The migration of academic professionals from Northeast Asia to Australia: a survey comparing academic immigrants from China, Hong Kong and Taiwan

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THE MIGRATION OF ACADEMIC PROFESSIONALS FROM NORTHEAST ASIA TO AUSTRALIA
A Survey comparing Academic Immigrants from China, Hong Kong and Taiwan

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

from

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

By

SAMAD YAGHOUBI HARGALAN
MA in Social Research (University of Ferdowsi)

CAPSTRANS, FACULTY OF ARTS

January 2006
CERTIFICATION

I, Samad Yaghoubi Hargalan, declare that this thesis, submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in CAPSTRANS, Faculty of Arts, University of Wollongong, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

.................................

Samad Yaghoubi Hargalan

22 November 2005
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LIST OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ABS  Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACT  Australian Capital Territory
ASCCSS Australian Standard Classification of Countries for Social Statistics
ASCO Australian Standard Classification of Occupations
AGPS Australian Government Publishing Service
DIMIA Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs
excl. excluding
LDC Less developed country
NEI Not elsewhere included
NSW New South Wales
NT Northern Territory
NUMAS Numerical Multifactor Assessment System
PRC Peoples' Republic of China
PTKs Professional, Technical and Kindred Workers
Qld. Queensland
O/S Overseas-born
SA South Australia
SARs Special Administrative Region
SIR Skilled Independent Regional
Tas. Tasmania
Vic. Victoria
WA Western Australia
- Nil
ABSTRACT

In recent years, highly skilled migrants have represented an important component of global migration streams. This research is a comparative study of the migration of academic professionals from China, Hong Kong and Taiwan to Australia, a 'nation of immigrants' which receives many highly trained professionals from different parts of the world, especially Asia. The main goal was to analyse the effects of in-system and out-system factors on the emigration process, as well as the effects of facilitating conditions, all as perceived by the academic migrants themselves. An intersystem model of international migration was developed, based on Robert K. Merton's theory of 'social structure and anomie'. This comprises the central part of an inclusive analytical model of the emigration decision, which draws on a range of theoretical influences and has descriptive, explanatory and functional dimensions.

Quantitative survey methodology was used to measure the impressions that the three populations of academic migrants had of the various subsystems of both sending and receiving societies, and of other relevant factors and conditions. A questionnaire was developed and distributed to academic staff members from the three Northeast Asian countries at seventeen Australian universities, resulting in 177 responses.

The survey results vindicated the multifaceted analytical model employed, providing an understanding of academic migration as a multi-dimensional phenomenon. Given the historical and cultural similarities among the source counties, it is apparent that most of the factors studied influenced all three groups to some degree, but the balance differed notably from one to another, according to the type of society.

Thus the migration to Australia of academics from the People's Republic of China was affected mainly by economic and political factors. In the emigration of academic professionals from Hong Kong, political factors played a more significant role than others, while in the case of Taiwan the survey respondents gave priority to environmental and some educational considerations. The results also show that the effects of 'pull' factors were viewed as more important than those of 'push' factors in the migration process. However, respondents rated most subsystems of Australian society less highly on the basis of their experiences after migration than their recalled expectations suggested.
The thesis finishes with a few general policy recommendations. These are directed at
governments, policy makers and socio-economic planners in both migrant-sending and
migrant-receiving systems.
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