

**The 'free self': A comparative study of bi-directional migration trajectories of students from mainland China and Hong Kong (0179)**

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The past decade has seen a rapid expansion of international branch campuses (IBCs) across the world. While China has become the world's second largest host country of IBCs, countries such as the US, Australia and the UK, dominate the provision side of the business. The past few years have, however, witnessed newer patterns. Countries whose higher education sectors do not traditionally possess comparable levels of global recognition to the dominant ones have begun to build IBCs in other parts of the world as well (Becker, 2015). One example has been the Israel Institute of Technology, which has recently set up a branch campus in China, the Guangdong-Technion Israel Institute of Technology (GTIIT) (Technion-Israel Institute of Technology, 2015).

Notably, existing research on IBCs has a managerial focus, revolving around home institutions' financial and reputational risk management. Such research is centrally concerned with issues of sustainability, particularly in view of the recent closure of some IBCs (Altbach, 2015; Becker, 2009). However, little is done to investigate the needs and views of stakeholders such as faculty members, whose experiences may be crucial to the success or failure of IBCs (Dow, 2010). While some providers of IBCs fly-in faculty members from their home institutions to teach on intensive courses, most have focused on securing a more permanent faculty base within the IBCs in China (Hayhoe & Pan, 2015). This is partially due to notable pitfalls of fly-in faculty members, such as lack of interaction with and/or interest in students on IBCs and exhaustion due to intensive travelling (Waters & Leung, 2013). However, for permanent staff working in the IBCs, especially those Chinese nationals with overseas PhDs, they may be subject to racist treatment and alienation from students, due to students' expectations of a Western education that is epitomised by white/western faculty members (Moufahim & Lim, 2015). It is therefore pertinent to investigate how such Chinese faculty members on IBCs navigate and engage with potential discriminations.

With such a view, this paper reports on preliminary findings of an ongoing ethnographic project which explores 15 Chinese faculty members with overseas PhDs recruited to the GTIIT. As all academics have to undergo training during their first year in the Technion's Haifa campus in Israel and then return to the work in the branch campus in Shantou, China the subsequent year, I conduct carry out ethnographic interactions (including interviews, focus groups and other daily activities) with them for three months in Haifa. In addition, as they each have a mentor in Haifa, I also conduct interviews with their respective mentors. This will be followed by another year's fieldwork in the GTIIT's Shantou campus, including interviews with these 15 faculty members and focus groups with students taught by these academics.

Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's (1984, 1986, 2002) notions of field, habitus and capital, this paper conceptualises the IBCs in China as a field with its relative independence in defining its own rules, including the kinds of resources (i.e. capital) that are deemed legitimate and carry symbolic force. Preliminary analysis of the first round of interviews pointed to three key issues.

First, while these academics value the opportunity to foster research collaboration with and receive training from the academics on the host campus in Haifa, some of them demonstrate various degrees of resistance against certain pedagogical and research orientations. This can be attributed to dissonances between their academic habitus and the rules of the field on host campus in Haifa. More specifically, all of these 15 academics received their PhDs from the US, the UK, Australia and Hong Kong and identify discrepancies between their academic training and beliefs and those of the colleagues on Haifa campus. Moreover, such discrepancies also gave rise to concerns about the academic 'sovereignty' of the branch campus. They ask: who determines the direction of research and curriculum development? How much should and can be compromised?

Second, parallel to resistance against the Haifa faculty members, some of these Western educated faculty members are concerned about the degree of innovation and freedom allowed on the GTIIT's Shantou campus. This is in line to the tight ideological control that is being enforced in higher education institutions in China (Cao, 2015). Such a concern thus places these faculty members in the dilemma of being caught between pedagogic and research domination of the Haifa campus and the ideological constraints on the Shantou campus.

Third, although they have not been officially in touch with students on the GTIIT's Shantou campus, they anticipate the need to 'prove' their worth to the student body. Despite possessing academic capital such as PhD degrees from renowned universities abroad (or in Hong Kong) and internationally recognised research publications, these faculty members perceive a disadvantaged position due to their Chinese nationality. This dilemma raises the question of what a Western education entails on IBCs in China and points to unsettling inequalities in race and ethnicity.

These preliminary findings highlight important issues that relate closely to the theme of the SRHE conference 2016: freedom and control in global higher education. While IBCs in China is an emerging field of research with great potential in innovation and knowledge creation, the pointy issues of faculty members' pedagogic, academic (research) and ideological freedom intersect with the issue of race and ethnicity. This complexity needs further teasing out and be addressed thoroughly so that a more socially just field of IBCs in China can be possible. While the IBCs in China as a field is inevitably influenced by surrounding social and political fields in China and internationally, the subjective experiences of faculty members as demonstrated in this paper points to broader concerns regarding where and how transnational education is heading.

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