

HOPE Updates – No.1

18th January 2023

Edited by: Daniel Zheng





科博国际教育
HOPE International Education
— Since 2000 —

News and editorial from HOPE

- *HOPE attend Education Innovation & Development Conference*
- *St. Bees School Huizhou host HOPE delegation*
- *Hope student, Hope legal advisor and HOPE friend – a three-in-one partner!*
- *Service and professionalism go first – HOPE annual staff exams become company tradition*

Highlights from local media

- *China's relaxed COVID curbs gain plaudits*
- *Stress of postgraduate exam changes outlooks*
- *International destinations excited to welcome back Chinese travelers*
- *Report: US schools closing due to lower enrollment, funding*
- *Pandemic behind declining English*

HOPE attend Education Innovation & Development Conference

Over 300 principals, senior management staff and head teachers of international schools in China joined the first education conference after the relaxing of the Covid prevention policy in Guangzhou from 8th-9th January. The two-day event was jointly organized by China Education Society International Education Branch, Guangzhou Education Bureau and Top-school with two main forums, 4 branch forums, 1 gala dinner and an education service exhibition throughout the event.



The main theme of the event is “Be positive, be patient, be persistent”

“Be positive, be patient and be persistent” is the main theme of the conference. International schools in China are facing increasingly greater challenge for survival and recognition by both government and parents after MoE’s effort to regulate the private education market. “To improve the quality of courses, enhance the quality of the teacher, increase more services to the students are the only way-out for the school itself”, said the principal of one local international school from Guangzhou.



Alex and Alice (our "A" stars) at HOPE stand during the conference

HOPE also joined the conference to know more about the demand from the schools as well as the latest policy on international schools and international education after the pandemic becomes more relaxed. HOPE also has a stand at the exhibition to promote its services to the international schools, particularly in teachers' development and recruitment, university applications, and school links with overseas institutions.

HOPE has been working with over 30 international schools in the above areas since 2017. Our well-organized small UK university fairs on campus or online have also been welcomed by the international schools. HOPE is to develop more services to school partners in China, including extra-curriculum activities for students and consultation on joint cooperation in running school with overseas partner. If any of our partner schools are interested in cooperation with Chinese schools, please feel free to contact us.

St. Bees School Huizhou host HOPE delegation

Daniel Zheng, MD, Alex Wen, GM of HOPE Shanghai and Alice Zhang, International Partnership Manager received a warm welcome from Sarah Wang, Principal of St. Bees School, Huizhou on 6th January during their school visit.

St Bees School is a boarding school in the UK with over 440 years' history. After it was acquired by Heyi Education Group, a HK based company in 2018, St Bees School has established 3 branch schools in China. Sarah, who worked very closely with HOPE when she was the senior manager at English UK, is now leading the newly opened Huizhou campus in Guangdong Province.

“We really want to work with our friend as we share the same vision for education, and we trust each other based on the previous partnership”. Daniel recalled his experience of working with Sarah and English UK over 10 years ago; “that is why we make our first visit to Sarah after recovering from the Covid in 2023”. He added.

Although it was the last day of the school term and Sarah was extremely busy, she expressed her warm welcome to HOPE delegation, and took us for a campus tour. Then a thorough discussion was arranged for how HOPE and St Bees can work together in the future. A further meeting with Director of Heyi Education Group was also scheduled during the education conference in Guangzhou the following day.



Daniel, Sarah, Alex and Alice (from left to right) at St Bees Huizhou

Add: Room 411 Pole Tower, 425 Yishan Road, 200235, China
地址：中国上海宜山路 425 号光启城办公楼 411 室，邮编：200235
Tel: +86 (0)21 33634525 Fax: +86 (0)21 33634528 Email: d.zheng@hope-studyabroad.com

Hope student, Hope legal advisor and HOPE friend – a three-in-one partner!

It is hard to believe that a HOPE student 20 years ago is now HOPE's legal advisor and a close friend!

Calvin, graduating from University of Essex in LL.M International Business Law in 2004, is now the Senior Partner of AllBright Law Firm in Shanghai, a top law firm in China. He recalled his 20-year relationship with HOPE during an interview with Mr Ye, editor-in-Chief of HOPE Parents Magazine, and Daniel Zheng, Managing Director of HOPE.



Calvin is being interviewed by Mr. Ye and Daniel

“It was my father's idea that I shall study overseas after LLB study and that decision linked me with HOPE 20 years ago”. Calvin recalled his first acquaintance with HOPE. “It was a terrific experience in the UK and it laid a solid foundation for my future career. I was really grateful to HOPE to give me a lot of advice and support during my study and work as well as during the application. Even when I came back

to Shanghai, I have been keeping close contact with Daniel and HOPE, and attended various events organized by HOPE” Calvin is very impressed by the “after Sale” service provided by his agent, and this mutual trust led to a further partnership when HOPE decided to contract a law firm to be its legal advisor.



Calvin (left) at HOPE's alumni event during the World Cup Final.

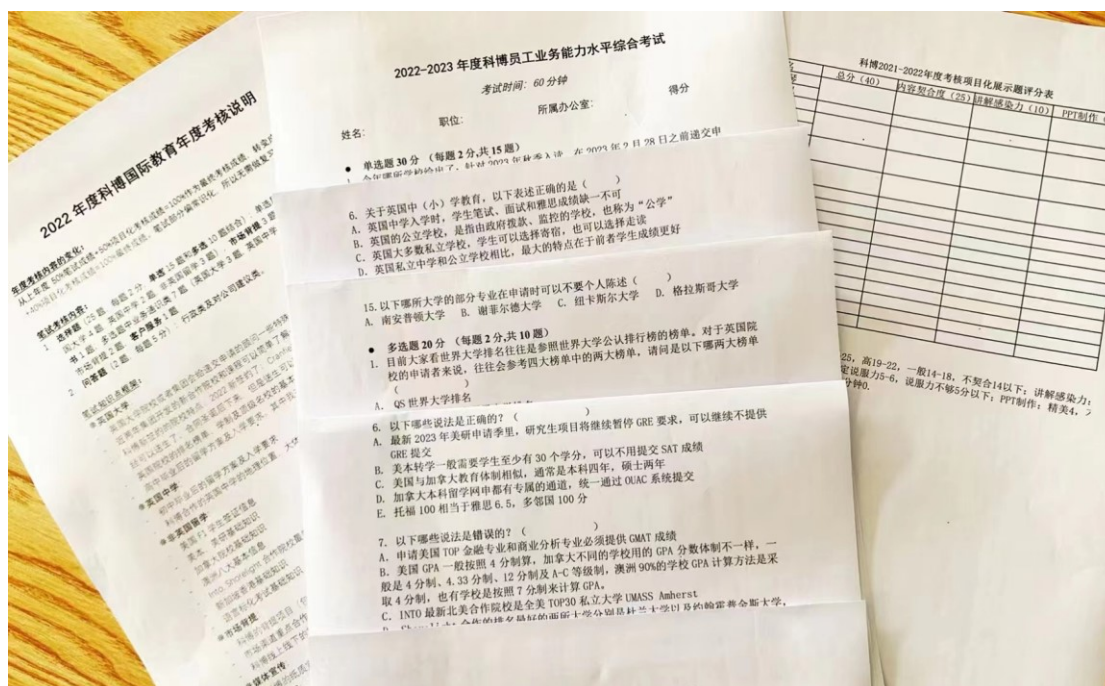
“Calvin and his team at AllBright is a very natural choice for us as they are very professional. Calvin studied in the UK and he knows this industry and our business. More importantly we know each other so well!” Daniel feels very lucky to have Calvin and his team to support HOPE’s legal affairs.

When summarizing his success in career and his long-term friendship with HOPE, Calvin stressed “it is the power of persistence that makes me to go with my career ,and HOPE!”

HOPE is indeed very proud of helping so many students to study abroad in the past 22 years. At the same time, HOPE is also very lucky to have so many successful students like Calvin around to support us. “Believe in the power of persistence”. Daniel echoed Calvin at the end of the interview!

Service and professionalism go first - HOPE annual staff exams become company tradition

Most of our staff did not expect, when they first joined HOPE, that they need to take an annual written and speaking exam each year, and the result is linked to their annual bonus!



This year's exam paper

As a matter of fact, this has been a tradition of HOPE for almost 20 years. The staff annual assessment is not only based on their KPI but also their exam result. The 60-minute written exam includes multiple-choice questions, short answer questions and case analysis, covering the knowledge you need to know in study abroad industry. For example, knowledge about education system of different countries, entry requirements and strength of our partner overseas institutions, characteristics of private schools and state colleges, the latest study abroad policy of China and destination countries, trend of the study abroad market etc..

Speaking test is a 15-20 min. presentation with PPT or business/event proposal on a practical task completed by two staff each group. Each group has two weeks to

prepare their own tasks, using Project Based Learning (PBL) method. The presentation and the PPT are judged by a panel of senior management staff.



This year's online speaking test

This long kept tradition of annual exam is to further enhance staff's professionalism to better serve our students, parents and partner institutions. It is also a good opportunity for team building as well as for self-assessment.



Written exam in progress

Add: Room 411 Pole Tower, 425 Yishan Road, 200235, China
地址：中国上海宜山路 425 号光启城办公楼 411 室，邮编：200235
Tel: +86 (0)21 33634525 Fax: +86 (0)21 33634528 Email: d.zheng@hope-studyabroad.com

China's relaxed COVID curbs gain plaudits

By XING YI in London | CHINA DAILY | Updated: 2023-01-09



Chinese travelers arrive at Charles de Gaulle Airport in Paris on January 4. JULIEN MATTIA/GETTY IMAGES

UK firms celebrate return to normal as businesses expect to land a windfall

It was just days after Christmas when Ian Zhu learned about the news of China changing its approach to the way it tackles COVID-19, including scrapping quarantine for international arrivals from Jan 8, and Zhu knew he should start looking for flight tickets.

"We've waited for this day for a long time," said Zhu, managing director of Tou Ying Ltd, a consultancy in London serving UK-China cross-border business.

"My clients all want to go to China to see Chinese partners in person because they've been communicating online for such a long time. There was one client who has

signed a memorandum of understanding with a Chinese company online recently, and they want to throw a celebration party in China."

Zhu said he has been checking flight tickets in March for them.

"Online celebrations just won't get that kind of good atmosphere."

However, before Zhu's UK clients can set out for their long overdue China trips, he has been busy with arrangements for several Chinese business groups that will visit the United Kingdom in the coming weeks. Some of his Chinese clients want to hold business roadshows, some are coming to attract foreign investment, and some aim to open up a branch in the UK. "Face-to-face communication is very important for doing business, which clears misunderstanding and builds trust, and we would say the business communities in both the UK and China cannot wait to meet each other in person."

Charlie Beamish, chief executive of Beamish International, which provides Scottish whisky services, was as optimistic as Zhu is about the prospects. "A lot of our clients are based in major cities in China," said Beamish, a frequent visitor to China before the pandemic. "The great frustration with COVID is that we've not been able to visit clients and meet them face to face. Now that China has reopened we're very excited, and hopefully, we'll be there in April or May and visit cities like Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Shenzhen this year."

Beamish said he expects an influx of Chinese clients visiting distilleries in Scotland.

Many UK companies, including his, outsource some of their business to China, he said, and the previous COVID-19 measures that affected manufacturers in China affected them as well.

"The UK was expecting a sustained amount of business coming through from China. What the lockdown proved was that the UK actually does rely on China."

Keith Bennett, deputy chairman of the 48 Group Club in the UK, said: "China's lifting of quarantine restrictions for inbound travelers will undoubtedly provide a major and much-needed boost to the global economy, not least as China is the world's largest trading nation.

"Already, a couple of months ago, the head of Emirates airline predicted that there would be a bonanza of demand for seats on flights to China once restrictions were lifted. This reflected the strong demand and appetite from the international business community."



Minister Counselor Bi Haibo from Chinese Embassy in London briefs on China's Covid policies to British reporters on January 6. [Photo provided to chinadaily.com.cn]

In a news conference organized by the Chinese embassy in London on Friday, Minister Counselor Bi Haibo said that as the COVID-19 situation in China continues to improve, the effects of policies to stabilize economic growth continue to emerge.

"Beijing and other Chinese cities that have passed the peak of COVID are once again showing vitality. Resumption of work and production is gathering pace. The number of cars on the road is growing.

"The exchange of Chinese and foreign personnel becomes easier, China's long-subdued consumer demand will be released, and investor confidence will be boosted. This is good news not just for China but the entire global economy. Many economic and financial institutes and experts have predicted that China's economy will rebound strongly."

Educational exchanges

Changes to COVID-19 control and prevention measures have been well received not only by business people, but also by those involved in international cultural and educational exchanges.

Theresa Booth, joint chief executive of Chopsticks Club, said: "The loosening of restrictions will have benefits to all our Chopsticks Club members, particularly our Chinese members who can travel again to visit friends and relatives, especially those with elderly relatives in China for whom the three years of separation has been a huge worry."

The club is an independent China-UK professionals' membership network that comprises 4,000 professionals working throughout China and the UK, which initiated the Engage with China educational charity that promotes China literacy in UK schools. "From an Engage with China perspective, it means we may be able to restart our summer school programs for Chinese students visiting the UK, and we look forward to UK schools resuming their exchange programs with China," Booth said.

In outbound tourism, a surge in inquiries for flight tickets and reservations for hotels has been expected by industry insiders.

Andrew Xu, chief executive of Club Med China and executive president of Fosun Tourism Group, said the group has had an increase in reservations for its ski resort in Hokkaido, Japan, and island resorts in Southeast Asian countries.

"Even before the quarantine-free policy took effect this Sunday, we have had reservation advances of more than 1 million yuan (\$146,000) a week for our outbound tourism products for the past three consecutive weeks."

The resumption of outbound tourism will be gradual but will surge in summer, he said.

There is also a growing appetite for inbound tourists to Chinese cities such as Lijiang, Yunnan province, Xu said, and the company has been marketing destinations in China in overseas markets.

"The number of domestic flights is on the rise," Bi said. "Many countries can't wait to welcome Chinese visitors, and many people in the UK are looking forward to the realization of their China tour."

Stress of postgraduate exam changes outlooks

By ZOU SHUO | China Daily | Updated: 2022-12-26 09:42



Examinees are seen at the examination sites at Renmin University of China in Beijing, on Dec 25. China's annual graduate school entrance exam kicked off on Saturday.

More students willing to try less famous colleges as fierce competition takes toll

A record 4.74 million students signed up for the 2023 national postgraduate entrance exam held from Saturday to Monday, 170,000 more than last year, the Ministry of Education said on Saturday.

The annual increase of 3.7 percent was considerably lower than the 21 percent recorded previously.

According to a report by the online education portal EOL, while well-known universities have seen slight increases or even drops in applicants this year, less

famous ones have witnessed big jumps in test-takers, showing that more students are willing to settle for less famous universities to avoid fierce exam competition.

Applicants to Yunnan Minzu University jumped by 55 percent to 9,486 this year and Jiangxi Agricultural University also witnessed an increase of around 40 percent. Meanwhile, Nankai University in Tianjin and Beijing Forestry University saw slight decreases in test-takers.

More attention should be paid to the increasingly intense competition in postgraduate exams, so that it does not become as stressful as the national college entrance exam, or gaokao, the report said.

Chen Zhiwen, editor-in-chief of EOL, said the slower increase may be the result of some students being intimidated by the intense competition.

Moreover, reports of the rising numbers of graduates only able to land jobs at the grassroots level or at primary and middle schools despite having a master's degree have made postgraduate studies less appealing as they do not guarantee a decent job.

Many of the applicants are born after 2000 and prefer a more stable and easier lifestyle, Chen added.

The report also found that around 55 percent of those surveyed chose to pursue postgraduate studies due to the difficulty in finding employment and more than 40 percent said they are interested in their major.

There will be an expected 11.58 million new college graduates next year, and employment remains a complicated issue, according to the Ministry of Education.

When asked what factors influence the choice of university, almost 60 percent of respondents said they care about whether the university has high entrance scores, and 41 percent said they pay the most attention to how many students the school plans to accept. Meanwhile, around 56 percent said they care about the strength of the university and 35 percent said the ranking of the major matters.

According to the report, the student mentality has changed from a desire to get into a good university for postgraduate studies to a feeling that getting into any university is fine.



Examinees are seen at the examination sites at Renmin University of China in Beijing, on Dec 25. China's annual graduate school entrance exam kicked off on Saturday.

According to the Ministry of Education, around 1.1 million of the 4.57 million applicants were accepted into postgraduate studies this year, an enrollment rate of 24 percent, meaning that more than 3 million test-takers failed to get places.

China Comment, a fortnightly magazine by Xinhua News Agency, said that when test-takers fail to get into their desired schools, many chose to try their luck again at postgraduate entrance exams.

These students usually have not found a job and many live in school dormitories and eat at school canteens to cut daily expenses, the magazine recently reported.

They are under great pressure to perform well in the exam and although many are determined to pursue postgraduate studies, they often feel lonely, at a loss and stressed during the long preparation period.

Qian Shujie, who took the exam for the second time this year, said she felt anxious when preparing, fearing that her peers would do better than her.

Qian told the magazine that her anxiety is also a result of her age, as many of her former classmates are already making progress at work and she feels she is stuck in the same place and will be 30 by the time she finishes postgraduate studies.

International destinations excited to welcome back Chinese travelers

By YUAN SHENGGAO | CHINA DAILY | Updated: 2023-01-14



Chinese tourists arrive at Suvarnabhumi International Airport in Samut Prakarn province, Thailand, on Monday. [Photo/Agencies]

Return of holidaymakers the 'last puzzle piece' for full tourism recovery

With the resumption of outbound travel in China after the country downgraded its COVID-19 management measures from Category A to Category B, Chinese tourists are embarking on trips overseas — and destinations are thrilled at the prospect of welcoming them back.

"Welcome to Thailand!" Thai Deputy Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul and other senior officials said on Monday to the first group of Chinese tourists arriving at Thailand's Suvarnabhumi Airport in Bangkok. The 269 passengers from Xiamen, East China's Fujian province, were greeted with flowers and gift bags.

Pakkanan Winijchai, an official with the Beijing office of the Tourism Authority of Thailand, told Beijing Daily that after the announcement over border-crossings, the Thai tourism sector greeted the news with cheers.

She said she expects to see an explosive growth in the number of Chinese tourists visiting Thailand.

Thailand's tourism authority forecasts some 300,000 Chinese tourists to arrive in the first quarter. Around 5 million Chinese tourists are expected to visit Thailand in 2023.

Emanuel Lehner-Telic, head of markets Asia-Pacific at the Austrian National Tourist Office, told Beijing Daily that they were having discussions with the federal provinces in Austria on welcoming Chinese tourists back.

After the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics, more Chinese are beginning to pay attention to Austrian winter tourism offerings, he said.

Innsbruck has hosted the Winter Olympics twice and Austria is a paradise for winter sports — accounting for more than 50 percent of the European market. Austria welcomes Chinese tourists to spend their winter holidays in Austria, he added.

The French embassy in China and the tourism agencies of countries including Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Israel and Norway posted in December welcome messages for Chinese tourists on Chinese social media.

A Chinese tourist shared his "silky smooth" experience traveling from Beijing to Paris and San Francisco. "I didn't encounter any obstacles," he told Beijing Daily. He embarked on this "long-awaited" trip in December, said the newspaper.

Although China had just resumed international travel, Zhang saw many Putonghua-speaking tourists around Paris, including in a long queue at a Louis Vuitton store.

"Many of those working in the tourism sector (of France) are actually Chinese," Zhang told Beijing Daily. "In the past three years, they had very poor business. Some of them even closed their companies and took up other professions."

"The salespeople at LV were especially warm toward Chinese tourists ... They would receive them patiently and refer them to stores with stocks if they didn't have what they wanted in stock," Zhang said.

Before COVID-19, China was one of the world's biggest outbound tourism contributors. In 2019, the number of outbound trips by Chinese citizens stood at 169 million. More than 2 million out of those trips were to France, bringing 3.5 billion euros (\$3.78 billion) in tourism revenue to the country, Beijing Daily reported.

"The resumption of international travel in China is a major event in the process of global tourism recovery and will give a strong boost to the full recovery of tourism-related industries in the receiving countries," Cheng Chaogong, a senior researcher with Tongcheng Travel, told chinanews.com.

Cheng said China had been an important source for inbound tourism to numerous countries. Due to COVID-19, the volume of China's outbound air passengers had been in an abnormal state in 2022. The monthly figure was less than 5 percent of that in 2019, according to the chinanews.com report.

"To a certain extent, the return of Chinese holidaymakers is the 'last puzzle piece' for the full recovery of global tourism," Cheng added.

Zheng Yue, deputy general manager of the North China Marketing Center at China Southern Airlines, told chinanews.com: "With the resumption of more international flights, the return of Chinese tourists is expected to drive the recovery of international activities including trade and cultural exchanges, and to pump energy into the world economy and global tourism."

Report: US schools closing due to lower enrollment, funding

By AI HEPING in New York | chinadaily.com.cn | Updated: 2023-01-06



High school students walk on a campus in Plano, Texas, the US on Aug 31, 2022.

US school districts across the country reportedly are closing buildings because schools have lost more than a million students since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, causing a lack of students or money to keep them open.

Public school enrollment fell by more than 1.4 million students to 49.4 million between fall 2019 and fall 2020 — or 3 percent — according to data from the US Education Department, The Wall Street Journal reported Thursday.

School officials say the decline in public school enrollment also is being caused by declining birthrates, an increase in home schooling, and more competition from private and charter schools, according to the Journal.

An analysis by the newspaper found that enrollment has fallen in roughly 85 of the nation's largest 100 public school districts for which data was available, with New

York, Los Angeles, Philadelphia and Fort Worth, Texas, all experiencing enrollment drops of around 10 percent.

A decline in students causes school districts to lose funding because most public schools get their money on a per-pupil basis, and a closing of a school can cause more families to leave, which can prompt greater enrollment declines and funding.

The Journal cited 16 school closings in Jefferson County, Colorado, in November; five closings in St. Paul, Minnesota, last summer; and seven closings in Oakland, California, last February because of declining enrollment and funding problems.

Districts in cities including Denver and Indianapolis have developed plans to shut down underused schools, the Journal reported, and superintendents say more closures are inevitable unless enrollment drops are reversed.

"We are subsidizing and adding funds to those schools as much as we possibly can, but it's just not sustainable," St. Paul Public Schools Superintendent Joe Gothard told the Journal.

"Nobody wants to close a school," Tracy Dorland, superintendent of Jefferson County Public Schools, told the Journal, but her school board approved her plan to shut down underused campuses.

COVID-19 struck as enrollment was already dropping in many cities as a result of decreases in numbers of school-age children and the rise of other educational options such as private schools and remote lessons.

Charter school enrollment rose more than 7 percent from the 2019-20 school year to the 2020-21 school year, and then fell slightly in the 2021-22 school year to about 3.7 million students, according to the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools

Pandemic behind declining English

By ZOU SHUO | China Daily | Updated: 2023-01-07



[Photo/IC]

English-teaching insiders in China said the COVID-19 pandemic could be one of the reasons for the decline in China's ranking in English proficiency, though such proficiency is still important in telling China's story to the world.

According to Swedish company EF Education First, China's ranking in English proficiency continued to decline last year, with the country coming in 62nd among 111 non-English speaking countries and regions.

In the company's 2022 English Proficiency Index, China scored 498 points out of 800, dropping from 49th place last year with a score of 513, and 38th in 2020 with a score of 520.

The country's English proficiency has slipped from moderate to low, according to the company.

EF Education First defines a moderate level as having an ability to participate in professional meetings in one's area of expertise, understand song lyrics and write emails on familiar subjects. A low level refers to an ability to navigate as a tourist in

an English-speaking country, engage in small talk with colleagues and understand simple emails from colleagues.

Wu Peng, an English professor at Jiangsu University's School of Foreign Languages, said he is skeptical about China's continued decline in the proficiency ranking, as there has been no change in the country's English education system and he has seen no apparent decline in his students' English levels in recent years.

However, he acknowledged that the country's English level remains still relatively low compared with other countries, which he said is mainly due to its exam-oriented English education system and English teachers in the country failing to adapt to the latest global English teaching methods.

Moreover, Wu said, the COVID-19 pandemic has had an impact on people's English proficiency, as there have been fewer international conferences and competitions held in the country, offering fewer opportunities for people to communicate in English.

EF Education First has produced the report for 12 consecutive years. This year's report analyzed data from 2.1 million nonnative English speakers, who were tested on their ability to understand written and spoken English.

The median age of participants was 25, while 97 percent were under 60 and 55 percent were women.

Adults from the Netherlands were ranked as the best non-native English speakers, with a score of 661, followed by those from Singapore (642), Austria (628) and Norway (627). Laos had the lowest score, with 360 points.

Within China, Hong Kong was ranked first at 561 points, followed by Shanghai and Beijing, both at 549, Tianjin at 528 and Zhejiang at 509.

Zhu Shenhai, an associate English professor at Guangxi Normal University, said the atmosphere for English learning has been declining in China in recent years and that some people have called for reducing the importance of English in education and important exams. "Such shortsighted views and misunderstandings have influenced students' English levels," he said.

Learning English well has helped China to achieve rapid development in science and technology, and it has also made more people receptive to foreign cultures, he said, adding that telling China's story well to foreign audiences requires English proficiency.

Wu said, "Chinese people have always been inclusive regarding foreign cultures and languages, and we absorb what's best in them," he said. "Learning English well can also help us appreciate the beauty of Chinese."