA, Accounting and Finance) who was in China admitted that lack of a good career plan is an issue. It was recognized from the interview that this graduate's job searches were not focused in a specific job field, but were quite wide. She said that the programme she learnt at university was not what she was interested in, and she did not want to work in that field. From this graduate's labour market experience, the importance of career planning should be emphasized.

The two Chinese graduates who were outside the labour force when they were interviewed both had labour market experience previously. When they were interviewed, one was at rest, and one was preparing for study abroad again. The one who was at rest had resigned from her previous job as it was too laid-back and her parents wanted her to return to her home city. It can be seen that the quality and content of a job can affect an employee's intention to quit. In addition, one's family can also affect his/her decision regarding employment.

Socioeconomic Background and Job Destination

The first sub-question of the main research question above is '*how does the background of Chinese graduates from Bangor University affect their job destinations?*' In this research, it is found that the background of Chinese graduates from Bangor University affects their job destinations in two ways. First, their socioeconomic background directly affects their job

destinations. For example, some graduates obtain their jobs with the help of their *guanxi*, or some self-employed graduates got financial support from their parents. Secondly, their socioeconomic background directly affects their educational attainment, which affects their job destinations. For example, some participants' parents made the decision or provided support for their education in the UK. In addition, for some Chinese graduates from Bangor University who participated in this research, their socioeconomic background affects their job destinations through both the two ways.

There are some Chinese graduates from Bangor University who had worked for a long time before they came to study in the UK for their Master's degree. According to Sicherman and Galor (1990, p.170-171), 'part of the return to education is in the form of a higher probability of occupational upgrading, within or across firms'. Although in this research, none of the Chinese graduates from Bangor University who had work experience before studying in the UK directly expressed the wish of upgrading job positions, among their reasons for studying in the UK, the power of a Master's degree and the usefulness of having a background of overseas returnee for long-term development in their career was mentioned, indicating their expectations of developing themselves in their careers. After they finished their studies in the UK, most of them were able to use their work experience and educational experience to either achieve occupational upgrading in their previous workplaces or another workplace immediately or after some time. Both educational background and work experience are important in the labour market. However, Ng and Feldman (2009) indicate that in many cases, there can be a negative correlation between educational level and amount of work experience. People who spend more years in education will have less time for accumulating work experience, whereas people who enter the labour market early will have less time for gaining formal education (Ng & Feldman, 2009). These Chinese graduates had long term work experience before they came to study in the UK, and after they achieved their Master's degree, they had both high educational level and abundant work experience. As a result, they are doubly advantaged in the labour market.

This research found that many of the Chinese graduates who participated in this research use *guanxi* during their job searches, no matter whether their *guanxi* helped them get jobs, eventually or not. This is consistent with earlier findings by other scholars: *guanxi* plays an important role in gaining employment in China (such as Bian 1994; Cheung and Gui 2006). Some of the Chinese graduates who participated in this research mentioned that they got job vacancy information from their contacts. Mouw (2003, p.869) points out that 'information supplied via contacts to workers or employers can increase the number of job openings a worker

hears about as well as provide information that is otherwise difficult to obtain'. Ren, Zhu and Warner (2011) indicate that many employers in China, especially public institutions, usually do not publish vacancies. When they do publish vacancies, their purposes are related to advertisement and public relations (Ren, Zhu & Warner, 2011). Although in this research, none of the participants particularly mentioned that they got vacancy information which was not published, some participants pointed out that vacancy information was obtained from their contacts within the enterprises or the industries, or who knew the employers. There may be the possibility that the vacancy information they received was not published or had not been published when they heard about it, as one Chinese graduates in this research identified one benefit of obtaining vacancy information by using her *guanxi* was knowing the information earlier. In addition, some of the Chinese graduates from Bangor University in this research said their parents' *guanxi* had an effect on their likelihood of obtaining jobs, although they did not provide the details of the influences. Further, some Chinese graduates from Bangor University in the UK who participated in this research said that they knew some other Chinese graduates from UK universities whose jobs were arranged by parents. All of these findings are consistent the argument put forward by Ren, Zhu and Warner (2011, p.3440) that *guanxi* plays an important role regarding 'gaining access to information, generating better jobs in a shorter time, and shielding graduates from competition'. In addition, the influences of *guanxi* in the workplace were also pointed out by some Chinese graduates from Bangor University who participated in this research.

Among the Chinese graduates who were self-employed when they were interviewed, the importance of the financial support from their parents was recognized. Wang and Zhao (2012) find that self-employers' own economic conditions and the support from their families form the primary source of their funds. In consistence with this, in this research, for the Chinese graduates without any work experience, incomes or savings, the effect of the financial support from their parents is obvious. It is one of the basic safeguards to make their business started. This reflects the influence of economic capital on the Chinese graduates' employment experience.

According to Wen (2005), in China, there were significant differences among students with different family social economic status in higher education opportunities and its outcomes. Ding (2006) points out that no matter in what kind of society, family background can affect people's education opportunity to varying degrees, and this is a universal rule. In consistence with this, with regard to the indirect influence of the Chinese graduates' socioeconomic background on

their job destinations, their parents play significant roles, in that most of the Chinese graduates from Bangor University who participated in this research received financial support from their parents for their tuition fees and living fees, and for some of the Chinese graduates, decisions about their education in the UK were made by their parents. In Bodycott's (2009, p.364) study, study abroad was treated by mainland Chinese parents as a way to 'ensure the best for their child', which would bring long-term social and economic benefits. Although this was not expressed by the participants in this research, most of them identified their parents support when making the decision to study in the UK. The involvement of Chinese parents in their children's educational decision-making has already been found by scholars. For example, in a study which explored students' decision-making about postgraduate education in China, Liu and Morgan (2016) highlight the important role parents play in shaping students' decision-making about postgraduate education. Because of the important roles of Chinese parents, international higher education institutions aiming for keeping competitive strength and continuing to attract talented mainland Chinese students, having a understanding of the recruitment market is needed, and this should not only emphasize student perspectives and related factors, but also recognize the role and status of parents, whose views, expectations and motivation have been largely neglected (Bodycott, 2009).

Although in this research, some Chinese graduates' study in the UK was completely determined by their parents, most of the Chinese graduates said the decision to study in the UK was made by themselves with the support from their parents, or made by themselves together with their parents. This finding differs from the finding of Bodycott and Lai's (2012) study, which examined Chinese students' and their parents' involvement when making the decision about cross-border study. In their study, for the majority of students, it was their parents who made the final decision regarding choice of country, program, and/or university; although the evidence showed that students did feel they had a say during the decision making (Bodycott & Lai, 2012). The difference between the findings of this study and Bodycott and Lai's (2012) study might be caused by the difference between the participants. All the Chinese students involved in Bodycott and Lai's (2012) study were enrolled in undergraduate programmes in Hong Kong higher education institutions. This means that when they were involved in the decision making process regarding cross-border study, they were at a younger age than the Chinese graduates from Bangor University who participated in this research. Most of the Chinese graduates in this research came to the UK for their master's study. Since these Chinese graduates had already finished their undergraduate study in China and they were older than

those in Bodycott and Lai's (2012) study, they might have had a clearer view about study abroad, and their parents might be more confident about their decisions. It is also worth noting that in this research, although education was highly valued by most of the Chinese graduates' parents, many Chinese graduates mentioned that their parents attitudes towards their education was quite flexible, which allowed them to make decisions by themselves.

Educational Attainment and Career Expectations

The second sub-question is '*what are the qualifications, skills and career expectations of Chinese graduates from Bangor University?*' In this research, achievement from study at UK universities has been widely recognized among the Chinese graduates from Bangor University who participated in this research, in relation to the degree subject knowledge, understanding and skills, generic skills and career development learning, which are essential supply-side components of employability mentioned by Dacre Pool and Sewell (2007). Most of the Chinese graduates from Bangor University who participated in this research achieved a Master's degree. Their career expectations vary and were affected by their ages, their labour market experience and political economy factors.

In Ren, Zhu and Warner's (2011, p.3441) study of higher education reform in China and employment of university graduates, university education was considered outdated, unpractical and static by all the graduates who were interviewed, the reason being that 'students are crammed with theories – most of which are not up to date, and they do not have much say in what subjects they undertake'. With regard to the factors affecting the choice to study abroad, in Bodycott's (2009) study, basically, the mainland Chinese students interviewed perceived that overseas universities provided better education and teaching than those in a mainland Chinese university. Rudd, Djafarova and Waring (2012) explore Chinese students' decision making in UK higher education, and also find that the UK's academic reputation is one of the influential factors. Similarly, in this research, some of the Chinese graduates from Bangor University also pointed out better education in UK universities as one of the reasons for their study abroad. This is also similar to what was found by Wu (2014) from interviews conducted with mainland Chinese students who had enrolled at British universities: the world-class educational system

in the UK, in contrast to the old-fashioned teaching and learning methods in most Chinese universities, was one of the motivations for choosing to study in Britain.

Wu (2014, p.438) points out that the three core factors which mainly drives student decision on studying abroad are 'the desire to experience different cultures', 'the native English environment' and 'future career aspirations'. These are mentioned by the Chinese graduates from Bangor University who participated in this research as their expectation from studying in the UK. In addition, enhanced independence was mentioned by some of the Chinese graduates in this research as another expectation, and there was also a Chinese graduate in this research who said that he wanted to see whether he could 'survival' by himself in an unfamiliar environment. It is pointed out by Wu (2014) that the experience of study abroad is viewed by students not only as a way to widen human capital, but also as a preparation to face the challenges of complex social and practical issues in the real world after their graduation.

Regarding the reasons for choosing to study in the UK, it is notable that not only some of the Chinese graduates who participated in this research, but also a relevant staff member mentioned the one-year study for a master's degree as a reason, as it is considerably shorter. Similarly, Wu (2014) finds that among mainland Chinese students' motivations for choosing to study in Britain, quite an influential factor refers to the fact that in British universities, achieving a master's degree only takes one year. In addition, the participants in this research also mentioned that the examinations to get a place to study for a master's degree in China was difficult to pass and took time to prepare for, these were further reasons for choosing to study in the UK. Similarly, Wu (2014) also found that a key factor for mainland Chinese students choosing to study in Britain referred to 'the intense competition to gain admission at the postgraduate level in Chinese universities'. Further, one Chinese graduate in this research viewed studying in the UK as an opportunity to change his subject area, which was also indicated in Wu's (2014, p.437) study. It is also notable that among the Chinese graduates from Bangor University who participated in this research, some of them studied in both a Chinese university and a UK university during their undergraduate study period, because of a cooperation between the two universities. In recent years, there are many cooperations between UK universities and Chinese universities, which could be attractive to some Chinese students and their parents. Regarding mainland Chinese students' motivations for choosing a particular university, Wu (2014) found from survey results that course ranking and teaching quality were the first two dominant factors; while in this research, course ranking was mentioned by some participants.

To conclude, many of the factors affecting Chinese graduates' choice to study in the UK generated from this research are similar to the main push and pull factors identified in Liu and Morgan's (2017) systematic review. The main push factors include career consideration, difficulty of access to study opportunities, educational methods, personal improvement and the influence of family and friends. The main pull factors include high-quality education and programme, the history, culture and language of the UK, the influence of relatives and friends and the programme's characteristic of time-saving.

According to Gu and Schweisfurth (2017), for most Chinese students, the most important achievements from their journey of study abroad are academic achievement and personal independence. Similarly, the achievement of degree subject knowledge, understanding and skills together with their degrees was found among many Chinese graduates from Bangor University who participated in this research. Although some of the Chinese graduates who participated in this research pointed out that the knowledge learnt from UK universities was theoretical and academic, the usefulness of what was learnt from UK universities in their workplaces was still recognized by many Chinese graduates. However, it should be noted again here that the full utilization of what is learnt from higher education at workplaces is unlikely in practice. In addition, Ren, Zhu and Warner (2011, p.3443) point out that there is a gap between what is taught to graduates at university and 'short-term 'usable' skills favoured in the labour market'. Although their study focused on the situation in China, this gap is also found in the current research, which can account for the reason why some Chinese graduates said they could not use what they learnt from UK universities vocationally in the workplace. Besides, it is also found that the achievement of personal independence was recognized among some Chinese graduates from Bangor University who participated in this research. In Gu and Schweisfurth's (2015, P.964) study which analyses the experience of Chinese returnees who completed their degrees in UK universities, most of the survey respondents 'felt more confident about their communication skills'. The development of communication skills is also recognized by some Chinese graduates from Bangor University who participated in this research.

Gu and Schweisfurth (2017, p.482-483) point out that the achievements from the experience of studying abroad recognized by many Chinese returnees include 'increased confidence, enhanced self-efficacy and positive attitudes in the workplace, particularly in terms of: (1) improved English language skills; (2) increased ability to deal with change and initiatives, work under pressure and take on leadership at work; (3) a more flexible attitude towards work; and (4) better time management and self-planning skills'. In addition, 'greater independence in

analysing and solving problems’, ‘more confident and positive attitudes towards life’ and ‘increased ability to think creatively and critically’ were also appreciated by the large majority of the Chinese returnees (Gu & Schweisfurth, 2017, p. 482-483). These achievements were also found among the Chinese graduates from Bangor University who participated in this research. However, the amount they could achieve from their study in the UK varied.

Among the 39 Chinese graduates from Bangor University who participated in this research, none of them raise any issue related to official recognition of UK academic or professional qualifications in China. The recognition of certificates from the UK in China was mentioned by some Chinese graduates in this research (such as Graduate 33, Female, MBA, Banking and Finance). Although the Chinese graduates who achieved their degrees abroad should get official authentication of their qualifications and degrees from Chinese Service Center for Scholarly Exchange (CSCSE), none of the participants in this research mentioned any problem caused by this.

Among the Chinese graduates from Bangor University who participated in this research, it is found that when they finished their study in the UK, some of them were clear about what they would like to do for their future career. However, from the interviews with some other Chinese graduates from Bangor University who participated in this research, it can be seen that lack of a clear view about future career, lack of plan, lack of knowledge about the labour market, unrealistic consideration about future career and inaccurate self-positioning existed when they graduated. Overseas returnees’ inaccurate self-positioning, too high expectation, and lack of plan are identified by Jia (2012) as three of the main reasons which result in the frustration of their employment. Similarly, it is also found the difficulties of employment caused by lack of a clear view about future career, lack of plan, unrealistic consideration about future career and inaccurate self-positioning among Chinese graduates from UK universities.

Current Employment Situations and Labour Market Experience

The third sub-question is ‘*what are the current employment situations and actual labour market experience of Chinese graduates from Bangor University?*’ The job hunting methods adopted by the Chinese graduates from Bangor University who participated in this research were explored, and their employment situations when they were interviewed were investigated.

Wu (2014, p.438) points out that ‘qualifications obtained in Britain are well recognized by employers in mainland China and this entails a significant advantage for career growth when students return to their homeland’. The findings of this research show that although Chinese employers well recognize the qualifications achieved from UK universities, the reality is more complex.

Similar to what is found by Yue, Wen and Ding (2004) and Li, Ding and Morgan (2008, p.273) among Chinese graduates from Chinese higher education institutions: ‘graduates from institutions with better reputations have a greater probability of getting job offers’, some Chinese graduates from Bangor University who participated in this research believed that Chinese graduates from the top UK universities were definitely highly valued by employers in the Chinese labour market. One of the reasons is that those universities are well-known among the employers. For example, the Chinese graduates from the Russell Group universities (Appendix 6), which are ‘24 leading UK universities which are committed to maintaining the very best research, an outstanding teaching and learning experience and unrivalled links with business and the public sector’ (Russell Group, 2016, p.3), could be thought highly be the Chinese employers. However, Chinese graduates from the UK universities without the halo effect or even less-known by many employers were just generally deemed as overseas returnees from the UK. Some Chinese graduates from Bangor University who participated in this research thought they belonged to the latter situation. While there are a large number of overseas returnees from the UK in the Chinese labour market, the advantage of this group of people is less obvious. Jia (2012) indicates that employers in China become mature and rational gradually in talent selection and their evaluation of overseas returnees also becomes even more prudent. Liu, Shi and Fu (2017) point out that based on Chinese employers’ experience of hiring overseas returnees for many years and their accurate understanding of labour market changes, they are more rational and pragmatic when selecting and recruiting overseas returnees, and they no longer emphasize the identity symbols of overseas returnees. Similarly, many of the Chinese graduates from Bangor University who participated in this research believe that in the current Chinese labour market, employers place more emphasis on the abilities and experience of graduates, than on the overseas qualifications.

In addition, there were also Chinese graduates from Bangor University who participated in this research who pointed out that some employers in China prefer graduates from some particular universities in China, including the top Chinese universities and the universities where their current staff graduated from. Regarding the former, some Chinese graduates who participated

in this research believe that compared with people who are generally deemed as overseas returnees by employers in China, graduates from top Chinese universities are more favoured by employers. As for the latter one, this is similar to what Little (2001, p.127) points out regarding the circumstance in the UK: there are employers who are interested in graduates from particular institutions for recruitment, 'based on the track record of previous graduates' and 'the potential for networking between current and post students'.

From this research, it can be seen that in the labour market in China, both the graduates from top UK universities and the graduates from top Chinese universities are advantaged. Li, Ding and Morgan (2009, p.380) hold that in China, 'the quality and reputation of institutions will replace educational level as signal and screening mechanisms'. Although the finding here cannot provide a strong evidence for them, the significance role the quality and reputation of universities play in Chinese graduates' job-hunting process has been identified from the interviews.

Regarding the supply and demand of Chinese graduates from UK universities in the labour market, it is generally thought that the supply exceeds the demand, however, a demand for very good Chinese graduates from UK universities still exists. Li (2013, p.473, 480) points out that there is a decrease 'in the labour market value of the 'hard currencies' that overseas qualification carries', while the 'soft currencies' obtained from the overseas experience carry more important merit. In consistence with this, it is found that the halo of the overseas returnees has become faded in recent years. The things of great importance are knowledge, skills, capability, and performance of the graduates, not just the UK educational background and a certificate from a UK university.

Glyde (1997) indicates that employers desire workers who have a strong job attachment in most hiring situations. Recruiting people with high possibility to move to different employers will increase the risks of not only losing talents, but also increasing costs related to recruitment and training. Wald's (2005, p.149) study showed that 'overqualified workers are more likely to engage in job search', which confirmed a belief of employers. Consistent with this, in this research, there are Chinese graduates from Bangor University who pointed out that the perceived stability and commitment of people with a Master's Degree from abroad may be a cause for concern among the prospective employers, and this may result in some employers preferring to choose local Chinese graduates with a Bachelor degree. This phenomenon might often exist among regular enterprises or for junior positions, where people with an overseas

Master's degree seem overqualified. This finding is similar to that is pointed out by McKee-Ryan and Harvey (2011): employers might be unwilling to hire employees who are overqualified, for the reason that they believe that when these workers are provided opportunities, they will move on to more suitable jobs. In addition, saving costs is another reason for hiring local Chinese graduates rather than graduates with an overseas Master's degree. These findings shows that people with a higher level of qualifications are not always preferred in hiring situations. Employers would make hiring decisions according to their own circumstances, including their needs, the size of the enterprise, their budget and long-term consideration. It can be seen that investment into education cannot always generate economic benefits for every individual in every workplace. The individuals need to find workplaces where their value can be recognized and realized, at least. On the contrary, if their human capital is not necessary for the enterprise, treated as costly, and involves high uncertainty of stability, the enterprise might not provide them with economic benefits in order to exchange their human capital. From this point of view, it can be seen that human capital theory emphasizes the supply side by highlighting the investment into education, but neglects the demand side of enterprises' needs. This is similar to what is pointed out by Schuller (2000): human capital theory neglects the demand side, especially whether workplaces and society have the ability to actually make use of the human capital available.

Although some Chinese graduates who participated in this research would like to say their degrees achieved from UK universities was a 'knocking brick' when applying for jobs, the importance of the real abilities was also pointed out. According to Harvey (2000, p.7), 'a degree is no guarantee of a job, let alone a career, and should only be seen as reaching 'first-base' in the recruitment process'. Similarly and more specifically for Chinese graduates from UK universities, it is found in this research that a degree achieved from the UK cannot guarantee a job for a Chinese graduate who hold the degree, although it may make him/her more competitive to get the opportunities for job interviews. The abilities and skills of the graduates are what the employers look for. What's more, for the graduates who apply for the second job or jobs afterward, the employers would also pay attention to the actual work performance, while the help of a degree from the UK is not as much as that for the first job application after graduation from the UK.

In addition, the importance of work experience was also highlighted by some Chinese graduates from Bangor University who participated in this research. Jia (2012) indicates that overseas returnees' lack of work experience is one of the main reasons which results in the frustration of

their employment. Wei and Zeng (2014) point out that full-time work experience before the overseas returnees returned to China can significantly affect their employment in China. The longer time they worked full-time before they came back to China, the higher the possibility of their employment in China (Wei & Zeng, 2014). Although this research does not examine this relationship, and it is not the emphasis in this research, many of the Chinese graduates from Bangor University who participated in this research pointed out the importance of work experience when applying for jobs. For the new graduates who have just entered the labour market without any work experience, internship experience is of great value. A lack of internship experience is pointed out by some of the Chinese graduates from Bangor University who participated in this research as one of the disadvantages facing this group of people when they look for jobs in China. Yue, Wen and Ding's (2004) study and Min et al.'s (2006) study show that in China, the higher education graduates who have work experience or internship experience have a significant advantage in job-hunting. However, Du and Yue's (2010) study shows that the impact of whether higher education graduates have work experience in society, such as internship, on their employment opportunity is not significant. Obviously, the findings of this research support the former rather than the latter. People who have work experience or internship experience have the opportunities to practice knowledge, abilities and skills they achieve from education in workplaces, which are valued by employers.

People who are unemployed for a long time are disadvantaged in the labour market. Glyde (1977, p.248) points out that 'education completed at some period in the past, but not complemented by work experience, may result in erosion of human capital or skill in the same way that physical capital can be expected to depreciate if not used', which provides an explanation for this phenomenon. Some Chinese graduates from Bangor University who participated in this research said that they found their jobs through campus recruitment, which is especially for the fresh graduates without work experience. This is a good opportunity for fresh graduates, because at that time having no work experience does not disadvantage. However, if they cannot find jobs for a long time after they finish their study, they are disadvantaged for the above reason.

One of the participants (Graduate 34, Female, MA, Business and Marketing), who had an experience of a layoff after she studied in the UK and went back to China, decided to accept a job which did not fully meet her expectations, because she hoped to enter a working situation as soon as possible. Accepting the work opportunity surely complemented her education to a certain extent, as her human capital was not eroded by long term unemployment. However,

doing this job made her underemployed because she would prefer to work in an international company, but this job was in a private enterprise; she couldn't fully utilize her knowledge and abilities here and in addition, her salary was not as high as that provided in international companies.

One of the participants (Graduate 35, Female, BSc, Banking and Finance), who worked in a private enterprise in Beijing when she was interviewed, said that at the beginning she would like to work in a foreign-funded enterprises. However, in order to get a Beijing hukou, she accepted the job in the private enterprise. Beijing hukou is favoured partly because of a large number of employment opportunities and high efficiency wages there, which attract a great number of outstanding talents, especially higher education graduates (Song & Song, 2016). And partly this is because Beijing hukou is linked to a lot of social welfare and public resources (Song & Song, 2016). Ma and Dong's (2015) study finds that obtaining Beijing hukou brings college graduates the losses of starting salaries, which is mainly due to that those corporations who can offer Beijing hukou provide relatively low starting salaries. Song and Song (2016) use the evidence from Beijing to study the wage effects of hukou on college graduates. They indicate the dilemma of a choice between hukou and better treatment faced by college graduates (Song & Song, 2016). 'In order to get a hukou, college graduates have to pay the cost of hukou by sacrificing a good job and a reasonable salary' (Song & Song, 2016, p.103). Although the information regarding the wage effects of hukou was not provided by the participant (Graduate 35, Female, BSc, Banking and Finance), but it is found that she gave up a part of her career expectation in order to get a Beijing hukou.

Ren, Zhu and Warner (2011, p.3440) explored the employment situation of university graduates in China, and found that the most significant factors affecting employment chances are 'strong social connections (guanxi), areas of qualification in high demand occupations and personal attributes that assist graduates to take a pro-active approach'. In this research, these factors are also found to influence the job-hunting of Chinese graduates from Bangor University. The influences of guanxi have already been discussed previously. Regarding the subject areas which related to the degrees achieved by Chinese graduates from UK universities, it might affect the supply and demand of Chinese graduates from UK universities in the Chinese labour market, the reason being that the Chinese graduates from UK universities who studied in business related disciplines are high in number, which might result in supply exceeding demand from employers. As a result, competition for related job opportunities are fiercer. In addition, whether the Chinese graduates from Bangor University took a pro-active approach looking for job

opportunities has an obvious influence on their job-hunting results. These Chinese graduates from Bangor University who prepared and made job applications before they finished their study in the UK and went back to China could usually obtain jobs earlier, even just a few days after they arrived in China. On the contrary, those Chinese graduates who did not consider their career plans even after they finished their study in the UK suffered a longer period of unemployment after their study, or changed more jobs at the early stage of their careers for the reason that they were not sure what they would like to do.

Regarding inter-province employment of college graduates in China, Yue and Zhou's (2005) study indicates that they mainly flowed to eastern coastal areas and big cities such as Beijing and Shanghai. Li, Liu and Guo's (2009) study of migration in postgraduate employment shows that in China, the employment migration of the graduates with a Master's degree mainly concentrates in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangdong and Zhejiang. In this research, Some Chinese graduates believed that the big cities in China, such as Beijing and Shanghai, could provide more opportunities for them. This was one of the reasons for some Chinese graduates choosing to work in those cities, although some of them needed to migrate from the cities where their parents lived to those big cities. Interestingly, regarding over-education in geographical areas in China, the rates in the big cities such as Beijing and Shanghai are much higher than elsewhere (Liu, 2014; Tian & Ji, 2017). However, these are not contradictory. Although it is not known whether the numbers of over-educated Chinese graduates from UK universities in big cities are larger than those in other cities, it can be understood that providing more work opportunities neither guarantee successful job-hunting nor ensures adequate employment.

From research conducted in Shanghai regarding the overseas returnees' employment situation and the influential factors, it can be seen that the overseas returnees who had returned to China for a long time and achieved high levels of education have relatively good employment and career development, while the overseas returnees who achieved relatively low levels of education and had returned to China for a relatively short time encounter relatively big employment difficulty (Wu, 2015). The influence of how long ago the overseas returnees returned to China is also identified by Wei and Zeng (2014). The longer ago they returned to China, the higher the possibility of their employment in China (Wei & Zeng, 2014). Regarding educational levels, Li, Morgan and Ding et al. (2008, p.691) point out that for higher education graduates in the Chinese job market, 'the higher the educational level, the greater the employment probability. The starting salary is also higher'. Among the Chinese graduates from Bangor University who participated in this research, it is also found that the employment

situations of those who had returned to China relatively longer ago were generally better. There are two reasons which might explain this phenomenon. First, the Chinese graduates who had returned to China longer ago can better adapt to the Chinese situation; while those who had returned to China more recently might need more time to make the adjustment. Secondly, the Chinese graduates who had returned to China longer ago might have more labour market experience and they might already have been promoted in their career; while those who had returned to China more recently might have just entered the labour market or be at the primary stage of their career. Regarding the relationship between levels of education and employment situation, it is difficult to conclude from this research. Among the 39 Chinese graduates who participated in this research, 35 of them achieved a Master's degree, 1 achieved a Bachelor degree, and 3 achieved a PhD degree. As a result, there is insufficient evidence to make comparisons between the Chinese graduates who achieved different degree levels, but this could be explored in further research.

Some Chinese graduates from Bangor University who participated in this research pointed out that the knowledge, skills and abilities of Chinese graduates from UK universities can be better utilized in foreign or international firms rather than in Chinese local firms. The reasons may refer to their achievement from UK universities and the characteristics of foreign firms. First, the knowledge, skills and abilities they achieved from UK universities might be more suitable to be applied in foreign or international firms or to deal with international business. Secondly, Ralston et al. (2006, p.827) pointed out that compared to China's state-owned enterprises and domestic privately owned enterprises, foreign-controlled business 'are most exposed to foreign culture and values, and are more likely to experience non-Chinese management styles'. Li, Poppo and Zhou (2008, p.386) indicate, 'foreign firms are typically characterized by organizational processes and routines that maximize the efficiency and implementation of market-based strategies'. As a result, the running method of foreign or international firms may appear more familiar to the Chinese graduates from UK universities, because of their adaptation to western style. However, the running method of Chinese local firms, such as the hierarchical structure and power distance may restrict the use of their knowledge, skills and abilities.

Regarding the labour market segmentation of the dual labour market, it is generally believed that most of the employed Chinese graduates from Bangor University who participated in this research were working in the primary labour market, which is characterised by high salary, good working environment, stable employment, social security, and relatively more training and advance opportunities (Lai & Tian, 2009). However, some of them had the experience of

working in the secondary labour market. In addition, some Chinese graduates in this research believed that the senior level job positions could not be provided to fresh graduates without any work experience and mentioned training, learning or accumulation in the workplace. It can be seen that they worked in companies having 'structured' internal labour markets, which recruit workers into a limited number of entry jobs, and then training and promotion are provided in order to 'staff the majority of the remaining jobs' (Bosanquet & Doeringer, 1973, p.423).

Many participants in this research, including both the Chinese graduates from Bangor University and the relevant university staff, believe that an advantage of Chinese graduates from UK universities who would like to work in the UK is their competences in both the Chinese and English language and their familiarity with both Chinese and British cultures. This advantage is especially obvious in companies having business in China or looking for business opportunities in the Chinese market. This is consistent with what is pointed out by Chen (2001): western-educated Chinese can be a valuable networking asset to companies seeking to do business in Greater China, especially if they maintained their cultural and social connections in Asia. 'Their familiarity with both cultures and business settings can provide an important bridge between East and West' (Chen, 2001, p.51). In addition, this phenomenon also indicates that there is a segmented labour market in UK labour market for Chinese graduates from UK universities, and the segmentation is based on the language ability and culture background.

In this research, it is also notable that political economy factors can affect the employment of Chinese graduates from Bangor University. According to Chen and Wang (2009, p.91), in 2009, under the influence of international financial crisis, almost all of the 'God's favoured one' in countries all around the world faced difficulty in finding 'a rice bowl'. Gao and Morgan (2010) indicate that in China, one of the direct influences caused by the global financial crisis is a decrease in employment opportunities in urban areas. Some of the Chinese graduates from Bangor University who participated in this research mentioned the negative impact of the 2008 financial crisis on their employment experience. During that period, some Chinese graduates who participated in this research thought finding a job in the UK was unrealistic as even native people were unemployed and could not get jobs. As a result, they did not take action to look for jobs in the UK. In addition, it was also difficult for the Chinese graduates who went back to China after they finished their study in the UK to find a desired job during that period of time. Similarly, Jia (2012) identifies the negative influence of worldwide economic downturn on overseas returnees' employment. According to Jia (2012), as the economic downturn mainly affects countries in Europe and America, many overseas returnees cannot successfully find a

job in the countries where they studied. When the overseas returnees look for jobs in China, most of them expect to bring their language advantage (such as English) into full play; as a result, they mainly targeted international enterprises (Jia, 2012). However, under the serious influence of the worldwide economic downturn, this kind of enterprises could not recruit many people, which resulted in many overseas returnees being unemployment (Jia, 2012). In addition, for the Chinese graduates from UK universities who would like to find a job opportunity in the UK after their UK higher education, they face the difficulty of getting a visa to work in the UK, which also reflect the influence of political economy factor on their employment.

Overall Conclusion

This research focuses on Chinese graduates from UK universities in the specific setting of Bangor University, and explores their labour market experience and work destinations. Based on the data gathered from semi-structured interviews with 39 Chinese graduates from Bangor University and 3 relevant staff members of Bangor University, the main findings are listed below.

- Regarding the socio-economic backgrounds which affect the participants' decision to study in the UK, their parents play significant roles. For some Chinese graduates who participated in this research, their parents act as the planners for their education in the UK. For some Chinese graduates who participated in this research, their parents act as supporters for their education in the UK.
- Among the participants in this research, most of them hold a higher degree than their parents.
- Besides the influences from the participants' parents, other people may also affect some participants' decision to study in the UK.
- For those who have long term work experience, the factors affecting their decision to study in the UK may be internal, from themselves.
- Regarding the influences of the Chinese graduates' socio-economic background on their employment, *guanxi* has an obvious effect on the employment experience of Chinese graduates from Bangor University, influencing both the job-hunting experience of Chinese graduates from Bangor University, and their experience in the workplace.

- For these self-employed Chinese graduates, financial support, an economic capital, from their parents is very important, especially for those Chinese graduates who do not have any work experience, income or savings.
- The reasons for pursuing higher education in the UK identified by the participants in this research include UK higher education's characteristic of time-saving, the quality of UK higher education, career related reasons, the history, culture and the language of the UK.
- Pursuing postgraduate study after their undergraduate study can be seen to be the common route for the Chinese graduates who participated in this research.
- The expectation from studying in the UK pointed out by the participants in this research include successful graduation, achievements related to study, developing English language ability, increasing competitiveness in the labour market, getting independence, obtaining the opportunity to work in the UK, and experiencing a different environment.
- The achievements from studying in the UK mentioned by the Chinese graduates from Bangor University who participated in this research include degree subject knowledge, understanding and skills, generic skills and career development learning.
- Regarding the expectations for a future career when they finished their study in the UK, although some young Chinese graduates had considered their future career before they came to study in the UK, some were less clear about this even after they finished their Master's degree.
- The graduates who had long periods of work experience before they studied in the UK often had a clearer view.
- Some Chinese graduates who participated in this research considered looking for jobs in the UK, however, some of them did not take any action for many reasons, including the widespread unemployment after the 2008 financial crisis, consideration of family, and the smaller possibility of getting a job in the UK than that in China. Even though there were Chinese graduates who took action to apply for jobs in the UK, the number of people who successfully got a job was very small.
- Most of the Chinese graduates who participated in this research found their jobs by themselves, through online methods, campus recruitment, social recruitment and so on. In addition, some participants found the job with their guanxi.
- Whether they hunted for jobs in China or the UK, the Chinese graduates from UK universities have their own advantages and disadvantages.

- Among the 39 Chinese graduates from Bangor University who participated in this research, 35 of them were employed when they were interviewed. Underemployment exists among these 35 participants.
- Regarding the relationship between supply and demand of Chinese graduates from UK universities in the Chinese labour market, it is generally thought that supply exceeds demand, especially in small cities and for the Chinese graduates who studied business related disciplines, such as accounting and finance. However, there is still a demand for very good Chinese graduates from UK universities.

These findings together can answer the main research question, '*what is the relationship between the human capital of Chinese graduates from Bangor University and their labour market experience?*' Generally, the achievements and experience of studying in the UK develop Chinese graduates' human capital, which can enhance their competitiveness in the labour market. However, the reality might be more complex due to the influential factors, including the political economy and social economic background of those Chinese graduates. This study investigates the employment patterns of Chinese graduates from Bangor University. The next sections will provide implications from the study, limitations of the study and recommendations for future research.

Implications

Theoretical implications, methodological implications and implications for policy-makers and practitioners will be provided in this section.

Theoretical Implications

This research explores graduate employment among Chinese graduates from Bangor University from a number of perspectives. The conceptual framework of this research consists of human capital theory, social mobility theory and institutional theories, which not only explore the relationships between socioeconomic background, educational attainment and socioeconomic attainment of Chinese graduates from Bangor University, but also considers the influences of

the macro labour market environment on the above relationships. Within this conceptual framework, both the supply side of the labour market and the demand side, which is neglected by orthodox human capital theory, are included. The conceptual framework built in this research can inform further research which not only explores employment among Chinese graduates from UK universities, but also among other people.

Regarding the investigation of underemployment, Feldman (1996) indicates that although there are some conceptually different dimensions regarding underemployment, most previous research only involved univariate measures of underemployment. However, in this research, the underemployment of Chinese graduates from Bangor University is analysed according to different dimensions, including their salaries, working hours, job field, education, experience, and subjective feelings. It is believed that the analysis of one or more dimension of underemployment might work to identify whether an individual is underemployed regarding those dimensions; however, only by analysing all of the dimensions of underemployment, can it be identified whether an individual is adequately employed. An individual who is not underemployed regarding one or more dimension might be underemployed in other dimensions. As a result, unless all the dimensions of underemployment are taken into consideration, it cannot be said that an individual is adequately employed in his/her job.

Methodological Implications

Regarding graduate employment research, quantitative research methods are usually used to generate precise and generalizable findings. Although the breadth is achieved, the depth is not realized. Only revealing the fact from numeric data and generating an outline of graduate employment among Chinese graduates from UK universities by adopting quantitative research methods cannot meet the objective of this research. Understanding the phenomena, exploring the reasons behind and highlighting social and cultural aspects are the emphases in this study. This research uses qualitative research method to reveal deep and rich contextual insights into the labour market experience of Chinese graduates from Bangor University.

In order to collect data from Chinese graduates from Bangor University and the relevant university staff members, semi-structured interviews were conducted through face-to-face method or by using telephone interview. Face-to-face interview is deemed as the method to get

the richest sources of knowledge not only through the conversation with the interviewee, but also from the interviewee's facial expressions, gestures and body language (Brinkmann, 2014); while by using telephone interview, without face-to-face contact with interviewees, the information from their appearance and non-verbal communication cannot be achieved (Edwards & Holland, 2013). Although this can be seen as a disadvantage of telephone interview, this research found that by using telephone interview, it was easier for the interviewees to share both their good and bad experiences; while some Chinese graduates who were interviewed face-to-face talked more about their good experiences or even avoided something they deemed not good.

Implications for Policy-makers and Practitioners

First, the mismatch between knowledge and skills learnt from UK universities and what was used in workplaces was realized by some Chinese graduates who participated in this research. Some of them pointed out that the knowledge learnt was academic and theoretical, while what was used in reality should be practical. This provides information about the importance of consistency between what is taught at universities and what is used in the workplace, suggesting that more attention should be paid to this by relevant policy-makers. As Mason (2002, p.455) points out after exploring the influence of mass higher education on high skills utilisation in service industries in the UK: 'available policy levers need to be used to ensure that the mix of graduate-level and intermediate (technician-level) skills delivered by education and training institutions is more consistent with the mix of skills and competences sought by employers'. In addition, some Chinese graduates who participated in this research pointed out that what was learnt from UK universities was not suitable for the Chinese market, which indicates that the knowledge and skills sought by Chinese employers should be emphasized for Chinese students. Chinese students should be cultivated to better meet the requirements of the Chinese labour market, in order to keep UK universities' attractiveness among Chinese students, especially in the competitive international market for higher education. Further, a better link between UK universities and Chinese employers built by the career services of UK universities could potentially provide Chinese graduates from UK universities with better opportunities for employment, as Yue, Wen and Ding (2004) and Li, Morgan and Ding (2008) indicate: in China, the higher education graduates who can obtain information about potential employment from

universities or colleges are apparently advantaged regarding employment probability and starting salary.

Secondly, many participants in this research indicated that the current policy regarding the work visa regime for international students who would like to work in the UK after their study at UK universities was too tight, limiting the international students' opportunities to gain work experience in the UK. Working visas issued for students after their graduation by some host countries are greatly attractive to Chinese students (Liu, Elston, & Zhou, 2014). It is widely believed that students who have overseas work experience will have better job opportunities in China than local graduate students, the reason being that more employees with international perspectives and experiences are needed for the economic development of China (Liu, Elston & Zhou, 2014). As a result, providing international students with appropriate opportunities to work in the UK can not only help UK universities keep their attractiveness among Chinese students, but can also better equip Chinese students from UK universities for a better career when they go back to China. In addition, it can also benefit the UK through the utilization of Chinese graduates' talents. However, the future repercussions of Brexit are likely to heighten this uncertainty for international students regarding their employment opportunities in the UK.

Thirdly, due to the large cost of tuition and living fees for international students to study in the UK, financial support from Chinese students' parents or even their families is of great significance, which is a fundamental factor enabling a large number of Chinese students' education in the UK to be possible. In addition, it is found that for some of the Chinese graduates who participated in this research, the decision about their education in the UK was made by their parents. As a result, as Bodycott (2009) indicates, for the international higher education institutions looking to recruit mainland Chinese students, it is necessary that the significance of the different stakeholders is considered, communicated and catered for in any of their marketing and recruitment strategies. Only placing emphasis on student perspectives is far from enough.

In addition, whether employers are located in the UK or in China, they need a comprehensive understanding of the experience of Chinese graduates from UK universities. This needs to include both their advantages and disadvantages, in order to make full use of the human capital of Chinese graduates from UK universities and to uncover their potential human capital. For example, as is suggested by Li, Poppo and Zhou (2008, p.396) study, foreign firms in China need to be shrewd in their hiring activities: 'host-country nationals with international

experience and a moderate level of connections are more likely to facilitate value-creation than expatriates that lack host-country experience and connections in China’.

Finally, potential Chinese students who are considering studying at UK universities and their parents need to have a clear idea regarding the value of studying at UK universities, and so avoid overestimating the role a certificate from a UK university can realistically play in influencing demand-side labour market outcomes.

Limitations of the Study

This study has three limitations, which are related to the single case study, the sample and the data from individual self-report.

The single case study of Bangor University provides an in-depth qualitative understanding regarding the work and employment experience of Chinese graduates who achieved their Bachelor, Master’s and/or PhD degree from Bangor University. However, the investigation within one single case limits the generalization of the findings. According to Bryman (2012, p. 406), ‘the findings of qualitative research are to generalize to theory rather than to populations’. It is analytic generalization, called by Yin (2003), rather than statistical generalization. Although the theory can also be generated from a single case study, and some of the Chinese graduates who participated in this research also have the experience of studying at other UK universities before or after they studied at Bangor University; it is believed that by including more cases of other UK universities, the generalizability can be improved.

The limitation regarding the sample is caused by the two volunteer sampling techniques used for data collection from the Chinese graduates from Bangor University. In this research, self-selection sampling and snowball sampling were used, and Chinese graduates were invited to directly contact the researcher to participate in this research. However, there is a possibility that some Chinese graduates who were not satisfied with their current employment situations or who thought their labour market experience were not good may not have been willing to contact the researcher, as talking about these may make them feel embarrassed. In addition, most of the Chinese graduates from Bangor University who participated in this research studied in business and finance related disciplines.

Moreover, since the data collected relied on the self-reporting of Chinese graduates, reliability is questionable. Although limitations of the sample and the self-report data do exist, the findings of this research show that the current employment situations and the labour market experience of the Chinese graduates from Bangor University who participated in this research varies. For example, some participants talked not only about their successful job applications, but also about the unsuccessful ones; some participants expressed satisfaction with their current employment situations, while some others were not satisfied. In addition, some Chinese graduates who participated in this research also talked about the labour market experience of other Chinese graduates from UK universities. What's more, three relevant university staff members also participated in this research and provided data from a different perspective. As a result, it is generally believed the findings of the research reflect the real situation.

Recommendations for Future Research

It is suggested that there are six areas to be explored and examined in future research.

First, as mentioned before, in order to address the limitation of single case study, involving more cases of other UK universities can improve the generalizability of the study. By comparing and contrasting the findings from Chinese graduates who graduated from different UK universities, it is worthy of consideration as to how the different UK HEPs affects the job destinations of Chinese graduates from UK universities. Li, Morgan and Ding (2008) point out that the reputation of the institution significantly and positively influences the employment probability and salary of a graduate. In a global context, the reputations of UK HEPs as an influential factor of the employment of Chinese graduates from UK universities can be investigated further. The comparisons can not only be among UK HEPs, but could also involve Chinese higher education institutions.

Secondly, this research mainly relies on the self-reporting of Chinese graduates from Bangor University to explore their work and employment experience. In addition, some relevant staff members from Bangor University also participated in this research. Although some Chinese graduates who participated in this research had the experience of recruiting other people, the data gathered is mainly from the employee side. It is questionable what the employers' views towards the Chinese graduates from UK universities are. In this research, some Chinese

graduates provided information about employers. For example, some Chinese employers think that Chinese graduates from UK universities have a high expectation about salaries; many Chinese enterprises do not approve very much of the one-year study for a Master's degree in the UK. Whether these reflect the real thoughts of employers needs to be examined. As a result, further exploration could be focused on the employer side of the labour market.

Thirdly, among the Chinese graduates who participated in this research, most of them achieved a Master's degree from UK universities. As has been discussed before, many Chinese students and many Chinese parents treat a Master's degree as an important influential factor for securing a better job. Yue, Wen and Ding (2004) and Li, Ding and Morgan (2008) also point out that in China, the higher the educational level, the greater the probability of successful job seeking. Yue and Zhou (2017) indicate that for the college graduates in China, the higher the educational level, the higher the starting salary a month. However, when these Master's participants were asked whether their jobs require a Master's degree, many of them said 'no'. This leads to a consideration of the actual labour market impact of the different degree levels. In this study, Chinese graduates from UK universities are treated as a whole group, and they have been compared with Chinese local graduates who hold a Bachelor, Master's or PhD degree. However, comparisons between the Chinese graduates from UK universities who achieved different levels of final degrees (Bachelor, Master's and PhD degree) are not emphasized in this research. In future research, the differences between them regarding employment situations and labour market experience could be investigated.

Fourthly, this study focuses on the current employment situations and previous labour market experience of Chinese graduates from Bangor University. As a result, how the Chinese graduates' achievements from their education in the UK (such as knowledge, skills and degrees) really influence their long-term career trajectories can only be explored from those who graduated many years ago. Since most of the Chinese graduates who participated in this research graduated after the year 2010, data regarding the impact of the achievements from their education in the UK on their long-term career trajectories is limited. This could be explored in future research. A longitudinal study collecting data over many years could investigate the influence of the achievements from UK universities on the Chinese graduates' career trajectories at different stages.

In addition, in recent years, sex discrimination in the labour market has been 'a topic of widespread concern to society and to individual graduates' (Li, Morgan and Ding, 2008, p.690).

For example, regarding the job search in China, Yue, Wen and Ding (2004), Min et al. (2006), Li, Ding and Morgan (2008) and Du and Yue (2010) indicate that male higher education graduates are more likely to successfully get job offers. This finding is related to Chinese graduates from Chinese higher education institutions. Regarding to Chinese graduates from UK universities, the comparison between the labour market experience of male graduates and female graduates is not emphasized in this research, and they are treated as a whole group to be compared with Chinese graduates from Chinese universities. In future research, the differences between labour market experience of male and female Chinese graduates from UK universities could be investigated in order to explore the effect of educational experience and attainments from the UK on reduction of sex discrimination in the labour market.

Finally, after the theories are generated from this qualitative research, quantitative research could be conducted to test the theories in a larger population of Chinese graduates from different UK universities. It is better to conduct this quantitative research after more cases of UK universities have been studied. As discussed in the limitation section, more cases would improve the analytic generalization. This then could allow quantitative research to realize the statistical generalization of the theories.

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**Bangor Business School
Ethics Declaration (Students)**

Student Name: Shijin Zhang

Banner ID 500399298

User ID: abp545

Tentative title of dissertation:

Graduate Employment among Chinese Graduates from UK Universities

Degree

PhD

☒

MPhil

☐

Master by Research

☐

Master Taught

☐

Undergraduate

☐

**You may NOT collect any data until this form has been approved by
your supervisor (case A) and/or Ethics Officer (case B or C).**

Original hard copy **MUST** be bound together with the dissertation. Failure to comply with university policy, which stipulates that students must secure the appropriate ethics permissions for their dissertation research, will result in the research data being destroyed. In these circumstances, data cannot be reported.

Prior to undertaking any research projects, students should familiarise themselves with the University's Research Ethics Policy:

<http://www.bangor.ac.uk/ar/ro/recordsmanagement/REF.php>

In the context of the Ethics Policy, **projects entailing no risk** are those that do not entail the collection of primary data; such projects **do not** have to be approved by the Ethics Committee. Examples of **no risk** projects include:

1. Statistical analyses of time series data published by the Office of National Statistics.
2. Investigations of interlocking membership on executive boards and executive remuneration committees in not-for-profit social enterprise companies, conducted using data obtained from government agencies, commercial databases and other public records.
3. Investigation of the British Crime Survey data to examine why some police authorities appear to be more efficient than others.

The following research activities would normally be considered as **involving more than minimal risk** and would **require review** by the College Ethics Committee:

1. Research involving vulnerable groups – for example, children and young people, those with a learning disability or cognitive impairment, or individuals in a dependent or unequal relationship.
2. Research involving sensitive topics – for example, participants' sexual behaviour, their illegal or political behaviour, their experience of violence, their abuse or exploitation, their mental health, or their gender or ethnic status.
3. Research involving groups where permission of a gatekeeper is normally required for initial access to members.
4. Research necessarily involving deception or which is conducted without participants' full and informed consent at the time the study is carried out.
5. Research involving access to records of personal or confidential information, including genetic, other biological information, concerning identifiable individuals, gender, race, religion, blood donation, and blood types.
6. Research that would induce psychological stress, anxiety or humiliation or cause more than minimal pain.
7. Research involving intrusive interventions – for example, the administration of drugs or other substances, vigorous physical exercise, or techniques such as hypnotherapy.

**Provide a BRIEF DESCRIPTION of the fieldwork,
including the main research question, data to be collected, sample characteristics and method**

This research will explore graduate employment and underemployment among Chinese graduates from UK universities who obtain the qualification of Bachelor, Master, PhD, etc.

The findings of this research will advance scholarship regarding the employment patterns of Chinese graduates in a more globalized labour market. It will also benefit the potential Chinese students who are considering to study in UK universities, and provide UK universities with valuable information about enhancing employability of the large number of Chinese students.

In this research, the relationship between supply and demand in the labour market of Chinese graduates from UK universities, and the factors that affect their job destinations will be explored, so the research question is:

Are the Chinese graduates from UK universities well-employed, unemployed or underemployed?

In order to better address this research question, there are three further sub-questions stemming from the main research question.

Sub-question 1:

How does the background of Chinese graduates from UK universities affect their job destinations?

Sub-question 2:

What are the qualifications, skills and career expectations of Chinese graduates from UK universities?

Sub-question 3:

What are the current employment situations and actual labour market experiences of Chinese graduates from UK universities?

To carry out this research, a qualitative research approach will be adopted. Case study will be employed as the research strategy, and Bangor University is the single case in this research, so the Chinese graduates from Bangor University, who have obtained the qualification of Bachelor, Master, PhD, etc., will be encouraged to participate in this research. Semi-structured interviews will be utilized to collect data, and it is decided that at least 30 Chinese graduates from Bangor University will be interviewed, however, there is no an upper limit. Accidental sampling and purposive sampling may be utilized. Each interview will last approximately 30 to 45 minutes. During the interviews, the participants' background, qualifications, skills, career expectation, current employment situation and labour market experience, etc. will be explored.

Specify Data Source

Database to which Bangor University provides access

☐

Name of database (specify which):

Period of study:

Variables:

Data collected by student (be succinct - one word per entry)

☒

Specify method (questionnaire, interview, archival, etc): Interview

Sample, group or informant: Chinese graduates from UK universities

Period and location during which the data will be collected: August 2015, in China;
September 2015 to December 2015, in the UK.

Data for which copyright is required but not currently held by Bangor University

☐

Name of database (specify which):

Period of study:

Variables:



(Attach evidence of lawful acquisition – e.g. invoice, contra details of the provider, etc.)

Other (describe in a separate document and attach)

☐

Provide evidence of lawful acquisition of data (e.g. invoice, contact details)

Declaration

Tick	Specification	Action
<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 20px; height: 20px; margin: 0 auto; line-height: 20px;">v</div>	<p>Project entails no risk, minimal risk or will progress based on the analysis of published data (without requiring participation by vulnerable groups).</p> <p>I certify that I have read the University Research Ethics Policy.</p> <div style="text-align: center; margin-top: 20px;">  (Sd) Date July 1st 2015 Candidate (NAME): Shijin Zhang </div> <p>I agree with the declaration above</p> <div style="text-align: center; margin-top: 20px;">  (Sd) Date July 1st 2015. Supervisor (NAME): Dr. Tony Dobbins. </div>	<p>No need to be referred to the Ethics Committee</p>

B <input type="checkbox"/>	BBS Internal Review - The discussion between supervisor and candidate was unable to determine whether this project entails minimal or no risk.	A copy of the research proposal and a document explaining any potential risk should be emailed to BBS Ethics Officer (Dr Rasha Alsakka r.alsakka@bangor.ac.uk) for BBS internal review
<p><u>BBS Recommendations:</u></p> <p>Go to Point A <input type="checkbox"/> Go to Point C <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>(Sd)..... Date..... (NAME):</p> <p>(Sd)..... Date..... (NAME):</p> <p>Signed by two members: BBS ethics officer, and UG dissertation coordinator, UG director, PG director, Director of the doctoral programme, College Director of Research, Deputy HoS OR HoS.</p>		
C <input type="checkbox"/>	BBS External Review – The project entails more than minimal risk	Needs to be referred to the Collage Ethics Committee (Allow at least 4 weeks for review)
<p>This should be accompanied by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A copy of the research proposal detailing any risk as defined in the University's Ethics Policy. 2. Copies of relevant supporting documentation (for example, letters of invitation to study participants, participant information sheets and consent forms). <p>Data Protection If the research involves the collection of data from private individuals, consent forms and information sheets should be completed and copies lodged with the secretary of the College Ethics Committee. Researchers need to ensure that they meet the legal requirement of the Criminal Records Bureau in these regards.</p> <p>Declaration The declaration must be accompanied by the research proposal and relevant supporting documentation. It should be signed by the student and then counter-signed by the supervisor.</p> <p>I certify that I have read the University Research Ethics Policy. The issues raised there that are relevant for this research project are described in the attached research proposal.</p> <p>(Sd)..... Date..... Student (NAME):</p> <p>I agree with the declaration above</p> <p>(Sd)..... Date..... Supervisor (NAME):</p>		

Appendix 2. An Example of the Study Information Sheet

Study Information Sheet

Thank you very much for your agreement to participate in this research. This Study Information Sheet contains the basic information about this research and how you will be involved in it as an interviewee.

The aim of this research is to explore the employment among Chinese graduates from UK universities who obtain the qualification of Bachelor, Masters and PhD. The findings of this research will advance scholarship. It will also benefit the potential Chinese students who are considering to study in UK universities, and provide UK universities with valuable information about enhancing employability of the large number of Chinese students.

This interview will last approximately 30 to 45 minutes, and as we agreed, it will be conducted via telephone (online method). During the interview, your background, qualification, skills, career expectation, current employment situation and labour market experience, etc. will be explored. You have the right to decline to answer a question or some questions, and you can withdraw at any time without providing any reasons. The personal information of the participants will be kept confidential. All the data gathered from the interview are only used for the purpose of this research.

Many thanks again for your agreement to participate in this research. If you have any questions about this research at any stage, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Name of the researcher: Shijin Zhang

Email: abp545@bangor.ac.uk

WeChat:

Appendix 3. An Example of the Consent Form

Consent Form

Title of research: Graduate Employment among Chinese Graduates from UK Universities

Name and position of researcher:

Shijin Zhang, PhD student, Bangor Business School, Bangor University

I, the undersigned, confirm that (Please tick box as appropriate):

1. I have read and understood the Study Information Sheet, which contains the basic information about this research and how I will be involved in it as an interviewee.	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about this research and my participation.	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I have been given sufficient time to consider my decision and I voluntarily agree to participate in this project.	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I understand that I can withdraw from this project at any time; I will not be questioned on why I have withdrawn; and I will not be penalised for withdrawing.	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I understand the arrangement of anonymity and confidentiality in this research.	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. The forms of data collection have been explained to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. The use of the data gathered from this interview has been explained to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. I understand that my words may be quoted by the researcher in her thesis, however, my name will not be used.	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. I would like that this interview will be conducted by using (select only one of the following language)	
Chinese	<input type="checkbox"/>
English	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. I agree audio recording and notes taking will be used during the whole interview to record the data. I understand that the only aim of audio-recording is to maintain a complete and accurate data for the research, and it will not be used for any other purpose. (If you don't agree to use tape-recording during the interview, the data will be only recorded by notes taking.)	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. I would like the researcher share my contact details and employment details with Bangor University Alumni Office in order to keep contact with Bangor University.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Participant:

Name of Participant
Researcher:

Signature

Date

Name of Researcher

Signature

Date

Appendix 4. Question List for Guiding the Interviews with Chinese Graduates from Bangor University

Each interview contains three parts.	
<p>The first part is directed by the sub-question 2 ('<i>What are the qualifications, skills and career expectations of Chinese graduates from UK universities?</i>'), in order to explore the supply side of the labour market for Chinese graduates from UK universities. In addition, why the participants choose to study in UK universities, and some information about the participants' education experiences before and after their study in UK universities are also asked at the beginning of the interviews. The questions used in this part may include:</p>	<p><i>What programme did you studied in Bangor University? What degree have you achieved from Bangor University?</i></p> <p><i>What skills have you obtained from your study in Bangor University?</i></p> <p><i>When did you graduated from Bangor University? What was your career expectation when you graduated?</i></p> <p><i>Why did you choose to study in the UK? Why did you choose to study in Bangor University? Why did you choose to study this programme?</i></p> <p><i>Would you please tell me what's you education background before you study in Bangor University?</i></p> <p><i>(For the participants who achieved Bachelor Degree from Bangor University) Do you have any education experiences after you achieved your Bachelor Degree from Bangor University?</i></p> <p><i>(For the participants who achieved Master's Degree or PhD Degree from Bangor University) Would you please tell me your education experiences before you studied in Bangor University for your Master's/PhD Degree?</i></p>
<p>The second part is directed by the sub-question 3 ('<i>What are the current employment situations and actual labour market experiences of Chinese graduates from UK universities?</i>'), in order to</p>	<p><i>When did you find your first job after your graduation? How did you find your first job? Have you encountered unemployment?</i></p> <p><i>(If the participant have other work experiences between the first job and current job) What is your second/third/...job? How did you find that job? Have you encountered unemployment between your first and second/second and third/...job?</i></p>

<p>explore the demand side of the labour market for Chinese graduates from UK universities, The questions used in this part may include:</p>	<p><i>Have you worked before you study in Bangor University? If yes, what are the differences you find between your labour market experience before and after your study in Bangor University?</i></p> <p><i>How helpful do you think your programme and degree are when you looking for your job, and why? How helpful do you think the skills you obtain from your study in Bangor University are when you looking for your job, and why?</i></p> <p><i>What is your current job? How do you describe your current employment situation? Is your current job meet the career expectation which you had when you graduated, and why? What is your current career expectation?</i></p> <p><i>Do you think your current job can be done by the person without your degree or by the person without your skills, and why? Do you think you fully utilized your skills in your job, and why?</i></p> <p><i>Do you think your salary is similar to the person without your degree or the person without your skills? If yes, would you please talk more about this?</i></p> <p><i>How helpful do you think your programme and degree are in your career, and why?</i></p> <p><i>How helpful do you think the skills you obtain from your study in Bangor University are in your career, and why?</i></p>
<p>The third part is directed by the sub-question 1 (<i>‘How does the background of Chinese graduates from UK universities affect their job destinations?’</i>), in order to investigate what roles their socioeconomic background play in their jobs. The questions used in this part may include:</p>	<p><i>Can you describe your social background, such as your parents’ education, their occupations, social networks, etc.? Does any of these helps you when you look for a job, and how? Does any of these helps you in your career, and how?</i></p> <p><i>Do you know your parents opinions towards education? If yes, please talk more about this. Is there any aspect of your education influenced by you parents? If yes, please talk more about this.</i></p> <p><i>What’s your opinion regarding how the socioeconomic background of a Chinese graduate from UK university can affect his/her job destination? Do you know any examples about this? If yes, would you please talk more about the examples?</i></p>

Appendix 5. Question List for Guiding the Interviews with the Relevant Staff from Bangor University

How do you recruit the Chinese students?

Do you hold any events in China to recruit the Chinese students? If yes, please talk more about these.

How do you publicize Bangor University? (Do you have any brochures or leaflets? If yes, would you please send a copy of these to me?)

What are the main considerations of the Chinese students and their parents when they are considering to choose Bangor University or study in the UK? Do they ask about the employment of Chinese graduates from Bangor University? Do they ask about working opportunities in the UK after their graduation? If yes, please talk more about these.

Do you talk about the employment of Chinese graduates from Bangor University with the potential Chinese students and their parents? If yes, please talk more about these.

What are the expectations of the Chinese students and their parents from the experience of studying in the UK? Are there any differences between the expectation of Chinese students and the expectation of their parents?

What careers and employability service does Bangor University provide to the current students and the graduates?

From the Website of Bangor University, I know the links with recruiters and employers are emphasized as a way to enhance the employability of the students and graduates. Since most of the Chinese graduates go back to China after their graduation, are there any links with Chinese recruiters or Chinese employers? Why?

Since there are many Chinese students, are there any careers and employability service specifically focused on them? / Since many Chinese graduates come back to China, do you provide them with any careers and employability services specifically focused on the Chinese labour market? Please talk more about this.

Are there many Chinese students and Chinese graduates using the careers and employability service provided by the University? What are the services they use? Would you please talk about some examples?

Do you know the employment situation of any Chinese graduates from Bangor University? Can you talk about the employment situation of the graduates you know? How do they find their job?

Do you know any Chinese graduates from Bangor University who have the experience of working in the UK?

*Do Chinese graduates face difficulties, when they look for a job in the UK after their graduation?
What difficulties might Chinese graduates face, when they look for a job in the UK after their graduation?*

What are the skills the Chinese students and graduates should gain or develop, in order to obtain work opportunities in the UK and be able to secure the job?

In recent years, more and more Chinese students prefer to pursue their higher education in UK universities. In addition, a large number of Chinese graduates come back to China after their graduation. What's your opinion about the relationship between the supply and demand in the labour market for Chinese graduates from UK universities? Why?

What are the advantages and disadvantages of Chinese graduates from UK universities, compared with the graduates from Chinese universities? Why? What are the advantages and disadvantages of the Chinese graduates from UK universities, compared with the local graduates and other international graduates, when they apply for a job in the UK?

How does the background of Chinese graduates from UK universities affect their job destinations?

How does their social, cultural and economic capital affect their job destinations?

Would you say Chinese graduates from UK universities are employed in jobs that match their qualifications and skills levels? Or are they underemployed in jobs that do not use their qualifications and skills?

Would you please provide some suggestion to the Chinese students who are considering studying in UK universities? What should they consider before making the decision about whether to go to the UK to pursue their higher education?

Would you please provide some suggestion to the Chinese students in UK universities, who would like to work in the UK after their graduation?

Appendix 6. Russell Group Universities

According to Russell Group (2015), the 24 Russell Group universities are listed below.

University of Birmingham
University of Bristol
University of Cambridge
Cardiff University
Durham University
University of Edinburgh
University of Exeter
University of Glasgow
Imperial College London
King's College London
University of Leeds
University of Liverpool
London School of Economics and Political Science
University of Manchester
Newcastle University
University of Nottingham
University of Oxford
Queen Mary University of London
Queen's University Belfast
University of Sheffield
University of Southampton
University College London
University of Warwick
University of York