



# 流动中的跨境学术移民

跨文化工作场域中的中英学者们

*Transnational Academic Mobility*

*The Experiences of Chinese and British Migrants in  
Transnational Academic Field*

刘田丰◎著



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全国百佳图书出版单位

该专著的出版得到了中南大学外国语学院省级重点学科外国语言文学的经费资助，特此鸣谢

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## 图书在版编目 (CIP) 数据

流动中的跨境学术移民：跨文化工作场域中的中英学者们 = Transnational Academic Mobility: The Experiences of Chinese and British Migrants in Transnational Academic Field: 英文/刘田丰著. —北京：知识产权出版社，2017. 11

ISBN 978-7-5130-4929-0

I. ①流… II. ①刘… III. ①文化交流—研究—中国、英国 IV. ①G125

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字 (2017) 第 109045 号

## 内容提要

本书主要研究的是在跨国教育的全球化背景下，在中英联合办学的高等教育机构里工作的中英跨国学术移民，以及此类高端移民在异国的日常工作和生活，从而挖掘出这种流动性的移民过程在空间和时间上的社会学意义。本书既描述了宏观关注国际高等教育联合办学的前沿动向，又结合实际阐释了跨国高端移民的日常跨文化交际行为。本书既可为政府工作报告提供调研资料，又可作为跨国高等学术机构的参考文献，同时也可供国际学生、旅居学者或跨文化工作者进行未来职业规划对参考。

责任编辑：许 波 徐家春

责任出版：孙婷婷

## 流动中的跨境学术移民：跨文化工作场域中的中英学者们

LIUDONGZHONG DE KUAJING XUESHU YIMIN; KUAWENHUA GONGZUO  
CHANGYUZHONG DE ZHONGYING XUEZHEMEN

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出版发行：知识产权出版社有限责任公司 网 址：<http://www.ipph.cn>

电 话：010-82004826

<http://www.laichushu.com>

社 址：北京市海淀区气象路50号院

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发行电话：010-82000860 转 8101

发行传真：010-82000893/82005070

印 刷：虎彩印艺股份有限公司

经 销：各大网上书店、新华书店及相关专业书店

开 本：720mm×1000mm 1/16

印 张：20.5

版 次：2017年11月第1版

印 次：2017年11月第1次印刷

字 数：360千字

定 价：66.00元

ISBN 978-7-5130-4929-0

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## Preface

In the context of transnational higher education, this study examines Chinese and British academic migrants' everyday work-life practices in a Sino-UK university joint venture. The study breaks new ground by teasing out the difficulties, problems, misunderstandings, contradictions, and tensions that occur in an unfamiliar transnational academic field for academic migrants. Correspondingly, it also looks at the career opportunities and international social and academic connections that gradually cultivated in the transnational working environment. The study offers a deeper understanding of transnational academic space by providing empirical insights into transnational academics' moving strategies, their pedagogic creativeness, and how their sense of belonging is intertwined with different places on the 'host' university campus.

The study adopted a variety of qualitative methodological tools (semi-structured interviews, photo interviews and participant observation) to explore the everyday texture of academic migrants' working practices in transnational workplace. The findings suggest the 'unexpected' barriers in the 'new' transitional academic workplace have significance for academic migrants' further professional improvement and transnational mobility. It also reveals how academic migrants are not just passively adapting or integrating into the 'new' transnational professional structure, but also positively challenging and changing its boundaries.

The research sheds light on scholarly debates on transnational academic mobility and the internationalisation of higher education in the Sino-British context. It goes beyond the national boundaries of higher education and places the investigation in a broader frame of social, cultural and spatial analysis in order to generate a deeper understanding of academic migrants' everyday practices. It argues for a transnational and enduring understanding of academic migrants' experience and points out that those experiences are nationally unbounded, yet locally specific. It also takes a step forward in academic mobility studies, by using grounded evidence gathered in transnational academic space to challenge the mono-academic cultural stereotypes bounded within national borders.

Here, I wish to acknowledge the encouragement, help and support from my faculty, supervisor, colleagues, friends and family during the completion of this dissertation and my doctoral studies in this four memorable years in London. Firstly, I would like to give my sincere thanks to Professor Katie Willis and Dr. Katherine Brickell for their expertise, guidance and support for my research through out the challenging Ph. D process. I would like to also give my thanks to the Department of Geography at the Royal Holloway University of London. This is very good Geography Department, not only because it is ranked 2nd in the UK and 1st in England for world-class research, but also because there are many wonderful people I have met during my time here. I would also like to say a special thanks to Rupert Griffiths and Weiqiang Lin, who are my closest friends and colleagues, for their warmth, friendship and academic support in the past few years. Finally, a special thank goes to my parents, they are the best in the world. I am dedicating this work to both of them.

## **Glossary and List of Acronyms**

APR-Annual Performance Review

BRIC-Brazil Russia India China

CAS-Chinese Academy of Science

C-BERT-Cross-Border Education Research Team

CEC-The Co-ordinating European Council

CPC-Communist Party of China

GBP-Great British Pound

GDP-Gross Domestic Product

HEI-Higher Education Institute

HESA-Higher Education Statistics Agency

HSMP-Highly Skilled Migrant Programme

IBC-International Branch Campus

IELTS-International English Language Testing System

MIDA- Migrations pour le Développement en Afrique

MNE-Multinational Enterprise

MOE-Ministry of Education

OECD-Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PGCHE-Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education

PSW-Post Study Work

QAA-Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

QTS-Qualified Teacher Status

REF-Research Excellence Framework

RMB-Chinese Yuan

THE-Times Higher Education

TNE-Transnational Education

TOKTEN-Transfer of Knowledge Through Expatriate Nationals

UNDP-United Nations Development Programme

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# **Chapter One**

## **Transnational Academic Mobility: Chinese and British Academics in Transnational Academic Space**

The origins of this thesis are my childhood experiences of academic life in China and my subsequent experiences of academic life and cultures in France and England. I grew up on the university campus of Xiangtan, Hunan province, China where both of my parents were university lecturers. In China, unlike the UK, it is normal for staff and their families to live and work on the campus, and indeed the campuses are more like towns in their own right, with all amenities readily available. The first twenty-one years of my life were spent in this environment, both as a resident and later also as an undergraduate student.

After my undergraduate studies, I left to study a master's degree in France. This was my first experience of a different country and a different academic environment and challenged my assumptions of both Chinese and Western education systems. When I returned to China to take up a lecturing position at Central South University, these experiences influenced my approach, experience of teaching and the university environment.

In 2011, I returned once more to Europe to study for a Ph. D in

London. These movements back and forth between East and West, as resident, student and academic connected strongly with my formative years. Through these experiences, academic migration, the motives and experiences of academic migrants formed a strong current in my understanding of my place in the world and that of many of my friends and family. Although my intention has always been to return to China to work in academia after completing my Ph. D, the motives for staying or leaving, the differences in teaching styles and the experience of the university environment have formed a large part of my academic life experiences. This thesis represents an academic investigation of the issues with which I have been not only familiar with, but have also grappled with throughout my life.

## Introduction: Transnational Encounters Across Space and Time

In the last two decades<sup>①</sup>, higher education has become increasingly transnational in character, with international branch campuses and educational programmes springing up in large numbers<sup>②</sup>. This has been in part shaped by a corresponding increase in transnational academic migration, with international links becoming ‘increasingly systematic, dense, multiple and transnational’ (Kim, 2010: 400). There is a growing body of migration research exploring the transnational mobility of students, but little is known about the transnational mobility of university researchers and academics, and their grounded working experiences in the host countries (Jons, 2009; Fehey and Kenway, 2010). There is evidence that encourages scholars to look more closely at academic migrants and their everyday activities (Larner, 2014). Holloway and Jöns (2012) have called for more research on these highly-skilled migrants from various cultural backgrounds, particularly world-class universities with global branches. In this thesis, I echo their call and address this gap by focusing on

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① In the last decade of 20th century and the first decade of 21st century, the cross border movement of international students, academics, programmes and institutions stepped into a new level (Warwick, 2014).

② There are currently 235 international campuses worldwide (C-BERT, 2015).

Chinese and British academic migrants in a Sino-UK university joint venture, and use the university campus as the main context through which to explore their experiences.

UK and Chinese academic institutions and academic migrants are the focus of this study for a number of reasons. Academic institutions in the UK are of particular interest, because they have managed to maintain a relatively strong position in the recruitment and retention of highly-skilled overseas academics in the face of growing global competition (Walker, 2015). HESA data for 2013—2014 states that 29% of all UK university academics were non-UK academics, a slight rise (or one percentage point) in comparison to the data gathered in 2012. Of these overseas academics, China provides the largest single group of ethnic minority academic staff in the UK (HESA, 2013/2014). Equally, UK universities are also keen to establish international branch campuses. By 2012, UK institutions had established 25 international branch campuses worldwide, and UK was listed in third place of the top five source countries of branch campuses after the US and Australia (Knight, 2015). Increasing numbers of British academics are adopting a ‘fly-in and fly-out’ (THE, 2014) working style in order to adapt to this ‘transnational agenda’ and accumulate international experiences.

Although the topic is under-researched, the small body of literature that does exist in relation to academic mobility is largely made up of national-scale studies and political perspectives (e. g. Altbach and Knight, 2007; Robinson and Guan, 2012). In this thesis, I argue for a more grounded perspective, applying critical scrutiny to the social and cultural aspects of academic mobility in individual and situated contexts (Roberston, 2010; Cantwell, 2011; Chen, 2015). Rather than taking national immigration policy trends as a starting point of research, my focus will be on what the everyday working experiences of Chinese and British academic migrants reveal within the context of the global processes of increasing

internationalisation. The study breaks new ground by teasing out where the difficulties, problems, misunderstandings, contradictions and tensions might occur in an unfamiliar academic field for transnational academic migrants. Moreover, to ask how these issues influence the three key themes of their work activities overseas, namely their future movement, pedagogic creativeness and how their identity, sense of belonging and social interactions are bounded to the use of place on campus. As 'time and space have shrunk' (Olson and Kroeger, 2001: 16) in transnational higher education, the 'host' academic field is gradually rebuilt by people of different cultures rather than insulated by national or institutional boundaries. The thesis argues for a translocal and enduring understanding of academic migrants' experience and points out that those experiences are nationally unbounded, yet locally specific.

More specifically, I examine the impact of relocation challenges on academics' daily working practices in three aspects: (1) observing migration as a continuous process, and pointing out the differences in immigration policies and administrative systems between China and the UK (Zhuang and Tang, 2012) and how these might positively and negatively impact academic migrants' movement; (2) observing migration as a creative process, and teasing out the differences in pedagogy (De Villiers, 2004; Jiang, *et al.*, 2010; Luxon and Peelo, 2009; Hsieh, 2011) and whether these differences generate new or hybrid forms of pedagogy; and (3) observing migration as a place-connected process, and exploring the spatial configuration of the campus (Cox, *et al.*, 2012) and its effect upon everyday working practices and experiences. These are dealt with in each of the empirical chapters, which will be outlined in more detail shortly.

In the following sections, I give a more detailed description of the context of international education and the theoretical background that is pertinent to my research. These sections are followed by a description of my specific research questions, a summary of the content of the chapters and the contributions of the study.

# 1 Background of the Study

## 1.1 International Education

Since the turn of the century ‘transnational education’ (Wilkins and Huisman, 2012) has been a rising phenomenon under the internationalism of higher education, driven by political, economic, social, and technological advances. It can take several forms, including ‘distance education, franchised programmes, collaborative ventures and international branch campuses’, the latter of which accounts for ‘most of the growth in transnational higher education’ (Wilkins and Huisman, 2012: 628) in the first decade of this century. Among 281 international branch campuses worldwide (C-BERT 2015), China is the second largest host country and the UK the third largest of the source countries (Knight, 2015). China and the UK thus form an important part of the international academic backdrop. Together they have already taken the lead in building inter-country academic collaboration to promote transnational education, and correspondingly, academic mobility.

The ‘transnational education’ phenomenon indicates that the higher education systems at the national level cannot remain immune from external forces. Higher education systems are in fact increasingly pursuing an international goal. The governments of these two countries are increasingly aware of the contribution that higher education institutions can make to promoting relations between the UK and China. According to a speech given by the Chinese ambassador Liu Xiaoming at the University of Durham on the 29th May 2012, British universities have begun to strengthen their input to research in China with more than 30 universities setting up Chinese research centers or institutes. For example, the University of Oxford established a Chinese Research Centre, and a Centre for Chinese Studies was established at King’s College London in 2010.

At the same time, UK institutions increasingly recognise the possibility of taking their educational programmes to the students (Waters, 2007). The establishment of international programmes and institutions has grown rapidly in recent years. In 2012, there were 71 Sino-British educational programmes and 5 joint venture universities in China (MOE, 2012). While as of 2015, there are 240 Sino-British joint university programmes, and 12 joint higher educational institutions in these two countries (MOE, 2015)<sup>①</sup>. Thus, as mentioned earlier, an important reason for locating the research in these two countries is their role as representatives of one of the most mature source/host countries of international branch campuses in transnational education.

However, when one looks more closely at these institutions' educational practices, it is hard to put all the branch campuses into a simple category. There are a variety of motivations and organisational structures that lie behind these institutions. This is in contrast to the approach taken by the existing literature, that generally defines the branch campus as 'an educational facility owned, at least in part, by a foreign institution, which operates under the name of the foreign institution, where students receive face-to-face instruction to achieve a qualification bearing the name of the foreign institution' (Wilkins and Huisman, 2012: 628). This is an over-simplification that does not adequately account for the real situation. Some Sino-British universities, for example, are either not owned by a foreign institution or do not award qualifications, such as Xinhua International Institute of Economics. So, without consideration of the complexity

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① These 13 joint institutions are: Sino-British College, University of Shanghai For Science and Technology; Shanghai International College of Fashion and Innovation, Donghua University; Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University; NUIST Reading Academy; The University of Nottingham-Ningbo; SWJTU-Leeds Joint School; HBU-UCLan School of Media, Communication and Creative Industries; Birmingham Institute of Fashion and Creative Art Industries; Birmingham Institute of Fashion and Creative Art, Wuhan Textile University; Bangor Collage, Central South University of Forestry and Technology; Xinhua International College of Economics; Surrey International Institute, Dongbei University of Finance and Economics; China Medical University- the Queen's University of Belfast Joint College (MOE, 2015).



of the Sino-British branch campuses, it would be problematic to analyse Chinese/British academic migration as if all institutions were the same. This is the underlying reason that I chose to focus on a single institution in this research.

In order to identify this single institution, my initial sampling process drew from the list of the major joint venture licensed universities under the 2014 legislation in China. The rationale for choosing the sample university is based on the consideration that this is one of the pioneering joint-venture institutions in China. It is relatively more experienced with respect to other institutions and could be usefully used as a model for prospective international institutions. Moreover, it has independent campuses and corporate capacity, which helps me to locate the conception of a transnational workplace as a ‘multicultural evaluating and bounded entity’ in a concrete way.

## 1.2 International Academic Mobility

The process of educational internationalisation has resulted in the increased mobility of academics across national borders (Dunn and Wallace, 2006; Kim and Locke, 2010; Poole and Ewan, 2010). More specifically, the transnational movement of academics is attributed to both the international expansion of Western universities to other countries and the ‘magnetic’ nature of ‘host’ universities that attract international academic migrants (Bennion and Locke, 2010). Recent literatures on knowledge diaspora and returnees tend to focus on the debate of ‘brain circulation’ rather than earlier discussions framed by ‘brain drain’ or ‘brain gain’ of the country. It is argued that the inflow and outflow of these highly-skilled migrants can be considered a powerful vehicle that can stimulate knowledge exchange and global human capital connectivity between countries (Solimano, 2008; Chen, 2015). In choosing Chinese and British academics who work in the milieu of ‘transnational education’, my research aims to capture the ‘everyday’ texture of the transitional mobility process. They are the two flows of academic migrants that have not frequently been addressed in