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Perceptions of Chinese Top-up Students Transitioning through a Regional UK University: A Longitudinal Study Using the U-Curve Model

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Abstract : This article argues an urgent need to better understand the personal experiences of Chinese top-up students studying in the UK since the number of Chinese students taking year-long top-up programmes in the UK has risen rapidly in recent years. This lack of knowledge could potentially have implications for the reputation of some UK institutions and also the attractiveness of the UK higher education sector to future international students. This longitudinal study explored the academic and social experiences of twelve Chinese top-up students in a UK institution in-depth and revealed that the students felt their experiences were influenced significantly by their surrounding contexts at the macro and meso levels, which, however, have been largely overlooked in existing research. This article suggests the importance of improving the communications between the partner institutions in China and the UK, and also providing sufficient pre-departure and after arrival support to Chinese top-up students at the institutional level.

Keywords : articulation agreements, Chinese top-up students, top-up programmes, U-curve
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