

Institution: University of Nottingham
Unit of Assessment: UOA27B
Title of case study: Engagement with Chinese migrant integration in the UK and beyond (Case Study 2)
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>The University of Nottingham's School of Contemporary Chinese Studies (SCCS) has played a key role in influencing policy and practice with regard to the integration of Chinese migrant communities. A model of global citizenship, as facilitated through community-university partnerships and student volunteers, has benefited a wide range of stakeholders in both "sending" and "receiving" nations, including international organisations, governments, local councils, civil society groups and, most significantly, Chinese community members themselves. The platform for collaboration that has emerged has been described by the co-founder of the Chinese Liberal Democrats group as a model for such initiatives across the UK.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Migrant workers' failure to integrate into the communities that receive them is a pressing issue worldwide and of particular concern with regard to the growing numbers of Chinese who find employment in the EU. Compared with the rich information and data about migrant workers in China itself, "on the ground" studies outside China are rare. As a result little is known the specific difficulties Chinese migrant workers face overseas and the possible solutions to their problems.</p> <p>Led by Dr Bin Wu, research by the China Policy Institute (CPI) at the SCCS has sought to address this gap by using field observation and in-depth interviews to examine the working conditions of Chinese migrants and so illustrate their broader social isolation and vulnerability. This evolved into the notion of developing university-community partnerships and training and mobilising student volunteers, thereby helping to overcome longstanding failings in support provision.</p> <p>The research began with a project centred on several Chinese-owned factories in the textile, garment and leather industries in Veneto, Italy. Wu co-devised the study and carried out much of the fieldwork. In 2008 the findings revealed the poor working conditions and consequent health concerns of the Chinese migrants who made up the vast majority of the factories' workforces. The plight of the workers was analysed in the context of their social isolation and their lack of meaningful communication and interaction with mainstream society and community organisations [1, 2]. Wu and his co-authors made a number of key recommendations, including regular round-table discussions geared towards Chinese communities' development in significant host countries; university engagement with Chinese communities; encouraging academics and students to participate in relevant initiatives; and the establishing of a dedicated Chinese immigration forum to bring together policymakers, scholars, the leaders of Chinese communities and other stakeholders.</p> <p>In 2009, taking forward the findings from this initial research, Wu embarked on a project commissioned by the International Labour Organisation. The aim was to investigate Chinese migrant workers' relationships with co-ethnic employers and to develop a deeper understanding of the factors – beyond poor language skills – contributing to their social isolation. Field observations and interviews were conducted, this time in UK Chinese restaurants and takeaways and traditional Chinese medicine shops. The evidence shed new light on the extent to which employers subjected legal and illegal migrant workers to various kinds of exploitation, abuse and coerced labour [3].</p> <p>Both projects demonstrated the social isolation of Chinese migrant workers in Europe could not be understood in the absence of a detailed appreciation of diasporic Chinese communities' structural deficiencies. Among the crucial factors revealed were segmentation and segregation; weak ties with host societies in tandem with strong ties with sending communities; and power struggles within Chinese entrepreneurial/community organisations without workers' participation [4].</p> <p>Alongside these concerns, a possible impetus for change was consistently highlighted by the research. This led to the concept of Overseas Chinese Community Building, through which university engagement could help bring together multiple stakeholders in collaborative efforts to empower Chinese migrant workers via community development and integration [5].</p>

Key Researcher: Bin Wu is a Senior Research Fellow of the CPI, at the SCCS since 2007.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

Publications:

1. Zanin, Valter, and Wu, Bin (2012): Immigrati Cinesioperai e Imprenditorinella Terra di Marco Polo, Vol. II: Condizioni di Lavoro e Salute Deglioperaicinesitra Zhejiang e Italia (Veneto) [Chinese Migrants Workers and Entrepreneurs in the Land of Marco Polo, Vol. II: Working and Health Conditions of the Chinese Workers Between Zhejiang and Italy (Veneto)], Padova, Cleup, ISBN: 978-88-6129-990-0
2. Wu, Bin, and Sheehan, Jackie (2011): Globalisation and Vulnerability of Chinese Migrant Workers in Italy: Empirical Evidence on Working Conditions and their Consequences, Journal of Contemporary China, 20(68), 135-152
3. Wu, B, Guo, L, and Sheehan, J (2010): Employment Conditions of Chinese Migrant Workers in the East Midlands: A Pilot Study in the Context of Economic Recession, International Labour Organisation research report
4. Wu, B, and Liu, H (2013): Bring Class Back in: Class Consciousness and Solidarity Among Chinese Migrant Workers in Italy and the UK, Ethnical and Racial Studies, doi: 10.1080/01419870.2012.715660
5. Wu, B (2010): Overseas Chinese Community-Building: Approach and Practice, CPI Policy Papers, No.65, November 2010

Grants:

1. Italian Government University Research Fund and Venice and Padova Councils: Mobility and Consequences of New Chinese Entrepreneurs in Veneto, Italy (2006-2008) – €80,000 (PIs: Dr Valter Zanin and Dr Bin Wu)
2. International Labour Organisation: Employment and Working Conditions of Chinese Migrants in the UK (2009) – €56,000 (PI: Wu)

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

CPI research into the integration of migrant workers has influenced policy, practice and a wide range of stakeholders in both “sending” and “receiving” communities. A model of global citizenship, facilitated by university engagement and student volunteers, has proved a key element in empowering Chinese migrant workers and has been described by Merlene Emerson, co-founder of the Chinese Liberal Democrats, as a model for similar schemes nationwide.

The effectiveness of the model was first demonstrated following Wu’s initial study of workers in Veneto’s textile, garment and leather industries. In 2006 just six Chinese migrants had registered with the Health Service of Padova’s “Spazio Ascolto” programme. By 2008 this figure had risen by at least 1,400 per cent as a result of a project involving student volunteers and local health officials. Professor Valter Zanin, of Padova University, has since noted “a marked transformation in the way the Chinese community regards and engages with local facilities and resources”. [a]

The success of this project was instrumental in a decision by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the University of Nottingham (UoN) to co-host a high-profile round-table workshop in Nottingham in October 2009 [b]. The event attracted 80 participants, including representatives of the International Organisation for Migration, UK government agencies (Home Office, UK Border Agency, UK Human Trafficking Centre, Gangmasters’ Licensing Authority), the Chinese Embassy, NGOs, Chinese entrepreneurs and community organisations, academics and student delegates. This directly resulted in the development of a number of initiatives to encourage the greater integration of the Chinese community in Nottingham, chief among them the establishment of a student volunteer support network [c].

Operating under a variety of names (Nottingham Student Network for Chinese Migrants, Nowe Community International and Nottingham Chinese Support Network), the network incorporates a training programme that between 2011 and 2012 alone instructed more than 300 UoN students, both Chinese and non-Chinese, in practising global citizenship in collaboration with local stakeholders. Merlene Emerson has remarked: “There is often a divide between the local community and the student body, and where foreign students are involved the gap is even wider. Dr Wu’s programme has not only succeeded in bridging that gap but has also managed to tap into

the student body to be an added resource for the local community.” [d]

Alongside the network, the workshop also led to the founding of the Nottingham Chinese Forum, a regular round-table meeting between three local councils (Nottingham City, Nottinghamshire County and Broxtowe Borough), NGOs (Voluntary Action Broxtowe), Chinese community representatives, university staff and student volunteers. The contributions made by both the network and the forum have been widely acknowledged by local stakeholders.

Broxtowe Borough Council, for example, has described the initiatives resulting from Wu’s research as “essential in developing both policy and service provision for the council and its partners”. The authority has drawn on the network and the forum to help the borough’s large Chinese community with issues such as citizens’ rights, access to health and education services, community safety and business advice. Richard Lea, the council’s Communities Team Leader, has observed: “We have gained a better understanding of the community and now know why some of our earlier attempts to engage were not successful.” [e]

Nottingham City Homes (NCH), which manages around 10,000 council properties, has used the network’s student volunteers to give presentations on Chinese culture to residents and to support its own Universal Roots project, which aims to raise cultural awareness generally. V. Bryce, NCH’s Equality and Diversity Manager, has described the project as “of great value” and a significant factor in NCH achieving its equality and diversity objectives. [f] Student volunteers also regularly visit Nottingham Chinese School, whose headmaster, Dr Xuezhong Sun, has praised the initiative as “of enormous benefit” and for giving “fresh and substantial impetus to efforts to bring together the disparate elements of communities for the purpose of development and integration”. [g]

Wu’s work has also been used in China. In April 2010 the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) invited Wu to Shenyang to give a lecture to more than 200 government migrant management officials. In 2010 and 2011 Wu also addressed local and national branches of the State Council’s Overseas Chinese Affairs Office and central government, including the Ministers of Personnel and Science and Technology. Kieran Gorman-Best, Project Manager for IOM’s EU-China Capacity-Building for Migrant Management (CCBM) programme, has credited Wu with “greatly enhancing” Chinese officials’ appreciation of migrant workers’ problems and for improving IOM’s own ability to “respond to these issues in an ever more sympathetic, productive and effective manner”. [h] Wu also facilitated a meeting between IOM and senior Overseas Chinese Affairs Office officials, resulting in the latter’s key involvement in the CCBM programme. In addition, his research has featured in the Chinese media [i].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- a. Letter of support from Professor Valter Zanin, Padova University, July 23 2013
- b. University of Nottingham/International Labour Organisation Joint Workshop on Employment of Chinese Migrants in the UK: Issues and Solutions, Nottingham, 22-23 October 2009 <http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/cpi/documents/funded-projects/ilo-workshop-complete-report.pdf>
- c. Project brochure: Practising Global Citizenship in Chinese Society, May 2012 (available at <http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/chinese/documents/staff-publications/practising-global-citizenship-brochure.pdf>)
- d. Letter of support from Merlene Emerson, co-founder, Chinese Liberal Democrats, July 26 2013
- e. Letter of support from Richard Lea, Communities Team Leader, Broxtowe Borough Council, July 2013
- f. Letter of support from Vincent Bryce, Equality and Diversity Manager, Nottingham City Homes, July 31 2013
- g. Letter of support from Dr Xuezhong Sun, Headmaster, Nottingham Chinese School, July 23 2013
- h. Letter of support from Kieran Gorman-Best, Project Manager, International Labour Organisation EU-China Capacity-Building for Migrant Management programme, July 25 2013
- i. China News Agency report: “Emergence of Global Citizenship amongst Chinese international students in the UK”, July 4 2011 (in Chinese) <http://www.chinanews.com/lxsh/2011/07-04/3154173.shtml>