

Changing Trends in the Flow of International Human Capital: From the Perspective of Foreign-trained Chinese PhD Elites in America, Britain and Australia (0205)**Key word:**

International education and immigration; foreign-trained PhD; Chinese overseas student; identity shift and formation; Ivy League (USA); Russell Group (UK); Group of Eight (Australia); international human capital flow; brain circulation

Abstract:

The paper investigates how foreign-trained Chinese PhD elites make their decision to stay in the host countries (America, Britain and Australia) or return to home country upon finishing their study. Identity shift and formation model is applied as framework to understand this stay/return decision at the individual level. This is a comparative study which involves current students and graduates from Harvard, Oxford and Melbourne. Both focus group and individual interview are conducted in order to understand how they make their decisions and what factors influence their decision-making. Document analysis of education and immigration policy is systematically explored in order to understand individual's choice in a broader social and cultural context. Moreover, similarity and difference amongst foreign-trained Chinese PhD elites' stay/return decision-making in three host countries are further critically discussed.

Outline:

In the context of globalization of higher education, studies in the flow of international human capital have gained increasingly popularity over the past decades. Those who hold foreign PhD degrees in developed countries are often seen as highly skilled talents, and thus a vital human capital to make contribution to the development of any given country. Although the Chinese government has made extensive efforts to attract Chinese foreign-trained talents to return and serve China by introducing a series of incentive policies, the incentive policies do not work effectively, especially considering attracting

foreign-trained talents in the categories of “those are self-funded” and “those hold scholarships from host universities” (Ministry of Education, 2010). In the past thirty years, there is heated debate on Chinese brain drain, brain gain and or brain circulation. However, while most of existing research argues the reasons for Chinese overseas students’ flow at the macro-level and meso-level, few papers take students’ psycho-cultural perception into consideration and address the issues at the individual level. Moreover, much less documents focus on Chinese PhD elites who study in the Ivy League (USA), Russell Group (UK) and Group of Eight (Australia), which consists of lowest return-rate compared to other Chinese overseas students. Further, very few studies target at a specific ethnic group of international student in different host countries. Therefore, this study takes a unique comparative perspective to explore Chinese PhD elites’ international education and migration issues and fill in the knowledge gap.

The paper investigates how foreign-trained Chinese PhD elites make their decision to stay in the host countries (America, Britain and Australia) or return to home country upon finishing their study. Identity shift and formation model is applied as framework to understand this stay/return decision at the individual level. This is a comparative study which involves current students and graduates from Harvard, Oxford and Melbourne. Both focus group and individual interview are conducted in order to understand how they make their decisions and what factors influence their decision-making. Document analysis of education and immigration policy is systematically explored in order to understand individual’s choice in a broader social and cultural context. Moreover, similarity and difference amongst foreign-trained Chinese PhD elites’ stay/return decision-making in three host countries are further critically discussed.