

The China Factor and Educational Migration from Taiwan to China: The Mechanism, Process, and Implication

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The number of Taiwanese Students to China for study has increased significantly in the last two decades. This phenomenon has much to do with Chinese government's political agenda to claim Taiwan's sovereignty by releasing educational resources and privileges to and by promoting a nationalistic discourse of "Chinese Dream" upon Taiwanese. This collaborative research project explored the social and political processes in which Taiwanese travel to China for educational purposes. We asked the motivations and rationales for those Taiwanese who make the decision to go to study or teach at Chinese Universities. We investigated the social and political mechanisms which are created or adopted to organize and make possible for those educational movements. During our first year of research in 2019, we conducted in-depth interviews with 42 Taiwanese who once joined educational exchange trips to China, or studied or taught at Chinese Universities. Through those interviews, we found that Kinmen, a frontier of Taiwan to China is an important and interesting place for various cross-border exchanges, including educational ones between Taiwan and China. Thus, during our second year of the research project in 2020, we extended our research project from Taiwan to Kinmen to explore contemporary educational and other social and economic exchanges between Kinmen and Fujian, China. We conducted 30 in-depth interviews with local governmental officials and community organizers, and other local people who frequented Fujian for works and leisure.

In our analyses, we adopt the concept of "rent" from economic sociology to conceptualize Chinese government's educational privileges to Taiwanese as "educational rent." We also take the concept of "migration infrastructure" from migration studies as the analyzing framework to investigate how Chinese government's educational rents mobilize various Taiwanese and Chinese to establish migration infrastructures to make it possible for educational movements from Taiwan to China. For the Kinmen part of the research, the principal researcher of the project has taken the concept of borderlands to position and investigate Kinmen's cross-border exchanges with China. Our research project is a timing study to understand the significances of "China Factor" in the fields of international education, Taiwan and China relations, and borderlands studies.

Outcomes of the collaborative research project:

A. Conference Presentations and Journal Article Writings:

- Hsiu-hua Shen & Chih-peng Cheng. "Rent- Seeking" and "Migration Infrastructure: Educational Movements from Taiwan to China," presented at the annual meeting of Taiwanese Sociological Association, 2019.
- Hsiu-hua Shen, 2021. "Kinmen: As a Borderland of Frontier and Margin." Presented at the annual meeting of Taiwanese Anthropological Association, September 26, 2021.
- Hsiu-hua Shen & Chih-peng Cheng. "Rent- Seeking" and "Migration Infrastructure: Educational Movements from Taiwan to China," under reviewed.

B. Further Research Project:

- Hsiu-hua Shen & Chih-peng Cheng, "Taiwanese Young Talents' Migrations to China and the Social and Political Implications of Such Crossings," funded by the Ministry of Science and Technology, Taiwan, 2021-2024.