Tampere University

HANWEI LI

The Journey of a Thousand Miles

Chinese Student Migration and Integration in Finland and Germany

Tampere University Dissertations 29

Tampere University Dissertations 29

HANWEI LI

The Journey of a Thousand Miles

Chinese Student Migration and Integration in Finland and Germany

ACADEMIC DISSERTATION
To be presented, with the permission of
the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Education and Culture
of Tampere University,
for public discussion in the Auditorium Virta 109
Åkerlundinkatu 5, Tampere,
on March 1st, 2019, at 12 o'clock.

ACADEMIC DISSERTATION
Tampere University, Faculty of Education and Culture

Responsible supervisor and Custos	Professor Pirkko Pitkänen Tampere University Finland	
Supervisors	Professor Thomas Faist Bielefeld University Germany	Dr. Virve Kallioniemi-Chambers Tampere University Finland
Pre-examiners	Professor Elina Lehtomäki University of Oulu Finland	Professor Terri Seddon La Trobe University Australia
Opponent	Dr. Charles Mathies University of Jyväskylä Finland	

The originality of this thesis has been checked using the Turnitin Originality Check service.

Cover design: Roihu Inc.

ISBN 978-952-03-0956-5 (print)
ISBN 978-952-03-0957-2 (pdf)
ISSN 2489-9860 (print)
ISSN 2490-0028 (pdf)
http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-03-0957-2

PunaMusta Oy – Yliopistopaino
Tampere 2019

This book is dedicated to my dear mom and dad.

谨此书献给我的妈妈和爸爸，谢谢你们一直都支持和鼓励我，做我的最坚强的后盾。

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation is an outcome of a long journey, during which I had a chance to move to Finland and take part in the Marie Curie ITN project 'Transnational Migration, Citizenship and the Circulation of Rights and Responsibilities' (TRANSMIC)[1]. During the TRANSMIC project, I pursued a joint degree of PhD in Education at what was then the University of Tampere, School of Education (EDU) and in Sociology at the University of Bielefeld, Graduate School in History and Sociology (BGHS)[2]. This precious opportunity allowed me to conduct multi-disciplinary research on the topic in question. During this journey, I had the privilege of knowing and working with many inspiring and kind people who supported me in the completion of my dissertation that I gratefully acknowledge here.

First, I would like to express my deepest and sincerest gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Pirkko Pitkänen for her invaluable support academically and personally throughout the process of writing this dissertation. I would like to thank Professor Pitkänen for introducing me to research in the fields of migration and transnationalism that inspired my academic interest and scientific enthusiasm. Professor Pitkänen not only guided my writing with her solid expertise, but also left me free to explore the research field utilizing my own creativity and critical thinking. It has been my immense pleasure to work under her knowledgeable supervision.

I am also very grateful for getting contact with Professor Thomas Faist from Bielefeld University so that I could pursue and complete a joint degree under his supervision through a Cotutelle agreement, and benefit from not only the academic support and resources of the then University of Tampere but also from Bielefeld University. This opportunity paved the way for me to build a dream career as a junior researcher. I want to express my gratitude to Professor Faist, who kindly accepted me as his doctoral student in the Bielefeld Graduate School of History and Sociology. Professor Faist has provided numerous insightful and helpful comments and novel

[1] See https://law.maastrichtuniversity.nl/transmic/

[2] As the requirements in Finland and Germany differ, this dissertation includes two separate summary reports, for the then University of Tampere and for Bielefeld University respectively. The German summary can be found in Appendix 4.

ideas that have helped me tremendously in the writing process. It has been a great pleasure to work under his supervision.

I also want to express my gratitude to my second Finnish supervisor, Dr. Virve Kallioniemi-Chambers, who has given me a lot of support not only academically but also personally. As the first person that I met in EDU on my arrival, I owe Virve my greatest gratitude for not only helping me with the academic work, but also taking care of the practical arrangements within the TRANSMIC project so I could fully concentrate on my research work. Virve, I would like to thank you for your encouragement throughout the years for guiding and helping me to finalize the dissertation process.

I gratefully acknowledge the TRANSMIC project, which was coordinated by Professor Hildegard Schneider of Maastricht University. TRANSMIC provided enormous academic and financial support for conducting my research work. I am grateful for all the first-rate research training that we received from knowledgeable scholars, the network that we built throughout the three project years with senior and junior researchers and the opportunity to work with leading scholars in the field of migration research. In particular, I would like to express my special thanks to Professor Hildegard Schneider for bringing this wonderful and successful project together, Professor Niels Philipsen for managing the project, and Ms. Diana Schabreigs for taking care of the financial issues.

I would also like to thank all the TRANSMIC research fellows: Luuk van der Baaren, Fanny Tittel-Mosser, Zvezda Vankova, Pauline Meline, Clotilde Mahe, Polina Palash, Ester Serra Mingot, Olga Cojocaru, Ngo Chun Luk, Leonhard den Hertog, Marieke van Houte and Ali Chaudahary for their kindness, support, encouragement, and company throughout this PhD journey. A special thanks to Luuk for being such a supportive friend throughout my doctoral studies, and being an extremely hospitable host during my stay in Maastricht. I am very grateful for the opportunity to get to know all of you fellows throughout the past years of my PhD journey, and cherish all the good memories spent with you in different places around the world.

I would like to thank the pre-examiners of my dissertation, Professor Elina Lehtomäki and Professor Terri Seddon for the extremely encouraging and constructive feedback on my study. I also express my thanks for Professor Holger Straßheim for acting as a reviewer for my doctoral dissertation at Bielefeld University. Additionally, I am thankful for Dr. Charles Mathies for agreeing to be my opponent in the doctoral defence.

Moreover, I would like to express my gratitude to Dean Dr. Risto Honkonen and the Faculty of Education and Culture (EDU) for offering me the opportunity to conduct my research in the doctoral program in Education and Society, and for the financial support to finalize my doctoral research. I have received invaluable support from the Faculty during my past three and half years as a PhD student in EDU, for which I am truly grateful. The excellent working environment, friendly and intelligent colleagues from the Faculty have given me great help while writing my thesis.

In particular, I wish to express my gratitude to my dearest colleagues in the Research Centre on Transnationalism and Transformation (TRANSIT) with whom I have had the pleasure of working : Ms. Marja Koskela, Mr. Jaakko Hyytiä, Ms. Paula Kuusipalo, Dr. Katja Keisala, Ms. Kaisa Niiranen, Dr. Inkeri Rissanen, Dr. Pauliina Alenius, and Dr. Päivi Vartiainen. I am also thankful for the colleagues on the Virta 4th floor community with whom I have had the pleasure of working and knowing during the past 4 years: Helena Rajakaltio, Professor Jaakko Kauko, Professor Nelli Piattoeva, Maija Yli-Jokipii, Raisa Harju-Autti, Professor Hanna Toiviainen, Dr. Anne Jyrkiäinen, Íris Santos, etc. I am very grateful for being able to work with you and learning from you. The stimulating conversations and the delightful lunch breaks that I had with you always cheered up my days and made this academic journey more enjoyable and colorful. I would like to express my special thanks to Dr. Katja Keisala, who kindly helped me translate the abstract of this dissertation into Finnish.

I would also like to express my thanks to dear Paula Mikola, who was the HR officer of the Faculty of Education and Culture. Paula was one of the first Finnish persons I met in Tampere, and has since then helped me greatly with orienting in the university context, and settling down in Tampere. I am very grateful for you, Paula, for inviting me to your home many times like a family member, which made Finland to feel like home from the very first years of my stay.

Further, I would like to express my thanks to Bielefeld Graduate School of History and Sociology (BGHS) for accepting me as a Cotutelle agreement double doctoral degree student, and for providing me with the facilities and support to conduct field research in Germany. I also wish to express my gratitude to the dearest colleagues and fellow researchers in BGHS, especially the researchers of the Center on Migration, Citizenship, and Development (COMCAD), whom I had the privilege to learn to know during my short stay in Bielefeld. I am grateful for your kind support and company during my stay in Germany. Thank you for your comments that helped me improve my working papers, and increase my understanding of international migration and transnational studies.

I would like to express my gratitude to Ms. Virginia Mattila who kindly helped with the language check and revision of this dissertation and the articles which form part of it.

The support from my family and friends has been invaluable and extremely important for me throughout the past years. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my mother and father, who have always been tremendously supportive and encouraged me throughout the writing process, as always in my life. I am very lucky to have kind, loving parents who love me, encourage me, and back me up under all circumstances in my life. This dissertation is dedicated to you, for always being by my side. I could not have overcome the many difficulties and challenges in the research and writing processes without your support. 谢谢我的父母亲。感谢你们一直给我的关爱，支持和鼓励，让我能在重重困境中坚持完成我的博士论文。没有你们我不会走到今天的这一步。我很幸运能做你们的女儿。谢谢你们，我爱你们。

Finally, I would like to thank my dear friends in Tampere, Ms. Chen Tanyu, Ms. Jin Tianyun, Ms. Zheng Gaoming, and Mr. Li Xiaozhou, doctoral research fellows in EDU (EDU's superwomen) – Vesna Holubek, Juliene Madureira Ferreira, Janniina Vaslov, Sini Teräsahde, Laura Pylväs, Johanna Lätti, Jenni Pätäri, Laura Rantavuori, etc., and researchers of HEG (Higher Education Group), Professor Cai Yuzhuo, Yulia Shumilova, Motolani Agbebi, and Pallavi Pal, whom I have luckily got to know during my years of living and studying in Tampere. Thank you for your support, company and encouragement during these years. You are the ones who have made Finland and Tampere feel like a home for me.

Tampere, 8 February, 2019

Hanwei Li 李晗薇

ABSTRACT

The objective of this joint doctoral dissertation was to identify the drivers of Chinese student mobility to Finland and Germany, and to explore the students' integration experiences in these countries. While past research has repeatedly documented the experiences of Chinese students studying in Anglophone countries such as the U.S.A. and the U.K., little is known about their experiences in non-Anglophone countries. This doctoral research focused on two non-Anglophone countries because the local languages pose serious challenges to overseas students when trying to adapt to the host society, build social networks, or find work after graduation. While previous research has often addressed issues related to the international students' integration within the academic circles, the present research considers Chinese students' integration not only into the academic settings but also into the societal environments.

The data was collected through semi-structured interviews (n=58) with mainland Chinese tertiary-level students in Finland and Germany in years 2015 and 2016. The group of respondents included degree students from a wide variety of backgrounds in terms of gender, age, major subject, previous work and study experience, duration of residence, and current location. The interviewees included both students who were studying in Finland or Germany for just one semester and students who had been residing in the respective countries for more than five years. This made it possible to estimate the students' integration experiences in different phases of their migration trajectories.

The dissertation consists of four sub-studies resulting to four published articles. Study I examined the drivers of Chinese student mobility, in particular the role of migration industry in channeling and facilitating the international student migration. Study II proposed a conceptual framework for integration (including academic, social, economic, and cultural domains) for analyzing Chinese students' integration experiences in Finland, while Study III explored the students' academic integration experiences and coping strategies in Germany and analyzed the interconnections of academic and social integration processes. Study IV focused particularly to the integration experiences of those Chinese students who wished to stay in Finland or Germany after graduation. It introduced the notion of 'weak integration trap'

observed among Chinese students. The related article analyzed the causes and implications of 'weak integration trap' using the theoretical frameworks of integration aspiration and integration infrastructure. The joint dissertation includes two summary reports (due to the German and Finnish requirements) which give an overview of the research set and summarize the main research findings.

The findings emphasize the importance of the migration industry in facilitating and channeling Chinese student migration. The education migration industry in China exemplifies a fully-fledged industry that provides services for all phases of student migration: it facilitates student migration from initial choice of universities and study destinations to the preparation and sending of applications for university application material, and finally applies for the visa and prepares the students for departure. Further, the increasing influence of the migration industry has resulted in a diversification of migration destinations, as exemplified by Chinese students' mobility to non-Anglophone countries like Finland and Germany. The findings imply that the migration industry may increasingly replace the role of migrants' personal networks in facilitating cross-border migration, and also lead to individualization of student migration. It is evident that although studies abroad have become more accessible for Chinese, they have also become more financially burdensome.

The findings revealed three stages of academic integration that Chinese students should ideally go through during their studies abroad. At the first stage, the students need to develop foreign language skills to understand the content of teaching (*surface learning*). At the second stage, the students need to gain a more profound understanding of the contents of learning (*deeper learning*). At the third stage, the students should go through the stage of *transformative learning* to develop critical thinking and innovative thinking capabilities. The findings show that although the academic environments in Finland and Germany are different, the Chinese students experience many similar challenges while integrating into the academic contexts, such as difficulties in studying in a foreign language, whether English or German.

The findings show that among Chinese students studying in non-Anglophone countries, it is rather common that the students spend many years in the host society without becoming fluent in the local language, which creates barriers to their adaptation and job seeking processes after graduation. The students' aspirations to remain long-term or permanently in the host society may also be inhibited by structural barriers. An inconsistent and unsynchronized integration infrastructure

may leave the students stuck in a 'weak integration trap', inhibiting them from staying on in the host society after graduation.

The four sub-studies conducted also identified differences in the Chinese students' integration experiences in Finland and Germany. The students studying on German-taught programs in Germany seem to have significantly higher pressures and greater difficulties with their academic integration than do the Chinese students studying on English-taught programs in Finland. However, the students studying in Germany have higher chances of finding employment after graduation because of better proficiency in the local language.

Keywords: integration, migration, Chinese student, Finland, Germany

TIIVISTELMÄ

Tämän cotutelle-sopimukseen perustuvan yhteisväitöskirjan tavoitteena on tunnistaa tekijöitä, jotka edistävät kiinalaisten korkeakouluopiskelijoiden liikkuvuutta Suomeen ja Saksaan, sekä tutkia ja vertailla kiinalaisopiskelijoiden integraatiokokemuksia näissä maissa. Aiemmissa tutkimuksissa on dokumentoitu kiinalaisten opiskelijoiden kokemuksia lähinnä englanninkielisissä maissa kuten Yhdysvalloissa ja Isossa-Britanniassa, sen sijaan heidän kokemuksistaan ei-englanninkielisissä maissa tiedetään vain vähän. Nyt käsillä oleva väitöskirja kohdistuu kahteen ei-englanninkieliseen maahan, Suomeen ja Saksaan, koska niissä vaikeus hallita paikallista kieltä hankaloittaa kansainvälisten opiskelijoiden sopeutumista yhteiskuntaan, sosiaalisten verkostojen rakentamista sekä valmistumisen jälkeistä työllistymistä. Siinä missä aiempi tutkimus on keskittynyt etupäässä kansainvälisten opiskelijoiden integraatioon akateemisissa konteksteissa, tämä tutkimus tarkastelee kiinalaisopiskelijoiden integroitumista uusiin akateemisiin ja yhteiskunnallisiin toimintaympäristöihin.

Tutkimuksen aineisto koostuu puolistrukturoiduista teemahaastatteluista (n=58), jotka tehtiin vuosina 2015 ja 2016. Haastateltavat olivat Suomessa tai Saksassa opiskelleita mannerkiinalaisia korkeakouluopiskelijoita. Opiskelijoiden tausta vaihteli sukupuolen, iän, pääaineen, työ- ja opiskelukokemusten, maassa oleskelun keston ja asuinpaikan sijainnin suhteen. Jotkut haastateltavat opiskelivat Suomessa tai Saksassa vain yhden lukukauden, mutta toiset olivat olleet uudessa asuinmaassa jopa yli viisi vuotta. Tämä vaihtelevuus maassaolon kestossa mahdollisti opiskelijoiden integraatiokokemusten analysoinnin muuttoprosessin eri vaiheissa.

Artikkeliväitöskirja koostuu neljästä osatutkimuksesta ja niiden perusteella kirjoitetuista neljästä artikkelista. Ensimmäinen osatutkimus kohdistui kiinalaisopiskelijoiden kansainvälistä liikkuvuutta edistäviin tekijöihin, erityisesti ns. muuttoliiketeollisuuteen (*migration industry*). Toisessa osatutkimuksessa analysoitiin Suomessa opiskelevien kiinalaisten integraatiokokemuksia akateemisen, sosiaalisen, kulttuurisen ja taloudellisen ulottuvuuden sisältävän teoreettisen viitekehyksen avulla. Kolmas osatutkimus tarkasteli Saksassa opiskelleiden opiskelijoiden akateemisen integraation kokemuksia ja selviytymisstrategioita sekä akateemisen ja sosiaalisen integraationyhteyksiä. Neljäs osatutkimus keskittyi erityisesti niiden

kiinalaisopiskelijoiden integraatiokokemuksiin, jotka halusivat jäädä Suomeen tai Saksaan valmistumisen jälkeen. Tutkimuksen pohjalta kirjoitettu artikkeli esittelee kiinalaisopiskelijoiden keskuudessa havaitun ilmiön, 'heikon integraation ansan' (*weak integration trap*), jonka analysointiin käytetään integraatiopyrkimysten (*integration aspirations*) ja integraatio- infrastruktuurin käsitteisiin perustuvaa teoreettista viitekehystä.

Tutkimuksen tulokset nostavat esiin muuttoliiketeollisuuden merkityksen kiinalaisopiskelijoiden kansainvälisen liikkuvuuden helpottamisessa ja säätelyssä. Korkeakoulukentällä toimiva muuttoliiketeollisuus on Kiinassa täysimittainen teollisuudenala, joka tarjoaa palveluja muuttoprosessin eri vaiheissa: yliopiston ja opiskelupaikan valinnassa, hakemusten teossa ja lähettämisessä, oleskeluluvan hakemisessa ja muuton valmistelussa. Muuttoliiketeollisuuden kasvava vaikutus on johtanut opiskelijaliikkuvuuden kohdemaiden monipuolistumiseen, mikä näkyy muun muassa kiinalaisopiskelijoiden mobilisaationa ei-englanninkielisiin maihin kuten Suomeen ja Saksaan. Tutkimuksen perusteella voidaan sanoa, että muuttoliiketeollisuus korvaa enenevästi henkilökohtaisia verkostoja opiskelijaliikkuvuuden helpottamisessa ja voi samalla johtaa opiskelijaliikkuvuuden yksilöllistymiseen. Samaan aikaan kun yhä useammalle kiinalaiselle avautuu mahdollisuus opiskella ulkomailla, ulkomaille muutto kuitenkin kallistuu.

Suoritettu tutkimus paljastaa akateemisen integraation kolme vaihetta, jotka kiinalaiset opiskelijat ideaalitilanteessa käyvät läpi Suomessa tai Saksassa opiskellessaan. Ensimmäisessä vaiheessa opiskelija kehittää vieraan kielen taitojaan ymmärtääkseen opetuksen sisältöjä. Tätä vaihetta kuvataan *pintaoppimisen* termillä. Opiskelijan on kuitenkin pyrittävä *syväoppimiseen* saadakseen paremman ymmärryksen opituista sisällöistä. Kolmannessa, *transformatiivisen oppimisen* vaiheessa opiskelija kehittää kriittisen ja innovatiivisen ajattelun kykyjään. Vaikka akateemiset ympäristöt ovat erilaisia Suomessa ja Saksassa, kiinalaisopiskelijat kohtasivat kummassakin maassa samanlaisia vaikeuksia akateemisen integraation prosessissaan. Yhteinen ongelma oli esimerkiksi vaikeus opiskella vieraalla kielellä, olipa tuo kieli englanti tai saksa.

Monet tutkimukseen osallistuneet kiinalaiset olivat asuneet uudessa asuinmaassaan vuosikausia oppimatta käyttämään sujuvasti paikallista kieltä, mikä vaikeutti heidän sopeutumistaan ja valmistumisen jälkeistä työn saantia. Tulokset osoittavat, että myös monet rakenteelliset esteet voivat estää kiinalaisia opiskelijoita jäämästä maahan pidemmäksi aikaa tai pysyvästi, vaikka he sitä tahtoisivatkin. Epäjohdonmukainen ja ristiriitainen integraatio-infrastruktuuri voi jättää opiskelijat

jumiin ‘heikon integraation ansaan’, estäen heitä jäämästä opiskelumaahan valmistumisen jälkeen.

Neljä suoritettua osatutkimusta osoittivat myös eroja kiinalaisopiskelijoiden integraatiokokemuksissa Suomessa ja Saksassa. Saksankielisissä ohjelmissa Saksassa opiskelevilla näyttäisi olevan suuremmat paineet ja myös vaikeudet integroitua akateemiseen toimintaympäristöön kuin Suomessa englanninkielisissä ohjelmissa opiskelevilla. Toisaalta Saksassa opiskelevilla kiinalaisilla on paikallisen kielen taidon vuoksi Suomessa opiskelevia paremmat mahdollisuudet työllistymiseen valmistumisen jälkeen.

Avainsanat: integraatio, muuttoliike, kiinalainen opiskelija, Suomi, Saksa

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ORIGINAL PUBLICATIONS

This doctoral dissertation is based on the following four single authored and jointly authored[3] articles. The articles are referred to in the text by Roman numerals I – IV.

I. Li, H. (2019 in press). The Role of the Migration Industry in Chinese Student Migration to Finland: Towards a New Meso-level Approach. In X. Du, F. Dervin, & H. Liu (Eds.), *Nordic-Chinese Intersections on Education*: Palgrave Macmillan.

II. Li, H., & Pitkänen, P. (2018). Understanding Integration of Mainland Chinese Students: The case of Finland. *Nordic Journal of Migration Research, 8*(2). doi:10.1515/njmr-2018-0008

III. Li, H. (2017). Academic Integration of Mainland Chinese Students in Germany. *Social Inclusion, 2017, 5*(1), 13. doi:10.17645/si.v5i1.824

IV. Li, H. (2018). Aspiration and Integration Infrastructure: A Study on Chinese Students' Integration in Finland and Germany. *Working Papers – Bielefeld University, Centern on Migration, Citizenship and Development*, 2018 (*160).*

[3] Articles II-IV are published, and Article I accepted and in press for publication. Hanwei Li was in charge of the study's conception and design, data collection, data analysis, and interpretation and writing of the manuscript (Studies I, II, III and IV). Pirkko Pitkänen contributed to the study's conception and design, and the writing up of the results (especially Study II).

1 INTRODUCTION

Chinese tertiary-level students represent an increasingly mobile group of people. An ancient motto in Chinese says 'read a thousand books, travel a thousand miles'. This ancient quote has inspired generations of Chinese to explore the world and continues to motivate them today. With the economic development and faster transportation, Chinese students are increasingly arriving in different parts of the world, experiencing new cultures and learning about the world. Chinese are currently the world's largest group of migrant students. According to the Chinese Ministry of Education (Zhang, 2018), some 608,400 Chinese students went to study abroad in 2017, an increase of 11.74 percent compared to the previous year. Today, China is the world's top international student sending country. Since Deng Xiaoping's open and reform policy in 1970s, over 5 million Chinese students have studied abroad (Ministry of Education of P. R. of China, 2018). While the U.S.A. remains the top destination for Chinese students, EU countries are also increasingly attractive destinations. In Germany, Chinese are the largest group of international students, accounting for more than ten percent of all overseas students (GHK Consulting & Renming University, 2011). Finland is also a popular study destination for Chinese students due to its high quality higher education and wide range of programs taught in English.

The rapid increase in the numbers of Chinese students in the EU implies both opportunities and challenges for the receiving societies and their education systems. One potentially positive impact is the role of Chinese graduates as skilled workers on the host countries' labor markets. This benefit is so far inconspicuous, as it remains difficult for many Chinese students to find jobs in the receiving countries after graduation. The stagnant job market in the EU after the 2008 financial crisis plays an important role here. The language barrier is also one of the key factors preventing Chinese and other international students from finding work. Although some non-English-speaking EU countries, such as Finland and Germany, welcome international graduates to stay and find a job by giving them a free visa extension for a certain period of time, this is not enough to ensure their employment.

Despite the reiceiving countries' incentives to attract and retain international students, we know very little about what drives the Chinese students to study in non-

Anglophone EU countries. This doctoral research seeks to contribute to the understanding of the migration and integration paths of Chinese tertiary students in Finland and Germany. Topical questions include: What factors facilitate the students' movement to Finland and Germany? What are their experiences once they arrive in the receiving countries? What are their plans after graduation? While past research has repeatedly documented the experiences of Chinese students in Anglophone countries such as the U.S.A. and the U.K., little is known about their integration experiences in non-Anglophone countries. In non-English-speaking countries, the local languages pose serious challenges to the students when trying to adapt to the host society, build social networks, or find work after graduation. Both Finland and Germany have good higher education systems that increasingly attract overseas students. Both countries also have policy measures not only to attract but also to retain 'the best and the brightest' international students from all over the world.

The doctoral research presented here had two main objectives:

- To identify the drivers of Chinese student mobility to Finland and Germany
- To explore the processes, challenges, coping strategies and trajectories of Chinese students' integration into academic and societal contexts during their studies in Finland and Germany

The overall research questions were as follows:

RQ1 What drives Chinese student mobility to non-Anglophone countries like Finland and Germany?

RQ 1a Why do Chinese students choose to study in Finland and Germany?

RQ 1b How do the students manage to come to study in these countries?

RQ2 How do Chinese students integrate in Finland and Germany during their studies?

RQ 2a How do Chinese students integrate into the academic contexts?

RQ 2b How do the students integrate into the societal contexts, especially if planning to stay in the country?

Four sub-studies were conducted to answer the research questions. These studies had the following aims:

The first aim was to examine the drivers of Chinese student mobility. Instead of listing all the factors that might account for their migration, the focus was on the

role of migration industry that facilitates and channels the international mobility of Chinese students. The aim was to examine how the migration industry influences the motivations, migratory paths and choices of destination of Chinese students and conditions the feasibility and actualization of the students' studies abroad.

The second aim was to identify Chinese students' integration paths in Finland and Germany. While past research has often investigated international students' integration in academic contexts, the aim of this research was to consider their integration not only in academic settings but also in wider societal environments. A four-dimensional conceptual model was proposed, including the academic, social, cultural and economic domains of integration. The students' integration experiences in Finland and Germany were studied within all those domains. Since academic integration is most central for the tertiary students, special attention was paid to the challenges, coping strategies and trajectories of Chinese students' academic integration.

Finally, the third aim was to ascertain whether Chinese students would like to stay in the host society after their graduation, and if so, whether they manage to integrate into the host societies. Since not every Chinese student would like to stay, social, cultural, and economic integration are more relevant for those aspiring to stay in the host society after graduation. Among these, the aim was to identify the intrinsic and extrinsic barriers preventing Chinese students from becoming fully integrated into society in Finland and Germany.

A qualitative research approach was chosen to gain an in-depth and exploratory understanding of the students' mobility and integration experiences. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with mainland Chinese students in different regions in Finland and in Germany. The qualitative research design facilitated an understanding of the respondents' own perspectives and therefore yielded unforeseeable findings. Individual interviews were particularly appropriate for this study because they served to reveal the students' personal experiences and perspectives.

The four sub-studies resulted in four published articles, each with a different research focus and study design. Article I addressed the drivers of Chinese student mobility, examining particularly the role of the migration industry in channeling and facilitating the Chinese student migration. Articles II, III and IV addressed integration issues. Article II proposed a conceptual framework for analyzing the students' integration experiences and applied the conceptual framework to study the case of Finland. Article III examined academic integration experiences of Chinese students in Germany and the challenges the students face and the coping strategies they develop. Article IV investigated the phenomenon of weak integration trap,

common to many Chinese students and explained the causes and implications of the phenomenon through the lens of integration aspiration and integration infrastructure.

The dissertation consists of the following articles:

Article I: The Role of the Migration Industry in Chinese Student Migration to Finland: Towards a New Meso-level Approach

Article II: Understanding the Integration of Mainland Chinese Students: The Case of Finland

Article III: Academic Integration of Mainland Chinese Students in Germany

Article IV: Aspiration and Integration Infrastructure: A Study on Chinese Students' Integration in Finland and Germany

The following summary of the doctoral dissertation provides an overview of the societal and theoretical starting points of the sub-studies, summarizes the main findings, and discusses the empirical and theoretical contributions of the studies. The second and third chapters introduce the contextual backgrounds and theoretical frameworks for the studies. The fourth chapter presents the overall methodological approach, research methods and research participants, and discusses issues related to research ethics and the validity of the research. The fifth chapter summarizes the findings of sub-studies I-IV, while the sixth chapter concludes the main findings of the dissertation as a whole. Finally, the seventh chapter discusses the theoretical and practical implications and limitations of the study and proposes directions for future research. The original publications are placed at the end of the summary.

2 SOCIETAL BACKGROUND OF THE RESEARCH

2.1 International mobility of tertiary-level students

With the trend of globalization of higher education, numbers of internationally mobile students have increased steadily since the 1970s. According to UNESCO statistics, more than five million internationally mobile students were studying abroad in 2014, more than double the 2.1 million who did so in 2000 and more than triple the number in 1990 (ICEF, 2015). The increase in international students worldwide in higher education institutions (HEIs) calls for more scholarly attention to be paid to the students' experiences of migration and integration.

But are internationally mobile tertiary-level students really migrants? Some migration scholars or even international students themselves might say 'no', since international student mobility is often seen as 'temporary' (Pitkänen & Carrera, 2014). International students are also seen to constitute a 'less problematic' group of foreign arrivals, for instance in contrast to the rather general image of migrants as poor, marginalized workers or refugees. However, according to the conventional definitions and statistical criteria of migration, international students are indeed migrants having crossed an international border and taken up residence in a foreign country with a different culture and language often for a long period of time (King & Findlay, 2012). In fact, the current situation of international students is rather similar to that of highly-skilled labor migrants: many countries compete to not only to attract the 'brightest and the best' but also seek to retain them in the country. EU countries like Germany and Finland have also pursued a policy of allowing international university students an extension to their residence permits for job-seeking after graduation. International students are thus no longer classed as 'temporary migrants' (Aksakal, Schmidt, Korpela, & Pitkänen, 2018; Pitkänen, Korpela, Schmidt, & Aksakal, 2018), rather it is hoped that their stay in the host country will increase their motivation for long-term settlement.

UNESCO, the OECD, and EUROSTAT have agreed upon the definition that internationally mobile students, new entrants and graduates are those who have physically crossed an international border between two countries to participate in educational activities in the country of destination, where the country of destination

of a given student is different from his/her country of origin (UOE, 2018). This definition concerns students enrolled for a tertiary education and defines country of origin as 'the country in which their upper secondary qualification was obtained'.

The concept of 'international student'[4] is different from two other common definitions of internationally mobile students, namely 'foreign student' and 'credit-mobile student'. Foreign students refers to 'non-citizens' who are currently enrolled on higher education degree courses which do not distinguish between students holding non-resident visas and those with permanent resident status'. The former usually travel to study in a foreign country independently, while the latter usually migrate with their parents, making them 1.5-generation immigrants. (IOM, 2018a) On the other hand, credit-mobile students refers to exchange students, such as those studying on EU Erasmus programmes. These students remain enrolled in their home countries but take a small number of credits at foreign institutions (Van Mol & Ekamper, 2016). Due to their fluid enrollment status, most statistics on international students do not include credit-mobile students (IOM, 2018a).

International students have experienced the most rapid increase in relative terms among the various categories of international migrants (Beine, Noël, & Ragot, 2014). International students also account for as much as one third of all temporary migration within the OECD countries (OECD, 2018) and play a significant role in the global knowledge economy. The EU has been a major destination for foreign students. By 2012, there were 1,943,684 international students in the EU, and this trend has been rising in recent years: from 7.6 percent in 2008 to around 9.64 of the total EU student population in 2012 (Eurostat, 2018). Germany is one of the main host countries of international students in the EU (ibid.).

As a consequence, internationalization of higher education institutions and international student mobility have long been important issues on the EU policy agenda. The EU's education policy aims to foster student mobility to help them develop their professional, social and intercultural skills and increase their employability (EU, 2018). Ultimately, it is hoped that the international student mobility will support economic advancement, foster the European identity and produce a political elite (Waters & Brooks, 2011). The European Higher Education Area (Bologna Process) has brought about far reaching changes in educational

4 In this report, internationally mobile students will mainly be referred to as international students, and international student mobility has mainly been viewed from the perspectives of destination countries.

mobility, the bachelor-master-doctorate structure, education quality assurance, as well as student and academic staff mobility. The use of European mobility and quality assurance tools such as ECTS, the Diploma Supplement and the European Quality Assurance Register at institutional level facilitate mutual trust and recognition, academic recognition and mobility (Reichert, Tauch, Geddie, & Crosier, 2005).

For several reasons international students are increasingly viewed as desirable migrants, especially for the industrialized countries. First, international students can be a good source of income for universities. As in some countries (e.g. Finland and the Netherlands), international students tend to pay higher tuition fees than domestic students, it allows universities to offset the decreasing funding from the governments. Second, many developed countries are facing a sustained demographic decline in their working-age populations. International students, who are usually young, highly educated and equipped with host-country credentials, are viewed as 'ideal' immigrants who can offset workforce gaps (Morris-Lange & Brands, 2015). Since international students have stayed in the host countries before entering the local labor market, they are presumed to possess an advanced command of the host country's language and to be more accustomed to the local culture than newcomers recruited directly from abroad.

Many European host countries are consequently increasingly inclined to carry out complementary policies to attract and retain international students as future highly-skilled workforce. To attract international students, it is essential to identify the key determinants of international student mobility. Research on foreign students' migration to the U.S.A. shows that the provision of undergraduate higher education and the low level of skilled workers' salaries in the countries of origin tend to prompt emigration of students and their stay in host countries upon graduation (Rosenzweig, 2008). Beine, Noel and Ragot (2014) look at OECD student mobility data and find that that the presence of country nationals at destinations tends to act as a magnet for international students. In addition, the students tend to be sensitive to the wage, living costs and quality of higher education at destinations. Tuition fees are not found to act purely as a cost component, since countries with prestigious universities can afford to raise their fees as the demand exceeds the number of places available and in some cases, tuition fees can be covered by grants. Thus, countries wishing to attract international students can consider various policies, such as regulating tuition fees (like Germany, which does not charge extra tuition fees for international students from outside the EU), introduce a number of scholarships or other types

of subsidies, be liberal in issuing and extending student visas, or allow credit transfer between universities and a certain amount of part-time work during studies.

Further, to retain international students in the host country after graduation, HEIs, employers and policy-makers can collaborate to facilitate international graduates' job-seeking. HEIs can provide career support to help their students to overcome major obstacles and facilitate development of their language skills and earlier exposure to job markets through internships. Employers, especially small businesses, can open positions to international students to enhance culturally diverse and international working environments. Policy-makers can ease the country's restrictions on post-study work and residency, enabling graduates to search for a job within a proper period of time and to lower procedural barriers, such as excessive processing times (Morris-Lange & Brands, 2015). In many EU countries the legal frameworks have been liberalized in recent years to foster better retention of international students, and to improve the competitiveness of these countries in sectors where there are shortages of highly-skilled labor. For instance, in Germany, under the Immigration Law (2005), international students from outside the EU or EEC can extend their visas by up to 18 months upon graduation. Finland likewise allows international students to extend their visas for job-seeking purposes for up to one year upon graduation (Migri.fi, 2018a). These new regulations are intended to increase the chances of retaining the international graduates in the labor markets of the destination countries.

International mobility of students is also important for sending countries. Although classic brain drain theory argues that outflow of the 'brightest and best' slows down economic development in the sending countries (Bhagwati & Hamada, 1974), this theory tends to neglect the complex nature of the global movement of highly-skilled migrants that can be increasingly regarded as 'brain circulation', i.e. temporary and repetitive movement between sending, receiving or other countries (Hunger, 2003; Pitkänen et al., 2018). More recent studies show that a significant number of international students end up returning to their home countries, which is also evident in the increasing waves of returnees to China after studies abroad (Jonkers & Tijssen, 2008). At least potentially, sending countries can benefit from returnees' overseas study and work experiences, language skills, and professional networks that can be the foundation for international businesses or other international endeavours. Even those who choose to stay abroad are often heavily engaged with their home countries, through telecommunications, international networks, or diaspora activities, and the sending countries may benefit from their international economic ties and knowledge transfer. (Morris-Lange & Brands, 2015)

This way international graduates can become bridges between different worlds: they exchange information, knowledge, and skills that benefit multiple societies.

2.2 International mobility of Chinese students

Among internationally mobile tertiary level students, Chinese students represent the largest group, and their numbers have been growing rapidly in recent years. According to the latest statistics (Zhang, 2018), since Deng Xiaoping's 'reform and opening policy' in 1978 that dramatically changed the economic and societal landscape in China, more than 5.2 million Chinese have gone abroad to study. In 2017, more than 600,000 Chinese headed abroad to university, four times the figure a decade earlier, bringing the number of Chinese studying at tertiary level outside China to nearly 1.5 million. Earlier waves of Chinese studying abroad relied mainly on scholarships or funding from governments or institutions. Nowadays more and more wealthy families in China have an aspiration and the financial means to send their children abroad. Just as one of the recent reports on China suggests, 'for China's elite, studying abroad is *de rigueur*' and overseas education has increasingly become a 'formative experience' for many (Economist, 2018).

Most Chinese students go to study at English-speaking destinations, mostly the U.S.A. Significant numbers also go to nearby East-Asian countries such as Japan and South Korea. However, an increasing number of Chinese move to study in the EU. A study on EU-China student and academic staff mobility (G.H.K.Consulting & Renming University, 2011) shows that while in 2000 there were only around 20,000 Chinese studying in the EU, in 2010 the number rose up to about 120,000. In Europe, the countries reporting the highest numbers of Chinese students (in terms of 'stock') are the U.K. (40% of total), France (23%) and Germany (20%), followed by the Netherlands (4%), Italy, Ireland, and Sweden (3% respectively), and Finland (1-2%).

Although Chinese students' mass movement to study abroad has been matched by many universities' increasing reliance on fee-paying foreign students, the future trend is still uncertain. Finland, for instance, is now aiming to attract more fee-paying non-EU/EEA students since policy change starting from autumn semester 2017, due to cuts in government funding for higher education institutions. It is known that most of the Chinese students moving to study in the EU are free movers (as opposed to those coming under organized mobility programs/agreements) and the vast majority are self-funded as full-degree students (G.H.K.Consulting & Renming

University, 2011). However, since the absolute number of young Chinese people of student age is projected to decrease in the future, it means that the demand for foreign tertiary education will likely decline. At the same time, Chinese students are questioning the value of investing in their education abroad when neither host countries' immigration policies nor HEIs' institutional support can provide a pathway for experiential opportunities (Choudaha & Hu, 2016). Such institutional support can range from academic services like language and writing support to non-academic services like careers advice and counseling. While Chinese students are often stereotyped as passive obedient learners, the reality may be that institutions themselves have not supported them enough in intercultural communication and improving services that will help students to integrate better into their destinations (Heng, 2018).

2.3 Finland and Germany as destinations for Chinese students

Finland

Finland has a long history of educational co-operation with China. The first bilateral agreement on exchange of students with China dates back to 1973. The Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture has adopted a process knwn as 'Destination Asia' aimed at developing collaboration in education and research with Asian countries. For instance, in September 2002, Beijing Foreign Language University started to teach Finnish. Further, to promote educational collaboration, Finland opened a branch office of the national education agency, Finnish National Agency for Education (CIMO) in Shanghai in April 2009. The office assists Finnish HEIs in establishing contact with Chinese universities and follows developments in the Chinese higher education sector. It also markets Finnish higher education in China (G.H.K.Consulting & Renming University, 2011).

Chinese students have long been one of the largest groups of international students at Finnish HEIs. The statistics from CIMO (2018) show that in 2016 there were in total 1,788 Chinese students studying in Finland, making them the third largest group of international students after Russian and Vietnamese. Of these, 565 were studying in universities of applied sciences (UAS) and 1,223 were studying in Finnish universities. Chinese are currently the biggest group in almost every field of master's and doctoral level international student study groups. However, in spite of many Chinese still moving to study in Finland, their numbers started to fall slightly

after 2012, especially in the UASs. At the same time the numbers of Chinese students in large destination countries like the U.S.A., the U.K. and Germany have increased. On the other hand, Finland is not alone in this situation as the number of Chinese students has also fallen or remained the same in some other smaller European destination countries such as Sweden, Norway, and the Netherlands.

Germany

In Germany, China has been the leading source for international students for years and the number of Chinese students has been increasing every year. Foreign students are categorized into two groups in German higher education institutions, *Bildungsinländer* and *Bildungsausländer*. *Bildungsinländer* are students of other nationalities who have obtained their higher education entrance qualification in Germany. *Bildungsausländer* are students of other nationalities who have obtained their higher education entrance qualification outside the country, Internationally mobile students generally belong to the latter category. According to the most recent data (Wissenschaft Weltoffen, 2018), China remains the top origin country of *Bildungsausländer* in Germany, accounting for 13.2 percent of the total, with 34,997 Chinese students studying in Germany in 2017. This total number of Chinese students among *Bildungsausländer* increased by 2,729 from 2016, an increase of approximately eight percent.

Germany has also established important bilateral educational cooperation with China since 1979; China is today the major cooperation partner for Germany in Asia. Not only are Chinese the largest group of foreign students in Germany, but many German students are also going to study in China. China is today the sixth major host country for German students abroad after Switzerland and the U.S.A. (Wissenschaft Weltoffen, 2018). The national education agency, German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) has opened branches in three cities in mainland China:Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou. They support exchanges of researchers and scientists, and also provide up-to-date information on studying in Germany and foster co-operation between German and Chinese HEIs. The DAAD actively uses Chinese social media platforms such as weibo (a twitter-like website) and wechat (a facebook and whatsapp type mobile app) to distribute information on study opportunities in Germany. The DAAD also screens the credentials of Chinese students before they can apply for a study visa and sends long-term or short-term German professors and lecturers to China. Wider academic co-operation between China and Germany has also been flourishing in recent years. Germany established

around 531 co-operation programs or partnerships with Chinese HEIs from 2009 to 2010, while there can be several co-operation agreements per university. Around 150 German universities are very active in their collaboration with China. (G.H.K.Consulting & Renming University, 2011)

2.4 'Attract and Retain' policies for international students in Finland and Germany

Finland

Finland has long been favourable towards international students as desirable migrants. Finnish higher education used to be free for non-EU/EEA students, which attracted international students from all over the world. However, due to economic recession in recent years, the Finnish HEIs started to charge tuition fees for non-EU/EEA students in autumn 2017. At the same time, the ageing population and need for skilled workers prompts Finland to aim at retaining international graduates. Data from Statistics Finland shows that among the international university graduates from 2009, after one year, around 52 percent remained to work in Finland. After five years, the percentage dropped, but 44 percent of international graduates were still employed in the country, and about 4 percent remained as students in Finland, while 20 percent resided for other reasons, and 32 percent had moved away from the country (Garam & Korkala, 2015).

In order to retain more international students as valuable skilled labor, Finland has adjusted its regulations by introducing post-study job-seeking residence permits, allowing international students to stay for job-seeking purposes after graduating (Migri.fi, 2018a). According to the latest legal framework, all non-EU students who have completed a degree in Finland can apply for a new residence permit on the basis of work immediately after they have found a job or apply for a residence permit for seeking work if they are not employed. International graduates can get a residence permit to look for work only once, for a maximum of one year. For the international students who graduated in Finland several years ago and have since left Finland, the option for applying a residence permit for job-seeking purposes still remains. There are no time limits for submitting a residence permit application on the basis of work after receiving a degree. (ibid.)

Most of the Finnish HEIs, particularly universities of applied sciences, provide career counseling and support, tailor their information sessions on the Finnish labor market and/or provide job application training or other career support to international students. Furthermore, there are various matchmaking and mentor programs co-organized by universities, city councils and Finnish chambers of commerce that bring international students, senior professionals, and Finnish companies together to increase the opportunities for international students to find a job in Finland. Although the HEIs generally organize job fairs, try to connect the students with potential employers and prepare the students for entry into the job market through all kinds of internships and summer jobs, those opportunities are generally available mostly for those with some knowledge of Finnish language. Since most of the international students in Finland study through the mediun of English, lack of Finnish language skills may prevent them from accessing the jobs available in the Finnish labor market.

Evidence shows that Finnish companies and firms have mixed attitudes towards international graduates (Garam & Korkala, 2015). Large international firms are generally more open towards recruiting international students, whereas small and medium-sized companies, employment offices and other local actors are only occasionally involved in employing international graduates. International graduates with background in computer programming or engineering have better chances of finding employment, while other sectors generally require fluent Finnish language skills that are hard for the foreigners to acquire. (ibid.)

International students in Finland are also encouraged to become entrepreneurs. Legally, Finland offers an entrepreneur's residence permit and start-up entrepreneur's residence permit for non-EU/EEA citizens. For a entrepreneur's residence permit, the applicants must register their business operations in the Trade Register of the Finnish Patent and Registration Office before applying for an entrepreneur's residence permit. The application process involves two phases. First, an ELY Centre (Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment) assesses the viability of the planned company on the basis among other things of the business plan and financing. Then the Finnish Immigration Service issues its decision on the residence permit (Infopankki.fi, 2018). In some cases, Finnish HEIs have also established start-up campuses, entrepreneurship communities, innovation labs, business incubators, and accelerators in which foreign students can work with their business ideas and startup companies. For instance, the former University of Tampere and Tampere University of Applied Sciences have introduced a Y-Campus, where students can learn about how to establish a company

and work together on their start-up ideas. Tampere University of Applied Sciences was one of the first to introduce entrepreneurship as a major subject of study so that students team up in Proakatemia to learn entrepreneurship through practical actions. The universities also recruit students to participate in Demola projects, where students from various fields team up to solve problems posed by companies. Many of those joining Demola projects are international students, who can gain practical experience in solving real life business and societal issues with their knowledge and skills.

Germany

Germany has also tried to attract more Chinese students to study in Germany by setting up national education agencies in various Chinese cities, establishing co-operation projects between universities and institutions, and actively disseminating information regarding study opportunities in Germany. In order to better integrate and retain Chinese and other international students, Germany has implemented various measures:

Legally, since 2005 international students in Germany have been allowed to stay beyond the end of their study programs. According to the Residence Act Section 16 subs.4, international graduates are allowed to look for skilled employment for up to 18 months after graduation. During the job hunting period, international graduates enjoy the same rights as their German counterparts as they are permitted to work in skilled or unskilled professions without prior approval from immigration or labor market authorities. In addition, Germany's willingness to retain international graduates goes beyond permission for a long job-seeking period, and also paves the way to long-term settlement. After only two years of skilled work, international graduates are fast-tracked to permanent residence status – much shorter than the five-year requirement set forth by the EU directives. Even self-employed graduates can benefit from Germany's fast-track permanent employment rule. As a result, Germany is considered to have one of the most liberal labor migration policies for international graduates among the OECD countries (OECD, 2013).

As in Finland, Germany's higher education consists mostly of universities and universities of applied sciences. The German HEIs generally have specialized staff providing career support at a later stage on a variety of degree programs. Past research has shown that German HEIs are quite active in supporting international students' career support, around 56 percent of all HEIs have offered international students career counseling in English, information sessions on the German labor

market and other specifically designed services (Morris-Lange & Brands, 2015). In practice, however, the data access restrictions in many German HEIs make outreach to international students complicated. According to the latest report (ibid.), more than 80 percent of the careers services at the German HEIs are unable to directly contact international students to offer their support services. Instead, they can only access students' contact information by requesting them from another unit within the HEIs. Sometimes the careers service office needs to make this internal request for every single outreach campaign. International students are often unaware of the careers support they can obtain from HEIs or they feel that the existing services do not address their needs. One in every three international offices also face the same problem.

German firms' willingness to accept international employees is partly similar to that in Finland. Most large and medium-sized businesses rank among the most active recruiters of international graduates. However, the small companies are still reluctant to hire international students. As a consequence, local politicians and public service providers seek raise awareness and promote international student retention. (Morris-Lange & Brands, 2015.)

3 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This section will introduce the theoretical background underpinning the empirical studies. The review consists of two parts: the first part reviews theory related to drivers of international migration and pays special attention to migration industry and migration infrastructure, which are crucial for understanding the drivers of international student migration. Student migration from China is more than ever intensively mediated by an education migration industry that provides a one-stop solution for student migration.

The second part introduces theories related to the integration of international students in academic and societal environments. Four dimensions of integration will be introduced: academic, social, cultural, and economic. Finally, the theoretical frameworks of integration aspiration and integration infrastructure will be presented. While most students have an aspiration to integrate into the academic circles, often only those students who wish to stay after graduation have an aspiration to integrate into the societal context in question. An interplay between integration infrastructure and integration aspiration will be introduced to explain the international students' integration into societal contexts, and the notion of 'weak integration trap' will be introduced.

3.1 Theorizing drivers of international student migration

3.1.1 Traditional migration theories

While in some studies, international students are considered sojourners rather than migrants, this research argues that international students, by conventional definitions and statistical criteria of migration, are indeed migrants (King & Findlay, 2012). Similar to the challenges that migrants face and the trajectories of integration that they have to go through, international students face similar concerns and have similar experiences. Migration theories explaining people's movements across national and international boundaries are thus relevant and useful for understanding students'

decisions to migrate. The following section introduces the classic migration theories that may be used to explain international student migration: push and pull theory and social network theory.

Push and pull theories

One of the classic theories of migration is the push and pull theory, which was initially developed mainly to explain the mechanism behind international labor migration (Todaro & Maruszko, 1987). Based on Ravenstein's laws of migration, Lee (1966) developed an implicit 'push' and 'pull' perspective. He emphasized particularly socio-economic factors that operate in sending and destination places as the basis for migration. Those factors are either positive or negative and either foster or impede migration. Other scholars, such as Altbach (1998, 2004), MacMahon (1992), Li and Bray (2007) have adopted this theoretical approach to explain the patterns of international student migration especially from developing countries to developed countries. Pull factors in the destination countries may include good research facilities, congenial socio-economic or political environments, high living standards and wages, the prospect of multinational classmates, and so on (Altbach, 2004; Li & Bray, 2007; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). Sending countries may have push factors such as under-developed education systems and facilities, and unstable economic, social or political conditions (Altbach, 2004; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). What comes to the student migration, there are also other forces which operate in sending and receiving countries: the legal framework for international students and the option to stay on after graduation also influence international student migration.

Although push and pull theory is considered as one of the classic migration theories, it has been much criticized: First, the theory is often criticized for leaving limited room for human agency, i.e., to the human capacity to respond to push and pull factors, or to change structural conditions (Castles, de Haas, & J. Miller, 2013). The macro-level push and pull factors can only cause or influence individual desires for migration when the individuals consider these factors to be relevant to their own values and goals (De Jong & Gardner, 1981, p. 72). Hence, it is often the perception of the objective situation which enters into the individual decision-making process instead of objective reality (Sell & Dejong, 1978, p. 331). Related to student migration, the push factors may create a potential interest for students to leave, yet the direction is unclear until the students respond to the pull factors of the host countries and institutions. Second, push and pull theory fails to consider the

importance of social ties in the decision to study abroad. In practice, the decision to study abroad may be made by parents or other family members. Third, as Findlay (2011) argues, theorization of international student mobility privileges the social demand-side of overseas education, while the supply-side factors are often ignored.

Social network theory

Migrant networks can be defined as sets of interpersonal ties that connect migrants, former migrants, and non-migrants in origin and destination areas through bonds of kinship, friendship, and shared community origin (Massey et al., 1993, p. 448). Migrant networks tend to decrease the costs associated with migration, therefore they can be seen as a form of location-specific social capital that people draw upon to gain acess to resources elsewhere (Massey, Arango, Hugo, Kouaouci, Pellegrino, et al., 1999). Faist (1997; 2000, 2010) emphasizes transnational meso-level factors of migration, as they link the individual decision making models to the structural macro migration models. The meso-level factors explain the processes in which social capital is created, accumulated, and mobilized by collectives and networks in given certain macro-level conditions. Social relations and social capital in collectives and networks help with migrants' decision-making and adaptation processes; they are both a resource and an integrating device. The decision-making of individual actors to migrate is embedded in social contexts and based on underlying macro-structural conditions (Haug, 2008).

Faist defines social capital as resources embedded in social relations that are available to potential movers and stayers to pursue their goals. Social capital can also be seen as a resource acquired from different kinds of relationships (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Massey, Arango, Hugo, Kouaouci, & Pellegrino, 1999) that links individuals (or group actors) to social structures, and serves to mobilize financial, human, cultural and political capital. It is created, accumulated and mobilized through three mechanisms: exchange relationships, reciprocity between people and collectives and solidarity within and between groups (Faist, 2010).

Migrant networks are sets of interpersonal ties that connect movers, former movers and non-movers in countries of origin and destination through social ties, be these relations of kinship, friendship or weak social ties (Choldin, 1973). According to Guilomoto and Sandron (2001) migrant networks can perpetuate themselves for instance through institutionalization or path dependency, but are also affected by external factors such as labor market changes and migration-related legislation changes. International migration may depend more on migrant networks

than on internal migration, since there are more barriers to overcome. However, such networks can also be highly malleable, since a chance event happening to pioneers can shape the entire network. Migrant networks are held in place by these institutionalized norms, also known as social capital, but they are complimented with external migrant institutions (Goss & Lindquist, 1995). Chain migration generally stems from social networks of migrants or collectives that reduce the costs for further migration, leading to the possibility of a transnational network that gives rise to new migration and new networks (Massey et al., 1993). These diffusion processes typically follow an s-shaped curve. With each new migrant, the social capital at the place of destination increases for the potential successor, and the process continues along the chains of migration, and develops into a self-perpetuating dynamic (Haug, 2008). Besides altruism, patriotism or reciprocity of social capital, the motivational background may be more selfish. Stark and Wang (2006) argue that one reason why the more highly educated pioneers help new migrants is that having less-skilled migrants in the destination country may help to differentiate their own skills better.

Past research on international student mobility discusses how the students' social networks influence their decision to study abroad. For instance, Beech (2015) states that social networks of friendship and kinship are key determinants for students deciding to study overseas. The students interviewed at three U.K. universities invariably reported that higher education overseas or mobility more generally was an accepted practice among their peers, leading to normalization of the mobility process as a taken for granted stage within the life course (ibid.). Collins (2008) argues that international education that relies on the movement of people or knowledge across national borders is facilitated by economic and social networks that act as bridges between countries of origin and destination. Collins illustrated how the international student mobility between South Korea and New Zealand is connected through bridges such as education agents, immigrant entrepreneurs, and interpersonal networks that assist in the movement and settlement of international students. Brooks and Waters (2011) argue that based on the experiences of U.K. undergraduate and postgraduate students, their decisions about whether to move overseas to pursue higher education are strongly embedded within social relationships, such as those with their parents and other family members, friends and partners.

However, there are still certain problems in the study of migrant networks. For instance, past research has pointed out that there is a tendency to regard migrant networks as only positive and egalitarian. However, the benefits that comes with network membership, especially co-ethnic network membership, often also cause

pernicious impacts (Gold, 2005). For instance, Tilly (1990, p. 92) points out that members of immigrant groups often exploit one another as they would not dare to exploit the native-born. In addition, many scholars have analyzed migrant networks in an overly narrow manner while ignoring the complexity of networks that expand in many migrant communities (Gold 2005). This research argues that the emergence of 'migration industry' can be seen as the result of evolution of complex migrant networks, in which the informal migrant networks are transformed into unified and organized networks, consisting of various intermediaries.

3.1.2 The migration industry and migration infrastructure theory

While previous research has examined how and why international students choose to study abroad from the perspective of push and pull theory and social network theory, less research has focused on the role that the education migration industry plays in international student mobility. As a steady stream of prospective international students has already been the source of university funding for many industrialized countries, such as for the U.K., the U.S.A., Canada, Australia, and so on (Brown, Edwards, & Hartwell, 2010; Pandit, 2009; Zheng, 2014), the role of the education migration industry in shaping international student mobility deserves more scholarly attention. Today, non-Anglophone countries are increasingly catching up with this trend. For instance, many Finnish and German universities and universities of applied sciences actively recruit students from abroad. In order to investigate the neoliberalization trend of global tertiary education that enabled universities to actively seek out new sources of funding, such as through recruitment of 'high value', full-fee paying students (Beech, 2018), it is essential to explore the role of the education migration industry in the tertiary education's neoliberal reforms.

The growing prominence of the migration industry is an essential part of meso-level migration theory. Much of the existing literature on meso-level factors focuses on the migrants' mobilization of social capital through interpersonal or organizational ties. Social capital is seen as a prerequisite for the accumulation and mobilization of human, financial, cultural and political capital (Faist, 2010). While the migration industry shares certain similar features regarding how social capital is mobilized through social networks to facilitate migration, a simply categorization of various collectives in migration industry as one form of social network (organization or weak ties) that facilitates migration fails to acknowledge its complex structure and overall participation in all phases of international migration (Hernández-León, 2005).

The migration industry is increasingly involved in migration decision-making and choice of migration destination. It also challenges the traditional assumption of the role that social, financial, and human capital plays in migration processes. Hernández-León (2013) argues that the migration industry plays a more significant part in structuring international migration than has been acknowledged by most migration theories.

The migration industry is defined as 'the ensemble of entrepreneurs, firms and services which, chiefly motivated by financial gain, facilitate international mobility, settlement and adaptation, as well as communication and resource transfers of migrants and their families across borders' (Hernández-León, 2013, p. 21). In addition to 'migration industry', a more encompassing term 'migration infrastructure' was introduced by Xiang and Lindquist (2014). Migration infrastructure is defined by the authors as 'the systematically interlinked technologies, institutions and actors that facilitate and condition mobility' (ibid. p.122). According to Xiang and Lindquist (2014), a migration infrastructure consists of the institutions, networks and people that move migrants from one point to another, and is thus a broader term than 'migration industry'. The authors divide migration infrastructure into five dimensions: commercial, regulatory, technological, humanitarian, and social. From these, the commercial dimension of migration infrastructure is most related to 'migration industry'. In relation to low-skilled migration, migration industry confines migrants to employers, prevents settlement, and enforces return. In the case of Asia, Lindquist, Xiang, Yeoh (2012) view the migrant broker as a critical methodological vantage point from which to consider the shifting logic of contemporary migration across the continent. They problematize the persistent distinction between altruistic social networks and profit-oriented brokers. Profit, trust and empathy go hand-in-hand in the relationships between brokers and migrants, and the distinctions between them are thus often impossible to sustain in practice.

Most previous research efforts have centred on migration industries in labor and irregular migration, while scholarly attention is only beginning to shift towards international students' use of the migration industry. As a result of neoliberal reforms, alongside HEIs' internationalization and globalization development, which facilitate international student exchange and mobility, academic communication and relationships, universities increasingly operate on a global scale for more funding and growth (Beech, 2018). Such a development trend means fierce competition for the global student market using different strategies such as distance learning, transnational higher education, collaboration with overseas partners (in both research and teaching), overseas branch campuses and mobility of students and staff

(Gopinath, 2015; Leung & Waters, 2013). Recruitment of international students who pay higher fees than their domestic and EU counterparts helps the universities maintain finances to support teaching, research and development (Zheng, 2014).

As a result of the global competition for fee-paying students, more and more universities have started to use third parties and international education agents to attract international students, especially from growing prominent student sending countries such as China and India. Pioneered in Australia (Choudaha & Chang, 2012), the university and education migration industry collaboration mode of recruitment has now spread to the U.K. and other countries. Baas (2007) found that Australian tertiary education institutions are collaborating with international education agents recruiting international fee-paying students with limited knowledge of English. The agents are often better informed than the students on higher education options and may offer a wide range of services including help with visas and travel, English language testing, accommodation and counselling (Collins, 2012).

The agents have effectively filled a niche in the market created by the withdrawal of state regulation from student mobility and educational provision by utilizing their knowledge and connections to the social networks of students and their families. Contrary to the perception that agents always increase costs, distort markets, and exploit migrants, Collins (2012) found that intervention by the state had only regularized the agents and encouraged the development of self-governing practices that formalized their status in relation to the education industry, seeking to secure a continuing flow of international students as the crucial connection. This has led to the development of the global education migration agency facilitating and channeling international student movement. It is an increasingly profitable business in countries like China, where students pay agents a significant amount of fees for helping them with the preparation of application material, English-language tests, and visa application issues. The agents who work for education migration firms can provide insider university recruitment information for the students due to their close connection with university recruitment offices. Sometimes the universities even give priority to processing student applications sent by formally recognized overseas education agencies. The agents who have established formal collaboration with overseas universities are also paid a commission by the universities for every student successfully recruited to one of their programs (Beech, 2018).

While past research has covered some aspects of the changing nature of global student migration and the growing prominence of the education migration industry, our knowledge of the implications brought about by it and the geographies of this recruitment process are limited. Past research on the education migration industry

mainly draws on evidence from Anglophone countries such as the U.K., Australia, and so on, while non-Anglophone countries are often neglected. The present research draws on empirical evidence from Finland and Germany to offer a better look at why Chinese students are using education migration industry services, what help they have obtained from agents, and how it has changed the dynamics of student mobility in the context of student migration from China, where there exists a fully-fledged, legal education migration industry.

3.2 Theories on integration

3.2.1 The concept of integration

Although integration has become a central topic in migration studies (Favell, 2001, 2010; Spencer & Cooper, 2006), it is increasingly criticized as a problematic concept due to its politicization − the domination of a practical approach over an analytical and theoretical one – and its inadequacy for dealing with an increasingly multi-cultural and diverse society (Grzymala-Kazlowska, 2018). In Germany, for instance, there is an increasing drive advocating the rejection of the term 'integration' in favour of 'participation' (Faist & Ulbricht, 2017). Despite being a contested concept, the term integration continues to be central in migration studies and debates regarding the settle in of migrants in host societies.

Integration generally refers to 'the process of settlement, interaction with the host society, and social change that follows immigration' (Penninx & Garcés-Mascareñas, 2016, p. 11). Süssmuth and Weidenfeld (2005) define integration as 'the process wherein newcomers become an accepted part of a foreign society and of accepting that society, based on the principles of equality, human rights, diversity and inclusion'. In the previous discussion, integration is seen either as a one- or two-way process. Whereas Esser (2004, p. 46) argues that integration is 'the inclusion [of individual actors] in already existing social systems', according to Heckmann (2005, p. 18), integration is 'a generations lasting process of inclusion and acceptance of migrants in the core institutions, relations and statuses of receiving society'.

Faist and Ulbricht (2017) argue that 'integration' has two dimensions: participation and belonging. Integration refers to communal relationships (*Vergemeinschaftung*), characterized by belongingness, the setting of boundaries and the binary conceptualization of in-group members and outsiders. Participation has

more to do with 'associative relationships' (*Vergesellschaftung*), through exercising civil, political, social and cultural rights and responsibilities. According to Faist and Ulbricht (ibid.), the processes underlying the formation of communal relationships are ambivalent, function as a socio-moral basis for wide-ranging social integration on a national level and constitute elements of culturalization or boundary formation along cultural lines. These dual consequences provide a fundamental starting point for analyses of the participation of migrants and non-migrants.

Alba and Foner (2015, pp. 4-5) summarized two main mechanisms that appear to foster integration. The first mechanism highlights the 'parity of chances', meaning those that improve the access of migrants and their children to valuable social resources, such as income or education, and that promote greater equality between migrant and native groups. The second mechanism emphasizes 'full membership', meaning the process of migrants becoming part of the enlarged membership circle in the host national community, which encompasses the migrants and their descendants avoiding being marginalized as 'them', in contrast to the 'us' of the majority group. Thus, full integration implies parity of life chances with members of the native majority group, as well as recognition as a legitimate part of the national community (Alba & Foner, 2015).

In this doctoral research, *integration* is defined as 'the mutual adaptation processes between the host society and migrants themselves, both as individuals and as groups' (IOM, 2018b). Integration can be understood both from the migrant and the host community perspectives. From the host society perspectives, integration mainly refers to the process or endeavor through which the migrants become part of the enlarged membership circle in the host community, while maintaining their ethnic and cultural heritage (Li, 2018). From the migrants' perspectives, integration pertains to the process or state of development of the migrants' capability (or ability) to pursue their aspirations in the host society, to improve upon life chances to gain access to valuable social resources, and to become accepted members of the surrounding societies, which can include contexts outside the host country (Li, 2018). This means that migrants have established relatively robust relationships within the host community while maintaining their contacts with the home country.

A differentiation between 'strong integration' and 'weak integration' will also be made. The differentiation between weak and strong integration does not mean that they are dichotomous, rather it signifies a continuous development process from weak to strong integration. From migrants' perspectives, 'weak integration' means that the migrants have not yet developed sufficient capabilities to pursue their aspirations in the host society. They have gained some but not all the same

educational and/or work opportunities, and access to valued social resources as have the native-born citizens. It thus indicates that the migrants have not reached parity of life chances with the native majority group. From the perspective of the host society, the migrants are not yet recognized as a legitimate part of the national community. This refers to a state in which the migrants may also face some forms of discrimination or exclusion that prevent them from gaining parity of life chances with members of the native majority group or from being recognized as a legitimate part of the national community.

To better understand the integration of international students, this research differentiates between integration into academic and societal contexts. Academic contexts include the higher education environments in which the international students' academic lives are embedded. Societal contexts refers to the social, cultural and economic environments in which the students live within the host societies.

3.2.2 Integration of international students

While past research on the integration of international students has often centered around their integration into academic circles, this research proposes a four-faceted conceptual framework consisting of academic, economic, social, and cultural integration.

Academic integration refers to the processes of adapting to the receiving academic contexts. It concerns questions such as how the students get used to the teaching and learning environments, how they participate in classroom discussions, and how they manage in their informal interaction with teachers and other classmates.

Social integration in turn refers to the students' social networks and involvement in local communities and may include their activities in the neighborhood, student organizations, leisure time clubs, voluntary organizations and so on. In this research, the functional model of international student networks (Functional Model of Friendship Networks [FMFN]) developed by Bochner et al. (1977) will be adopted to study international students' social integration. Bochner et al. (1977) categorize students' networks into three categories: co-national networks that affirm and express the culture of origin; networks with host nationals which facilitate academic and professional aspirations; and multinational networks for recreation purposes.

Further, *cultural integration* refers to the process of gaining an understanding of the basic rules and norms of the host society. It may be expected that getting to know the cultural expectations of the host nationals will facilitate the 'cultural integration'

processes of international students. In practice, however, each society possesses tacit cultural norms that are hidden and, thus, difficult for foreign newcomers to perceive. Acquiring tacit cultural knowledge is an important factor in the integration process as it helps newcomers to understand the cultural expectations of the host population.

Since it is not possible for international students to participate in full-time jobs while studying full time, *economic integration* typically refers to the students' experiences in terms of internships, apprenticeships, job-seeking, part-time jobs and entrepreneurship during their studies. Related to the international students' long term integration (if any), their participation in the local labor market after graduation is of topical importance. (Li & Pitkänen, 2018)

3.2.3 Integration aspiration

It is evident that weak integration among international students may be caused by a lack of integration aspiration. Aspiration can be seen as a form of 'attitude' (Carling, 2014). Eagly and Chaiken state that aspiration is 'a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favour or disfavour'. Some literature also utilizes the term 'motivation for integration', as defined by Kim (2001), looking at the extent to which migrants are willing to make efforts to participate and adapt into the host environment.

In this research, aspiration for integration is defined as the drive to take the necessary action to become an active and competent member of the host society. This may occur through various activities, such as language learning, socializing with host nationals, finding job opportunities, and so on.

Based on this integration aspiration is conceptualized in several interrelated ways, which may be applicable to international student mobility. First, integration aspiration is seen as an interplay between the migrants' own characteristics and the characteristics of the place. As mentioned by Carling and Schewel (2018), the value of living in a specific place depends on both the characteristics of that place, and its interplay with the individuals' needs and preferences. The host society is an important part of the living environment, especially in relation to the local socio-cultural environment, living atmosphere, economic and political situations, and welcoming attitude towards migrants. Migrants' spatial preferences and geographical imaginaries come into touch with reality when they arrive and begin to live in a new destination country. The interplay between the characteristics of that place and the

migrants' own preferences will ultimately shape their wellbeing and impact on their aspirations for integration.

Second, integration aspiration can also be examined from life-course perspectives. The timing of migration may have effects for experiencing other events and how further life courses unfold (Wingens, Windzio, Valk, & Aybek, 2011). Migration not only carries instrumental values, such as personal security, work opportunities or family reunion, but can also be valued intrinsically, such as the experience, adventure, and independence that come with migration (Carling, 2014; Carling & Schewel, 2018). The question whether or not the migrants are in the life stages of planning to settle down, developing a stable relationship and building a family unit, or still of the age of preferring adventure, exploration and experience, has huge impacts on their integration aspiration. After arrival in the receiving country the outcomes of incorporation processes are closely linked to the various factors emphasized in the sociological life course approach, such as transitions, path-dependence, timing, sequencing, and so on. (Wingens et al., 2011) Integration aspiration is thus closely related to the timing of migration, since migrants who still accept and favor adventure, exploration and experience may have less aspiration to integration due to changes in their future plans. By contrast, those who prefer to settle down and favor personal security may have higher integration aspiration if the characteristics of places suit their own preferences.

Third, integration aspiration can be explored from the perspective of opportunity costs. Migrants have a choice of investing more time in certain aspects of integration over others, especially regarding the comparative socio-economic and socio-political opportunities that influence their personal and career prospects. The concept of 'opportunity cost' has been employed and explained by Samuelson (1951) as 'some of the most important costs attributable to doing one thing rather than another stem from the foregone opportunities that have to be sacrificed in doing this one thing'. Similarly, migrants may, for instance, choose to improve their skills in the local language to integrate more, but realize that the cost of learning the local language can be thought of as time sacrificed that could be spent on learning other skills (e.g. computer programming) or doing other things that are deemed beneficial for their wellbeing, and personal and professional development. Comparion of opportunity cost is ultimately shaped by the migrants' personal and professional aspirations that favors certain aspects of integration over other important matters.

Finally, integration aspiration may be understood as a comparison of places. People's notions of their future prospects are largely dependent on a socio-culturally and economic existing entity that allows them to fulfill particular expectations. The

impact of the institutional contexts in the country of origin, destination, and other potential migration countries shapes the migrants' integration and future migration aspirations. Migrants' integration aspiration is also mediated and conditioned by integration infrastructure in the host country, which may be country or region specific. The socio-economic situation in one place as compared to others, shapes the migrants' potential for making a living and building their future careers. If, for instance, the glass ceiling for career development is too strong for non-native populations, or the attitude against recruiting migrant background populations prevails within the mainstream society, it can have a potentially negative impact on the migrants' future outlook, and subsequently, on their aspiration for integration.

3.2.4 Integration infrastructure

The academic discussion on integration infrastructure draws inspiration from migration infrastructure theory. While migration flows may be fragmented and short-lived, which results in migration infrastructure tending to be more instrumental in conditioning migrant mobility, integration is a longitudinal process that is constantly mediated, influenced and structured by integration infrastructure. Thus integration infrastructure can be understood not only from a processual and longitudinal perspective, but also from the interactive system perspective, where the multi-dimensional myriad of constituents facilitates or conditions how integration is initiated, sustained and developed. For analytical purposes, this research postulates six dimensions of integration infrastructure: the educational, the social, the governmental, the regulatory, the technological, and the commercial.

Perhaps the most obvious element of integration infrastructure that influences migrant integration is the *educational infrastructure*. Educational integration infrastructure in this context refers to the universities, the universities of applied sciences, and other public educational institutions that provide the training in language or skills to help students to integrate. Second, *social integration infrastructure* pertains to migrant networks that contribute to shaping migrants' integration aspirations and integration processes. Third, *governmental integration infrastructure* mainly refers to organizations that promote international academic mobility and exchange, such as CIMO (Finnish National Agency for Education/Opetushallitus) in the Finnish context, the DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service/Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst) in the German context, and the CSC (China Scholarship Council) in the Chinese context. These organizations do not only

promote the mobility of international academics and students, but they also provide integration opportunities for funded students and scholars.

Fourth, *regulatory integration infrastructure* is closely related to Feldman's definition of 'migration apparatus'. According to Feldman (2011, p. 6), migration apparatus concerns the disparate institutions, policies and discourses that turn into a 'state policy object', which generally also impact on the international students' aspirations for integration. While some of the regulatory infrastructure may facilitate integration, others may serve to hinder newcomers' integration through restricting migration control policies.

Fifth, information and communications technology has not only revolutionized communication between migrants, but also transformed the ways in which migrants integrate. Thus, *technological integration infrastructure* also comes to facilitate the integration of migrants, enhancing their communication and community formation in the host society. Sixth, *commercial integration infrastructure*, which is closely related to the notion of 'migration industry' has been explored in the literature regarding its role in facilitating migration (Hernández-León, 2008, p. 154). However, commercial infrastructure has also been increasingly expanding its reach to the country of destination, where the migration agencies can profit from the international students and other migrants by providing them services related to the integration and incorporation in the destination country.

4 DATA AND METHODS

This chapter introduces the research participants and research methods used and discusses research ethics and the validity of research related to Sub-studies I, II, III and IV. Overall, the research participants comprise Chinese tertiary-level degree students studying in Finland (n=30) and Germany (n=28). The qualitative data was gathered through semi-structured face-to-face interviews in 2015 and 2016.

The four sub-studies focused on examining the drivers of Chinese student migration and their integration experiences in academic and societal contexts in Finland and Germany. Study I focused on the drivers of Chinese student migration, while the focus of Studies II, III and IV was on the Chinese students' integration experiences in those countries. The research questions were as follows:

RQ1 What drives Chinese student mobility to non-Anglophone countries like Finland and Germany?

RQ 1a Why do Chinese students choose to study in Finland and Germany?

RQ 1b How do they manage to come to study in these countries?

RQ2 How do Chinese students integrate in Finland and Germany during their studies?

RQ 2a How do Chinese students integrate into the academic contexts?

RQ 2b How do the students integrate into the societal contexts, especially in case they plan to stay in the country?

The articles based on Sub-studies I, II, III, and IV are presented at the end of this summary.

4.1 Qualitative methods

Semi-structured thematic interviews served as the method for collecting data for Sub-studies I, II, III and IV. The themes for the interviews can be seen in Appendix 1. Interviews as a data collection method allow the researcher to flexibly steer the

topic and gather more in-depth information than can be done by surveys (Wu, 2015). The qualitative semi-structured interview is defined by Kvale and Brinkmann (2015, p. 6) as 'an interview with the purpose of obtaining descriptions of the life world of the interviewee in order to interpret the meaning of the described phenomena'. Qualitative methods also offer some leeway to follow up on angles deemed important by the interviewee, while they enable the interviewer to focus the conversation on issues considered important to the research (Brinkmann, 2014). In the doctoral study conducted, the interviewees were encouraged to express themselves freely while the general direction and forms of the interviews were maintained. The purpose of the interviews was to enable the participating students to talk freely, think deeply about the topic in question and construct their social world during the interviews (Silverman, 2006).

At a more general level, the epistemological approach of the research can be called social constructionism (Andrews, 2012). Social constructionism is an interpretive framework which implies to the ways individuals seek to understand their worlds and develop subjective meanings corresponding to their experiences (Creswell, 2012, p. 24). It is based on the idea that all our knowledge and understanding of truth are socially constructed, and that we create our understanding of reality through our social relatioships, experiences, and interactions (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Social constructionism thus has a more social than an individual focus, although each individual mentally constructs the world of experience through his/her own cognitive processes (Young & Collin, 2004). Reality is socially defined, but this reality refers to the understanding of the world rather than the objective reality of the natural world (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Hammersley, 1990).

The epistemological approach chosen has both theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, constructionism emphasizes the importance of subjectivity and reflexivity (Brinkmann, 2018), and advocates a view of the subjects as locally produced through the social interaction and social practice of interviewing (Foley, 2012). Thus the emphasis is placed on the situational practice of interviewing: a constructionist views the interviewer as a traveler (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015) whose journey is delineated by the local context of the interview (Potter & Hepburn, 2005). Berger and Luckman (1966) state that conversation is the most important means of maintaining, modifying, and reconstructing subjective reality since subjective reality is comprised of concepts that can be shared unproblematically with others.

Practically, the social constructionist position resulted to choosing semi-structured interviews as a means for data collection. Semi-structured interviews were

used as they allow one to utilize the knowledge-producing potentials of conversations by allowing the opportunities for the interviewees to follow up on questions and angles deemed important by them (Brinkmann, 2018). Compared to more unstructured interviews, the researcher in semi-structured interviews has greater influence over focusing the conversations on issues deemed important in relation to the research topic (Brinkmann, 2018). Additionally, compared to more rigorous scientific methods such as close-ended questionnaires or controlled experiments, semi-structured interviews allow the research participants to broaden the dialogues to questions important to them (Gergen & Gergen, 2012).

The role of the researcher is more complicated in qualitative studies than in quantitative studies since 'human instruments' rather than questionnaires or machines are used for data collection (Lincoln & Denzin, 2003). This fact was taken into account in the present doctoral research. As a researcher who had broadly similar experiences of mobility and integration as the research participants, I was aware that my own experiences could be either an advantage or a disadvantage. Since I had similar experiences of mobility and integration in Finland and Germany, I could easily start as an insider to enter into the potential research participants' social networks, gain their trust in a relatively short period of time, and understand the research participants' experiences during the interview processes. However, I was also aware of the potential danger that my own biases, assumptions, expectations, and experiences have for my interpretations.

Thus, throughout the data collection and analysis, I tried to critically examine my own behavior and interpretations. Moreover, when conducting the interviews, I asked open-ended probing questions and tried to avoid asking loaded questions that gave the participants cues for providing socially desirable answers. I also asked more probing questions to get to deeper levels of conversation. During the data analysis and writing of the research reports, I adopted the following procedure suggested by Kram (1985), in order to control selective perceptions and biased interpretations: First, I kept a personal diary covering my experiences, reactions and internal thoughts throughout the research process; second, my supervisors in Finland and Germany read and criticized my texts, which helped me to enhance self-awareness and illuminate blind spots and biases; third, the research results were presented in numerous research seminars and national and international conferences allowing for feedback and discussions that helped me to enhance my awareness of the potentially biased interpretations.

However, screening of the researcher's own social embedding and experiences is often an inevitable dimension of any research project. While we can control many

aspects of the research processes to be as neutral and objective as possible, there remain less conscious or unconscious factors outside of our awareness. As Goldstein (2003) argues, a researcher has a similar responsibility as a therapist to understand him/herself in human interaction. The danger is not the influence of the self in interaction but rather the fear of self-understanding because one may learn something unpleasant. This includes understanding one's own influence in the human interaction.

4.2 Research procedure

Thirty mainland Chinese tertiary-level degree students were interviewed in Finland in 2015 and twenty-eight in Germany in 2016. Two methods were used to recruit research participants: First, the international offices of HEIs across Finland and in Germany were approached with a request to send a research invitation to all mainland Chinese students enrolled in their universities. Students who volunteered to participate in the research contacted the researcher through email, instant message, or by phone. Second, snowball sampling was used. The research participants were encouraged to distribute an invitation letter among their friends to recruit more participants for the research by the Ethics Committees of the Tampere Region and Maastricht University.5

The recruitment strategies used appeared to have advantages and disadvantages. An advantage was that online sampling and snowball sampling could produce in-depth results relatively quickly; trust could be developed faster through referrals made by acquaintances or peers than by using other more formal methods of identification (Atkinson & Flint, 2001). On the other hand, a disadvantage was that the research participants were not randomly drawn but were dependent on voluntary participation and the subjective choices of the respondents first accessed (Griffiths, Gossop, Powis, & Strang, 1993), therefore, the sample might be biased and not allow the researcher to make claims of generalizability from the Chinese student sample group. However, since the goal of this research was to understand the migration challenges and integration experiences of Chinese students in Finland and Germany, gaining a deeper understanding of the students' meanings and arguments generated

[5] Maastricht University was the coordinating institution of the TRANSMIC project which funded this doctoral research.

from the interviews was more important than the generalizability of the research findings.

Further, the recruitment strategy might have overemphasized social networks and be limited to those students who checked their own emails, used online social network websites, and did have social networks, while missing such 'isolated individuals' who were not connected to any network that the researcher tapped into (van Meter, 1990). However, since it became evident that only very few Chinese students were without access to any network, I believe that I did my best to reach the target population. Finally, the recruitment strategy might cause self-selection bias such that the people who are more successful in integration or have difficulties in integrating were recruited for the research. However, the results of the data analysis show that the participants came from diverse socio-economic and academic backgrounds with varied challenges and experiences of integration. Thus, it can be assumed that the risks of voluntary respondents causing self-selection bias was avoided by snowball sampling.

The interviews, which lasted from one to three hours, were conducted in mandarin Chinese by the researcher. In both country cases, most of the interviews were conducted in the researcher's office, the students' homes, or in empty classrooms, where there were no external disturbance. The shared language and cultural background facilitated communication between the interviewer and the interviewees (Welch & Piekkari, 2006). The questions for the interviews were based on the themes presented in Appendix I. While a list of interview questions was used for all interviews, flexibility and spontaneity were preserved by using probing questions emerging from the Chinese students' accounts. All interviews were audiorecorded, transcribed (verbatim), and anonymized for the qualitative content analysis. The interview generated a total of 58 transcripts, each of them being approximately 20 to 60 pages.

4.3 Research participants

The group of respondents included tertiary students from a wide variety of backgrounds in terms of gender, age, major subject, previous work and study experience, duration of residence, and current location. Most of the interviewees came from urban middle class and upper middle-class family backgrounds in China. Among the interviewees from Finland, 18 were female and 12 were male. The interviewees were studying in Finland on bachelor's, master's or doctoral

programmes in various fields, such as computer science, business management, and so on. Two of the master's students were working full-time and doing their master's studies on a part-time basis. Among the interviewees in Germany, 16 were female and 12 male . All participants were in their twenties with an average age of 24 years for females and 26 for males. The interviewees came from various academic backgrounds: five were studying natural sciences, four social sciences, three mechanical engineering, three medicine, three computer science, three sports management, two arts and humanities, two German linguistics, and one English literature.

The two main types of Finnish and German universities were covered: universities and universities of applied sciences (UAS). Approximately half of the interviews in Finland were conducted in the Finnish city of Tampere, where two international universities and one UAS were situated at the time of the research. The rest of the interviews were conducted with students from other major Finnish cities: Helsinki, Espoo, Turku, Joensuu and Oulu. In Germany, most of the interviews were conducted in the towns of Bielefeld, Paderborn, and Düsseldorf, while a few took place in Berlin, Munich, and Leipzig.

The interviewees included students who were studying in Finland or Germany for just one semester and students who had been residing in the respective countries for a longer period, even more than five years. As the duration of study and integration phases of the interviewees were diverse, it made it possible for the researcher to explore which features of integration manifest in the different phases of students' migration trajectories. It became apparent that the students who had moved to Finland or Germany recently had fresh experiences of 'culture shock', while the 'veteran students' gave lively accounts of how they had managed to overcome integration problems in different stages and reflected on their personal development trajectories. This variation made it possible to compare the students' core experiences and enabled internal generalization based on interview analysis as well as the possible transferability of the theoretical developments to other cases (Maxwell & Chmiel, 2014).

4.4 Data analysis

The interview transcripts were encoded in Atlas.ti program using substantive coding, which includes both open and selective coding procedures (Kelle, 2010), and theoretical coding (Thornberg & Charmaz, 2014). The aim of the analysis was to

consolidate, reduce, and interpret the interview data to create categories describing the topic of the research.The data collection resulted in 58 transcripts that were analysed using thematic content analysis. After familiarization with the data, and constant comparison between different incidents from the interview data, thematic codes consisting of pre-existing themes were generated based on the theoretical framework and the preliminary analysis of the interview transcripts. Thematic criteria served to divide the text material into units that would fit the coding frame (Schreier, 2012).

Next the analysis progressed with line-by-line coding, structured according to the theoretical framework. The unit of analysis in the coding system was one paragraph, and paragraphs could be given multiple codes. In the third analytical step, every statement in the codes was further analysed and placed under an appropriate heading or thematic 'node', along with any others which were sufficiently similar (Hannan, 2007). This inductive process generated a number of sub-themes that are presented in the results section, supported by verbatim quotations from the research participants to establish a clear link with the raw data. The aim of the analyses in this research was not to provide a thematic analysis of the entire data set, but rather a more detailed and nuanced account of one particular theme or group of themes within the data related to the topic of the research (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

In presenting the findings in Articles I-IV, no personal data was revealed that would have made the interviewees recognizable. The anonymity of respondents was protected by using only the gender and the major subject to characterize the respondents. Citations from the interviews conducted in mandarin Chinese were translated into English by the researcher.

4.5 Research ethics

Ethical considerations were taken into account from the beginning of the research. The research complied with the ethical norms and rules shared by the social and educational scientific community on consent, confidentiality, and vulnerable populations. It followed the ethics guidelines of the Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity (TENK). According to TENK, ethical principles of research in the humanities and social and behavioral sciences emphasize caution in three main areas: respecting the autonomy of research subjects, avoiding harm, and protection of privacy and data.

During the sampling process the lists of Chinese students' contact information obtained from the universities' international student offices were kept strictly confidential. In the email invitations sent out to the participants it was stressed that participation in the research was voluntary and withdrawal from the research was possible at any time without loss of benefits to which the respondent was otherwise entitled.

Before the interviews, an information sheet (Appendix 2) was presented to the respondents. The information sheet included the researcher's contact information, a short description of the research topic and the method of collecting data, the estimated time required for participation, the purpose for which data was to be collected, how it would be archived for secondary use, and the voluntary nature of participation. The participants had an opportunity to ask questions about the research before proceeding to the interviews. Additional information was provided before the interviews upon requests from the participants. This could include, for example, the study's scientific or doctrinal orientation, how confidential data would be protected and where data would be archived after the study, and/or how and when the results of the study would be published. The interviewees were asked to sign a consent form (see Appendix 3) acknowledging that they have received both written and oral information on the research and had the opportunity to pose questions to the researcher. The consent form stated that their participation in the research was voluntary, and the information they had given in the interview would be kept in confidence.

I paid special attention to ensure that participating in the research would not cause any negative effects to the participants. Data confidentiality was guaranteed, and it was ensured that the findings would not affect the participants adversely in any respect. I ensured the respondents that their identities would be treated in strict confidence, and that in the published articles information on individual respondents would be presented in such a way as to make it impossible to identify them.

During the fieldwork, the research data were stored in password protected storage devices: as encrypted files in the work computer of the University of Tampere and in a locked place to which only the researcher and the supervisors had access.

A crucial aim was to ensure that the Chinese students interviewed could speak freely without getting into danger of ending up in a vulnerable position. In order to make sure that the students' participation in the research would not affect them adversely in any respect, it was decided that the interview data would not be reserved

for future research purposes but the transcripts would be destroyed five years after the defense of the dissertation.

4.6 Research validity

Concerning the validity of the research and the appropriateness of its methodological choices, there is a need to assess the clarity and appropriateness of the research question, including description and appropriateness for sampling, data collection and data analysis; levels of support and evidence for claims; coherence between data, interpretation and conclusions, and finally level of contribution of the paper (Dixon-Woods, Shaw, Agarwal, & Smith, 2004). Further, Kitto et al. (2008) proposed six criteria for assessing overall quality of qualitative research: Clarification and justification, procedural rigor, sample representativeness, interpretative rigor, reflexive and evaluative rigor, and transferability/generalizability. These ideas were used in ensuring the trustworthiness of this doctoral research.

The aim of the research was to create conceptually and empirically grounded analysis rooted in relevant data on the experiences and motivations of Chinese studying and living in Finland and Germany. Research validity was sought through several strategies. First, based on my constructivist epistemological approach, I paid attention to recognizing my own biases in the data collection processes and in analyzing the data, I kept a log of the research activities performed and recorded my reflections upon those processes. Second, I sought to enhance the validity of the resrach by involving a wide range of informants. As the section above shows, the interviewees were Chinese students from a diverse range of backgrounds. Their individual viewpoints and experiences were compared against others and, ultimately, offered a rich picture of attitudes, demands, and behaviors to illustrate the phenomenon under study (Shenton, 2004).

Third, frequent debriefing sessions were held between me and my supervisors in order to widen my vision as the principal investigator. My supervisors brought in alternative experiences, perceptions, and discussed alternative approaches that allowed me to pay attention to my ideas and interpretations and helped me to recognize my biases and preferences. Fourth, frequent peer scrutiny by colleagues, peers, and other academics was conducted throughout the research project. For instance, the TRANSMIC project that my research was embedded in held several peer presentation sessions and offered feedback from other researchers. All of the four sub-studies included in this dissertation were published after several rounds of

rigorous peer-review processes. The research results were presented in various international conferences to allow for feedback from other academics. These peer-review sessions enabled me to refine my methods, develop a more detailed explanation of the research design, analyze the research data, and strengthen my arguments in the light of the comments made.

In order to enhance the validity of the research conducted, the participants' recruitment strategy and background information and the data analysis procedure were reported in detail, thereby offering a clear picture enabling future researchers to repeat the work (Shenton, 2004). Articles I – IV also include numerous verbatim quotations from the interviews to establish clear links with the raw data. From these accounts of the participants' experiences, conclusions regarding other findings could be drawn. Such in-depth coverage of the research methods allows the reader to assess the extent to which proper research practices have been followed. It also allows the reader to develop a thorough understanding of the research procedure and the effectiveness of the methods.

5 OVERVIEW OF THE SUB-STUDIES AND RELATED ARTICLES

This chapter summarizes the main foci and findings of the sub-studies presented in Articles I-IV. Study I focused on drivers of Chinese student mobility to Finland and Germany, while Studies II, III, and IV placed special emphasis on Chinese students' integration into academic and societal contexts in Finland and Germany.

5.1 Study I

The aim of Study I was to describe the drivers of Chinese student migration in the Finnish context and analyse the role of the migration industry in Chinese student migration. The research question was:

What is the role of the migration industry in Chinese student migration to Finland?

The resulting Article I provides a brief review of past research, which often analyses student mobility through the lens of a push-pull model or social network theory and discusses the theoretical constraints of these theories. The article describes several attempts to resolve the impasse, including focusing either on the macro-level structural conditions, individual micro-level factors, or through a meso-level networks approach. It suggests that the migration industry approach may be more appropriate than a social network theory, or push-pull theories alone to articulate the various levels of analysis of international student migration. Then, the features related to the development of education migration industry in China, and its role in facilitating and channeling Chinese students' migration to Finland are discussed. The education migration industry facilitates student migration from the initial choice of universities and study destinations to the preparation and sending of university application material, and finally applying for visa and preparing for departure.

Study I also investigated the theoretical and practical implications of migration industry development in China and envisaged future development trends in Chinese student migration. Article I thus provides an insight into the shifting logic of

contemporary student migration and underlying societal transformations, which is increasingly effected and shaped by migration industry.

Article I concludes with four main findings: First, the research results indicate that the education migration industry not only facilitates but also increasingly channels student mobility. The increasing influence of the migration industry has resulted in a diversification of migration destinations, as exemplified by Chinese students' mobility to non-Anglophone countries like Finland and Germany. Moreover, the results of the study confirmed the role of the migration industry in facilitating increasing individualization of Chinese student migration. The education migration industry enables students to make calculated choices based on professional advice and calculations offered by agencies instead of relying on their own social networks to cluster at certain destinations where there already exists a co-ethnic community.

The findings indicate that although the migration industry may be complementary in relation to migrant networks, it increasingly plays a replacement role. The migration industry can have an incomparable advantage over migrant networks in three ways: first, it offers one-stop comprehensive solutions that guarantee success before the contract is concluded; second, the education migration industry relies on teams of specially trained staff to offer professional advice on studying abroad and has a professional network with overseas universities to help the students obtain offers of study places faster; third, it is widely accepted among the applicants to use such service that is increasingly becoming the norm.

Further, the findings show that the break in the exchange and reciprocity relationship leads to the individualization of Chinese student migration and growing independence of Chinese students. Nowadays successful migrants no longer have the obligation to help potential migrants in their home communities as reciprocity of favors. Chinese students wishing to study abroad only need to pay for a migration service, the education migration industry has even established collaboration with banks that offer financial solutions to help students through means such as study loans. Thus, students wishing to study abroad no longer need to rely on loans from their families or friends and repay the favors they received through reciprocity that formerly was incumbent upon them.

Finally, the results show that the development of a migration industry has also become a double-edged sword: on the one hand those with sufficient financial capital can enjoy easier access and faster processes; on the other hand, those with limited financial capital are at a disadvantage in the competition for scarce resources, such as prestigious overseas higher education. This explains why student migration from

China has become more accessible, but also more financially burdensome. Thus financial capital begins to play a more and more important role in Chinese student migration.

5.2 Study II

Study II investigated mainland Chinese students' integration experiences in Finland. A further goal of the study was to provide information about whether the maintenance of transnational ties and co-national networks can facilitate or hinder Chinese student integration abroad. Answers were sought to the following questions: (1) What challenges do mainland Chinese students encounter in their integration into Finnish academic and societal contexts? (2) How do mainland Chinese students integrate academically, socially, culturally and economically? The resulting Article II identifies four conceptual domains of integration – academic, social, economic and cultural – as central to the students' integration processes. The article analyses the students' integration challenges and coping strategies in the four domains of integration and estimates the role of English and Finnish languages in mediating their integration into the host academic and societal environments.

The main findings of Study II can be summarized as follows: First, the study indicated the important mediating role of both English and the host language in Chinese students' integration processes. As a consequence, Article II proposes that proficiency in both English and the host culture's local language is crucial for Chinese student integration in Finland. While competence in English is an important facilitating factor for integration in academic environments, lack of host language proficiency may inhibit students from socializing with the host community and thus from gaining full access to opportunities and facilities both within and outside the university. In practice, for students wishing to stay in the host country after graduation, knowledge of the local language is crucial for their integration.

The study showed that the maintenance of native ethnic identity, co-national networks, and transnational ties with the home country in no way limits the students' integration into academic and societal host contexts. Contrary to Kim's (2000) argument that co-national contacts only offer short-term support and that contacts and friendships with host-nationals are more important for long-term adaptation, the results of this study show the opposite. The findings of Study II imply that the co-national networks of Chinese students provide them with social, psychological and academic support that can be essential for their integration into the host society.

For instance, many students in Finland found internships or employment opportunities in positions linked to China, where their language skills, cultural knowledge, and professional and institutional connections with China were highly valued.

Contrary to earlier research suggesting that international students experience a lack of meaningful host-national contacts (Schartner, 2015; Young, Sercombe, Sachdev, Naeb, & Schartner, 2013), many of the Chinese students interviewed for this study had managed to establish meaningful host contacts despite cultural differences and language issues. Many of the Chinese students were willing to put in the effort to make foreign friends in order to gain increased insight into different cultures and to learn foreign languages. Nonetheless, this may be partially attributed to the fact that Chinese student communities are smaller in Finland than in Anglophone countries.

Moreover, Study II showed that the difficulties of Chinese students' to integrate in Finnish academic settings are caused by various factors. Although most of the Chinese students had passed an English language test before arriving in Finland, some of them still struggled with English in their academic tasks. The pedagogical and cultural differences between the Chinese and Finnish higher education systems were problematic for many students, especially with regard to the lack of development in critical thinking within the Chinese system. Some of the interviewees said that they were afraid to question their teachers' opinions and chose not to participate in the group discussions in class. However, after an initial settling in period, most of the Chinese students interviewed had indeed managed to adapt to Western teaching and learning styles and had managed to 'find their own voice' in their academic work and in class.

Finally, It is important to realize that mutual adaptation of both newcomers and the host society is needed and that all aspects of integration (academic-social-cultural-economic) originate from the same process of mutual adaptation processes. The four domains of integration are thus endogenous, interrelated, and influence each other. For instance, language skills serve as the foundation that 'opens doors' to other aspects of integration, and the students' cultural knowledge of the host society and its history contributes to their better social and economic integrations. The findings also imply that although the Chinese students may be largely focused on their academic integration due to demanding course work, it is important not to neglect social integration. Social integration will not only alleviate the students' feelings of loneliness, stress and homesickness, but may also ultimately contribute to their academic integration.

5.3 Study III

The aim of Study III was to present an analysis of the academic integration experiences of mainland Chinese tertiary-level students in Germany. The study also investigated the relationship between academic and social integration and learning and knowledge acquisition within the academic contexts. The research questions were: (1) What challenges do mainland Chinese students encounter while studying and living in Germany? (2) What strategies do Chinese students use to overcome challenges in their academic integration? (3) Is there a connection between academic and social integration among Chinese students studying in Germany?

The findings of Study III showed that one of the biggest challenges for the Chinese students' successful academic integration is their lack of German language proficiency. Although every student interviewed had passed a German language test before entering a German HEI, the difficulty of using a foreign language in academic contexts combined with a knowledge gap, pedagogical differences, and cultural differences still made academic integration extremely challenging for them. Many interviewees expressed a frustration at their difficulties in following teaching due to the lack of linguistic proficiency and adequate general knowledge. Some students who never failed any class in China reported having failed numerous classes after coming to Germany. However, it was noted that these challenges also served as a stimulus to come up with new strategies that were more appropriate to the students' own learning habits and personal dispositions.

The study revealed that social integration was found to facilitate Chinese students' better academic integration by enhancing their linguistic proficiency and improving their cultural awareness. However, it became evident that social integration is not an absolute prerequisite for academic integration. It was found that the Chinese students often build strong alliances with their Chinese peers to help each other to achieve their academic goals. Thus the students without strong social ties with German students could still manage to achieve their academic goals. One of the key strategies appeared to be learning in teams with other students, regardless of nationality, in order to enhance learning efficiency through mutual teaching and learning.

In addition, Study III showed that Western pedagogy, which encourages students to learn through independent study and critical thinking seems to be a key barrier to Chinese students. The study also revealed an underlying cultural difference between east and west. Some of the interviewees emphasized that the teachers needed to help the students to understand the course content properly before they can be more

critical towards an author or other students' opinions. Some also doubt the efficiency of applying critical thinking and debate in class in a situation where the students have not yet reached advanced comprehension of the learning material and are only reflecting from their own individual experiences. Moreover, some interviewees claimed that the German debate culture is incompatible with Chinese culture, which values being humane and avoiding unnecessary conflict.

Nevertheless, Article III concludes that, contrary to the conventional stereotype of Chinese who only rely on 'rote learning' and passively listening to teachers in class, Chinese students can be resourceful and innovative in pursuing their academic goals. The students interviewed, in spite of the challenges that they faced, were still active in class and tried to learn through various sources and by utilizing different learning platforms. Rote learning was also utilized as a pathway to improve deep learning. Some interviewees argued that the Chinese students were in fact well-equipped to tackle academic integration challenges, since they were used to high pressure exams. Most of them have acquired resilience and tenacity to meet the challenges of academic integration since they have lived through one of the most competitive education systems in the world.

5.4 Study IV

Study IV examined the integration of Chinese students who wished to stay in Finland or Germany after graduation. The study addressed the retention aspect of Chinese students since both Finland and Germany aim not only to attract but also to retain international tertiary students as a future supply of highly-skilled labor. The resulting Article IV build theoretical frameworks of integration aspiration and integration infrastructure, which are crucial for analyzing Chinese students' intentions to integrate not only into the academic contexts but also the societal environments. The study introduced a phenomenon observed among Chinese students, called 'weak integration trap'. The article explains what the weak integration trap is, what causes it and discusses the implications of becoming stuck in it. Answers were sought to the following questions: (1) What is a weak integration trap? (2) What causes the weak integration trap (from the perspectives of integration aspiration and integration infrastructure)? (3) What are the implications of the weak integration trap?

The findings of Study IV show that the weak integration trap occurs when migrants (in this case Chinese students) have acquired the capability to manage their day-to-day lives in the host society. They may have established some networks with

host-nationals as well as with internationals and co-nationals, hold a job (such as working as a researcher during their doctoral studies), or may even be married to a host-national. However, they have not yet gained the same educational and work opportunities as native-born citizens. In addition, they have not gained a sense of dignity and belonging or of acceptance as full members of the host society. For many Chinese students, in this research, who arrive in the host society after adolescence, becoming stuck in the weak integration trap was largely due to their limited proficiency in the host language. Becoming fluent in a foreign language requires tremendous effort and the language acquisition facility naturally declines after the human brain reaches adulthood (Long, 1990).

The study revealed several implications of the weak integration trap. First, it can lead to a feeling of alienation in the host academic and societal environments. Second, it can lead to difficulties in completing studies, due to insufficient language proficiency, due to social isolation causing psychological issues, and so on. Finally, it can lead to failure to stay in the host society after graduation. Thus, being stuck in the weak integration trap can generally be seen to have a negative impact on both Chinese students and host societies. The students who wish to complete their studies and stay in the host society may eventually fail to do so. This way the host society loses potential highly-skilled workforce, which it desires to retain.

The notions of 'integration aspiration' and 'integration infrastructure' were utilized in this study to explain the causes of 'weak integration trap'.The findings show that weak integration trap is often a result of a lack of integration aspiration among Chinese students. However, Chinese students' aspiration for integration is also shaped by different dimensions of integration infrastructure. Study IV showed that insufficient, inconsistent and unevenly distributed integration infrastructure can result in the Chinese students' lack of aspiration for integration, leading to becoming trapped in a 'weak integration' stage.

Article IV argues that to better understand the processes and dynamics of integration and the mechanisms that have resulted in some students getting stuck in the 'weak integration trap', integration aspiration and integration infrastructure offer useful methodological tools to understand the ongoing phenomena. The findings indicate that Chinese students have differentiated integration aspirations conditioned and shaped by integration infrastructure. Since the students have different aspirations towards integration, those choosing to remain are distinguished by whether they aspire towards full integration or prefer to stay in the stage of weak integration. In practice, many Chinese students' aspirations to remain long-term or permanently in the host society may be inhibited by structural barriers. Their

aspirations may be facilitated but also hindered by a range of integration infrastructures, including educational institutions, bureaucrats, policies and regulations, and technologies. For instance, many countries have introduced policies to allow international graduates to stay for a year (Finland) or 18 months (Germany) while looking for a work. However, in the meantime, according to the EU and local laws, local employers should prioritize hiring host-nationals and EU citizens over non-EU/EEA citizens, and often require local employers to provide justification and additional documents for hiring a non-EU/EEA citizen over a local or EU/EEA citizen (Kahanec & Zimmermann, 2011). This policy contradicts the 'train and retain' policy since it discourages employers from hiring the non-EU/EEA graduates.

6 SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

This chapter will conclude the summary of the main findings of the doctoral research as a whole. The first section analyses the drivers of Chinese student migration in the cases of Finland and Germany, and the role of the migration industry in these processes. The second section analyse the Chinese students' integration experiences in academic and societal contexts and the interconnections between the students' integration aspirations and integration infrastructure in the Finnish and German cases.

6.1 Drivers of Chinese student migration to Finland and Germany: The role of the migration industry

This section first discusses structural factors from sending and receiving countries that contribute to Chinese students' migration in Finland and Germany. Then it analyzes the drivers of Chinese students' mobility through the theoretical framework of the migration industry and identifies the reasons why Chinese students are increasingly relying on the migration industry instead of other sources of assistance (such as their social network).

From a receiving country perspective, the findings show that one of the structural factors that drives Chinese student migration to both Finland and Germany is the non-existent or low tuition fees (or semester fees) for higher education in those countries. Many of the Chinese students interviewed emphasized the importance of free or low tuition fees when considering possible destinations at which to study. At least at the time of the interviews, moving to study in Finland or Germany was an economicaly rationale option for many. Before 2017, Finnish higher education was free of charge even for non-EU/EEA citizens, with abundant programs at all levels of studies offered through the medium of English. The situation is similar in many of the states in Germany. While more study programs are taught in German, many German universities only charge semester fees of a few hundred euros per semester, which is still quite affordable for middle-class Chinese students. Thus it is not surprising that most of the Chinese students moving to study in Finland or Germany

are from middle-class families with enough savings to support their children's studies abroad but unable to easily afford to go to more expensive destinations such as the U.S.A. or the U.K.

Both Finland and Germany offer some major subjects that are considered of high quality and competitive worldwide and continuously attract international students to come to study. For instance, many international students move to study subjects related to mechanical engineering or automobile related subjects in Germany. In addition, a lot of students choose to study computer science or game studies in Finland because Finland has established its competitiveness in those fields.

The findings of this dissertation indicate that student mobility to both Finland and Germany is influenced by transnational institutional factors, such as transnational collaborative partnerships between Chinese and Finnish or German universities, transnational education agencies, and partnerships between overseas universities and the Chinese education migration industry. Many of the students interviewed explained that their mobility to Finland or Germany was facilitated by the existing bilateral collaboration between Chinese and Finnish or German universities. Exchange study experiences in the destination country often strengthened the students' wish to pursue further degree programs in the host country. In addition, degree programs have been established between Chinese and Finnish or German universities that allow students to first finish part of their degree studies in China, and then continue to complete their studies in Finland or Germany. Further, transnational education agencies such as CIMO in Finland and the DAAD in Germany have established branches in China and actively promote scholarships and various study opportunities to encourage more talented Chinese students to study in these two countries. There are also cases in which the Finnish universities or universities of applied sciences have partnerships with the Chinese education migration industry to attract more students to study in Finland. This form of collaboration is already more evident in the U.K. and Australia, while is still burgeoning in Finland and Germany.

From the sending country perspective, the fierce competition for higher education opportunities in China has compeled many students to choose to go abroad for higher education. Since the 1980s the Chinese government has lifted the restrictions on studying abroad, and ever since then the policy has been encouraging studies abroad while also aiming to attract return migration of overseas graduates. A diploma from a second or third tier university from China is certainly not as valued as a diploma from abroad (Xiang & Shen, 2009). Thus many of the interviewees taking bachelor's studies in Finnish UASs revealed that they either did not do well

in the university entrance exam in China, or they wanted to avoid the fierce competition for university in China.

The findings emphasize the importance of the migration industry in facilitating and channeling Chinese student migration. The migration industry comprises constituents of a dynamic set of actors in the process of causing, facilitating and sustaining student mobility across borders. Whereas past research has often examined different types of actors and different roles played by the migration industry in humanitarian migration or labor migration, this research shifted the angle to focus on education migration industry that serves a more priviledged group of migrants, i.e. international students, and mobilize their social capital pursuing economic interest through assisting students' pursuit of higher education abroad. Although the intermediaries of international student migration have existed for a very long time, the neoliberalization trend of global tertiary education (Beech, 2018) and rising middle class families' need for high quality overseas education indeveloping countries like China, have enabled the exponential growth of a prosperous education migration industry.

This research mainly examined the implications of the migration industry from the perspectives of Chinese students themselves. The findings show that the development of the migration industry can render four probable consequences. First, the education migration industry has not only facilitated but also channeled student migration. Economic interest driven by continuing demand from the market has led to the appearance of thousands of big or small study abroad agencies in China, specialized in different study destinations. This has resulted in a diversification of migration destinations, as exemplified by Chinese students' mobility to non-Anglophone countries like Finland and Germany. Second, although the education migration industry may be complementary in relation to the students' social networks, it is increasingly replacing them. Third, the break in the exchange and reciprocity relationship leads to the individualization of migration. The findings show that, in addition to a wider choice of migration destinations, successful migrants no longer have the obligation to help potential migrants in their home communities as a reciprocity of services rendered. Fourth, the development of the education migration industry enhances inequality, since students with sufficient financial capital can enjoy easier access and faster processes to overseas higher education. They can also hire professionals to polish their application packages to make them more competitive. On the other hand, those with limited financial capital have fewer advantages in the competition for scarce resources, such as prestigious overseas higher education.

6.2 Integration of Chinese students in Finland and Germany

This section presents and compares the main findings related to the integration processes, challenges, and trajectories of Chinese students in Finland and Germany. The students' integration experiences are analyzed in academic and societal contexts. Academic contexts refers to the higher education environments in which the international students' academic and social lives are embedded. The experiences of academic integration are analyzed utilizing the surface and deep learning theory by Marton and Säljö (1976) and transformative learning theory developed by Jack Mezirow (1991, 1994, 1997, 2000, 2003). Societal contexts mainly include the social, cultural and economic environments in which the students live within the host societies.

6.2.1 Integration of Chinese students in academic contexts

Although the academic environments in Finland and Germany are partly different, Chinese students experienced many similar challenges while integrating into the academic contexts, such as the difficulties of studying in a foreign language, whether English or German. The transition from being a passive receiver of knowledge to becoming an active producer of knowledge is often one of the hardest phases that the Chinese students need to go through. The research findings show that there are four challenges that Chinese students need to overcome in order to integrate better academically:

The first challenge concerns language learning. In the Finnish case, almost all the students interviewed had come to study in Finland on programs taught through the medium of English. Although they had passed an English language test, for many interviewees their English skills were still inadequate for meeting the demands of their universities. In addition, some of the interviewees also reported that they needed time to adjust to their teachers' accents, since these differed from the American or British accents to which they were previously accustomed.

In the German case, most Chinese students were studying on programs offered in German, while just a few studied on English programs. Students on programs offered in German found it really hard to keep up with the teaching since many of them had only studied German for one to two years before joining native speakers in the classroom. They often had many difficulties in understanding the content of teaching, fulfilling academic requirements, engaging in class and conversing with

native speakers, which led to problems with their studies and/or finding internships or job opportunities in the host society. Many students confessed that they had failed several courses at the beginning of their studies, although they had hardly ever failed any classes when they were in China.

Second, the findings indicate that the teaching style in China centeres more on lecturing, while classroom discussion and student participation are only occasionally used. Instead, western education often features classroom discussion, participation, and debate. As Kennedy (2002) states, Chinese culture has an influence on Chinese students' learning styles: Chinese students are low in individualism and high in collectivism, and exhibit a strong sense of belonging to a social group and a preference to work together to solve problems (Nield, 2009; Sayers & Franklin, 2008). The Chinese students may appear quieter in class because of their shyness, not being confident about their language proficiency, or reluctant to challenge their lecturers or peers. The findings revealed that for some Chinese students it was difficult to follow the content of teaching and that they nevertheless had very little to contribute. These findings are in line with earlier research suggesting that students from a Confucian cultural background have more difficulties in adjusting to the western teaching style than do their western peers. They may adopt a less active learning strategy, and be hesitant about voicing their own opinions in the classroom, while western students are more used to participating actively in class (Auyeung & Sands, 1996; Duanmu, Li, & Chen, 2009; Strohschneider & Guss, 1999; Vita, 2001; Yuen & Lee, 1994). The findings also support earlier research that shows that Chinese students expect a teacher to be a 'knowledge model' who gives students clear guidance for them to follow while, for instance, British teachers act more as facilitators of students' learning by encouraging the learners' own creativity and independence (Cortazzi, Jin, McNamara, & Harris, 1997).

Third, the findings indicate that differences in intellectual background can make it difficult for some Chinese students to understand the content of teaching. This was especially evident among the master's students studying in Finland or Germany. The difference in the intellectual background might concern knowledge of the subject or cultural knowledge. The former knowledge gap was often caused by different learning focus and learning material between China and Finland or Germany, so that some of the students found they still had a big knowledge gap to fill by themselves through self-study in order to fully understand the new teaching content. On the other hand, also a cultural knowledge gap could influence the students' understanding of the content of teaching. This was the case especially among students of social sciences or humanities. Since some of the content in those

subjects may be culture-related, Chinese students may find it hard to keep up with native students if the teacher assumes that they have the same cultural understanding. This could be seen in the response of a participant in Study II:

> Even though my major subject in Finland is international business law, most of the study material and law cases are from EU law. For a Chinese student who has little knowledge of EU law, it is very difficult to catch up with my classmates because they have a much better knowledge base than I have. (Female, International business law)

Fourth, the requirements of western higher education, where Socratic/Aristotelian rhetoric and argumentation are the norm, may be unfamiliar to some East Asian students who may be more used to a transmission style of teaching and learning (Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 2008; Scollon & Scollon, 2001). The individualistic, low uncertainty avoidance western-style critical argumentation common in western universities involves rigorous debate, an aggressive search for truth and a discerning of error, bias and contradiction (Ennis, 1996; Paul, 1984). Thayer-Bacon (1993) describes this approach as 'the battlefield mentality' which often results in polarized critiques, with theories and ideas rejected or accepted on the basis of supporting evidence and logical argument. It is based on the premise that evidence should be held in doubt and subjected to scrutiny until it can be proved legitimate and truthful. The findings of this doctoral research indicate that independent and critical thinking is essential for the Chinese students' transformative learning, and that it is also one of the most difficult stages of transformation for them. Among many students, a lack of systematic training in critical thinking and argumentation, or a lack of confidence in their argumentation, could result in their becoming silent in classrooms. However, the findings also indicate that some students might reject the total adoption of 'western style' but instead chose a 'middle way' so that they express their views while still being sensitive to others' feelings and saving face. This is consistent with the finding that experienced Chinese students can be 'empathetic insiders' (Relph, 1976), that they understand and value new practices, but still keep their own cultural practices without becoming fully assimilated.

Although classroom debate is a highly valued norm of teaching and learning in western higher education, the findings also imply that such a teaching method might not be the best one to enhance student learning. The findings suggest that the Chinese students found much to criticize in classroom debate and discussion: First, it is possible that classroom discussion can fall into surface critical thinking so that the students often refer to their own experiences instead of engaging in in-depth critical thinking. Second, the classroom discussion may not achieve optimal results if the students have not been able to reach a profound understanding of the subject

matter. Thus it is necessary for the teachers to first help the students to a deeper-level understanding of the matter before they begin their discussion. Finally, the format of classroom discussion may not be the best way for everyone to learn, since those students who are more shy and introverted are less willing to contribute to the class but prefer to listen and learn from the teacher. These findings align with those of earlier research, which asks whether the western teaching approach encouraging individualism and distinctiveness might be counterproductive in a multicultural classroom (Darwish & Huber, 2003) in that it may emphasize how 'alien' westerners are compared to East Asian collectivist groups (Triandis & Gelfand, 1998). Furthermore, the findings emphasized the importance of intercultural communication and teaching competence among teachers, since one of the tasks of a lecturer should be to encourage understanding, respect, and tolerance between cultural groups and alternative viewpoints through education (Noorderhaven & Halman, 2003). This highlights the need for lecturers to gain intercultural communication competence so that they can provide a better environment for students from different cultural backgrounds, where intercultural dialogue, reflectivity, and courage to think can be nurtured (Jokikokko, 2005).

On the basis of the research findings, it can be summarized that, in order to successfully integrate into Finnish and German academic contexts, the Chinese students need to go through three stages of academic integration during their studies.

At the first stage, the students need to develop foreign language skills to achieve surface learning and understand the content of teaching. A surface approach to learning has been defined by researchers as an intention to reproduce content, with learning processes characterized by rote learning and memorization (Entwistle, McCune, & Hounsell, 2003; Lonka & Lindblom-Ylänne, 1996; Loyens, Gijbels, Coertjens, & Côté, 2013). Surface level learning tends to be associated with those learners who concentrate on memorizing what an author writes or a lecturer says and low level cognitive activities tend to be involved (Marton & Säljö, 1976). These kinds of students are also known as 'strategic' learners. In fact, strategic learning can be very useful in certain circumstances. For instance, it may mean that the learner selects and prioritizes what he or she needs to learn.

At the second stage, after the students have developed their language skills to reach a basic understanding of the content of teaching, they still need to strive for higher levels of language proficiency to gain a more profound understanding of the content of teaching, and to be able to better communicate with their fellow students and teachers. This stage is often referred to as deep learning. Deep learning is often characterized by students' intention to understand content through the process of

relating and structuring ideas, seeking for underlying principles, weighing relevant evidence, and critically evaluating knowledge (Entwistle et al., 2003; Lonka & Lindblom-Ylänne, 1996; Loyens et al., 2013). Deep level learning is typically associated with those learners who attempt to link ideas together to understand the underpinning theory and concepts, and to make meaning out of the material under consideration (Fry, Ketteridge, & Marshall, 2003). It is also associated with those learners who are able to understand authors' and lecturers' words well enough to give them a meaning using their own words (Marton & Säljö, 1984).

At the third stage, when the students have reached the stage of deep learning, they need (at least ideally) to go through the stage of transformative learning to develop critical thinking and innovative thinking capabilities. Transformative learning is defined as learning involving a fundamental change in frames of reference (which include relatively fixed assumptions and expectations) that essentially transforms otherwise unexamined ideas, knowledge and practices to make them more critically reflective (Dirkx, Mezirow, & Cranton, 2006; Mezirow, 1978, 1991, 2000). These frames of reference may involve such things as ideologies, attitudes, moral-ethical beliefs, cultural understandings, aesthetic values and so forth (Mezirow, 2000). During this stage it is essential to build the capacity to develop autonomous and independent thinking; to critically reflect on the assumptions upon which interpretations are based, and existing unquestioned frames of reference; and to create new knowledge on the basis of existing knowledge.

6.2.2 Integration of Chinese students in the societal contexts

This section presents the main findings on Chinese students' integration into societal contexts.

6.2.2.1 Integration Infrastructure

First, the societal context for integration will be discussed using the notion of 'integration infrastructure' as an analytical means.

Integration infrastructure can be understood as a part of a larger societal infrastructure that utilizes the reproduction of knowledge, resources, facilities, laws and regulations in the society in question, which in turn conditions migrants' integration. Integration infrastructure can also be seen to shape migrants' aspirations for integration and their future prospects of achieving it. Subsequently, by exploring

how integration infrastructure conditions integration aspirations and processes, it is possible to gain a better understanding of integration itself. Essentially, this necessitates a re-orientation of the questioning about how the migrant influx produces integration infrastructure, to thinking about how integration infrastructure produces integration. Xiang and Lindquist (2014) introduced the concept of migration infrastructure mainly to explain how migration is mediated by a number of social infrastructures. However, they have not considered the migrants' lives after they arrive at the destination, and the mediating role of various social infrastructures during the migrants' integration processes. Inspired by Xiang and Lindquist (2014), this research divides integration infrastructure into six dimensions: educational (language and skills training), governmental (state labor or social welfare institutions), regulatory infrastructure (immigration laws and policies for residence permits and citizenship, home country diaspora policies), social (migrant networks), commercial (intermediaries and brokerage, companies) and technological (communication and technological tools).

Educational integration infrastructure

Educational infrastructure here mainly refers to the universities, the universities of applied sciences, and other public educational institutions that provide the training of language or skills to help students to integrate. the study conducted explored two types of educational infrastructures involved in the Chinese students' integration processes. Firstly, formal educational institutions offer tertiary education or skills training to help international students to better integrate. The courses offered at the universities not only help the students to acquire skills, but also improves their ability of using languages (either English or the language of the host country) in academic or everyday settings, and to prepare them for their future work careers. In addition, educational infrastructure serves as a platform for the students to socialize with host-nationals and other international students, and to enhance their cross-cultural communication skills. To facilitate better integration of international students, most higher education institutions have tutoring programs that help new incoming students to settle in. These programs facilitate international students' integration through organizing various social events and activities for them. Some of the German universities organize several 'Stammtisch' evenings each term to help international students to deal with any difficulties they may have with academic and social integration. Finnish universities also offer intercultural communication courses, Finnish language courses, and events that help the students to integrate socially and culturally.

Second, not only the HEIs of the host countries offer students help with their integration. This research also found that some of the bilateral agreement universities that organized exchange programs between China and Germany offered intensive language training and courses on German culture within their home universities in China before the students traveled abroad. In addition, if the students encountered difficulties in their studies after arriving in Germany, the Chinese university could organize tutoring classes taught by senior international students to help the newcomers to deal with their academic integration.

Social integration infrastructure

Social integration has long been recognized as an important aspect of the migrants' integration processes. Thus, integration infrastructure necessitates an understanding of how migrant networks contribute to integration aspirations and integration processes. Migrants' incorporation into society is ultimately their incorporation into different networks of people. Migrants' diverse networks within their host society are not only an important part of their social integration but also an infrastructural means towards integration in general.

The research conducted found that various migrant networks may function differently but interact with each other in a way that shapes the integration aspiration and integration processes. First, the networks with co-nationals, especially with veteran students or people living long-term in the host society, can facilitate social integration, especially during the initial settling in period. In addition, co-ethnic student organizations, such as the CSSA (Chinese Students & Scholars' Association) that has branches in most major university cities in Finland and Germany, often serves as a hub for students to build their co-ethnic networks and to provide support and guidance for new incoming students. The interviews showed that the CSSA often mobilizes senior students to offer help to newcomer students with their academic and social lives through various lectures and socio-cultural events. These senior students also facilitate networking among Chinese students and local residents through social programs. However, engaging solely with co-ethnic student groups may impede the social integration processes and language skills development of the newcomer Chinese students. In contrast, engaging with international groups and host-ethnic groups will enhance the students' host language skills and their knowledge of the host society and of other cultures. The co-ethnic and transnational networks may in general provide the students with essential help and psychological support, but the international and host-national networks offer new students

opportunities to learn new languages and to learn about the host culture and about other international cultures.

Governmental integration infrastructure

Governmental integration infrastructure includes the organizations that promote international academic mobility and exchange, such as CIMO (Finnish National Agency for Education) in the Finnish context, the DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service) in the German context, and the CSC (China Scholarship Council) in the Chinese context. These organizations not only promote the mobility of international students but also provide integration opportunities for funded students (and scholars). For instance, the DAAD offers pre-departure training courses for its scholarship recipients to provide them with a better understanding of German culture, language and society. It also makes active use of social media platforms in China to introduce German culture, and to offer advice for better integration. CIMO in Finland also publishes an annual report on the current state of internationalization in Finnish education and helps policy-makers to draft policies to help international students to better integrate into the Finnish society.

Moreover, the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture drafts policies to attract and retain international students, which most obviously affects the students' integration aspirations and processes, too. Further, various economic integration activities, such as mentorship and job shadowing programs, are organized in Finland by the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment. Also, other governmental institutions organize various 'mentoring' projects for international students. This affords students access to the networks of senior jobholders which they would otherwise be unlikely to gain.

Regulatory integration infrastructure

Regulatory infrastructure, closely related to Feldman's (2011, p. 6) definition of 'migration apparatus' − the disparate institutions, policies and discourses that turn into a 'state policy object' − generally impacts on the students' aspirations for integration. While some of the regulatory integration infrastructure is aimed at providing extrinsic motivation to facilitate migrant integration, others may serve to hinder migrant aspirations for integration due to increasingly strict control over migration. Specifically, three aspects of the regulatory infrastructure observed from this study can be seen to have a direct impact on the integration aspirations of Chinese students and their integration processes.

Residence permit policy is one such aspect. Most evidently, a question that influences students' aspirations for integration is whether or not the host country allows the students to extend their visas for job-seeking purposes after graduation. Both Finland and Germany have policies in place that allow students to extend their residence permits after successful completion of their degrees. In addition, the EU has implemented the blue card scheme, which aims to attract and retain highly-skilled migrant workers. Nonetheless, the income threshold for applying for the blue card seems to be too high for international graduates: this scheme had not been used by any of the research interviewees to help with residence permit extension.

Another topical aspect is that of the family reunification policy. With regard to long-term settlement, migrant aspiration is impacted by whether migrants are allowed to bring their family members to settle in the host society. Since most of the Chinese students interviewed in this study were from the one-child generation and came from urban middle-class families, many of them expressed concern over the responsibility of taking care of their parents if they decide to reside permanently abroad. The current regulations in Finland, for instance, only allow the migrant's parents to visit twice a year, for a maximum of three months at a time. Immigration of migrants' family members is restricted mainly to spouses and children.

Finally, permanent residence permit and the citizenship scheme also matter. Naturally, the country that counts the migrants' study years as residence time when they apply for permanent residence permits or naturalized citizenship will provide students with the greatest incentive to stay and integrate further. According to the Finnish Immigration Service (Migri.fi, 2018b), obtaining Finnish citizenship requires, among other things (such as language requirements), that the applicant has resided in Finland for the last five years without interruption on a continuous residence permit (A permit), while a permanent residence permit requires the applicant has resided in Finland continuously for four years on an A permit. In practice, international students are generally granted temporary residence permits (B permit) with only half of their study time counted when they apply for Finnish citizenship. Those applying for citizenship also need to pass a language test in Finnish. In the case of Germany, obtaining German citizenship requires applicants to have eight years of legal residence in the country, besides meeting other relevant requirements (Staatsangehörigkeitsgesetz (StAG), 2016). However, for students who graduated in Germany prior to their subsequent employment in Germany, after only two years of skilled work, international graduates are fast-tracked to permanent residence status – much shorter than the five-year requirement set forth by the EU directives. Even

self-employed graduates can benefit from Germany's fast-track permanent employment rules (Morris-Lange & Brands, 2015).

Technological infrastructure

Information and communications technology (ICT) has not only revolutionized communication between migrants, but has also come to facilitate the integration of migrants, enhancing their communication and community formation in the host society. The findings of this doctoral research highlight the influence of technological infrastructure on the integration of Chinese students in three ways.

First, and most notably, are the social media platforms that assist with communication and community formation among Chinese students and with the host-nationals and multinationals. The online social communities among the Chinese students are usually formed through wechat (a Chinese instant messaging application) and weibo (a Chinese website that is similar to Twitter). In the wechat community, the members routinely publish information on local events, news, requests, questions, and advertisements. However, not only unofficial communities and individuals utilize wechat to distribute information, educational infrastructures such as the DAAD, also have an official account through which they routinely distribute information on academic programs and scholarships in Germany, study advice, introductions to German cities and student testimonials. In addition, social media platforms such as Facebook and Whatsapp allow the Chinese students to engage in various communities among internationals and host-nationals, and to keep updated on the events happening nearby.

Secondly, Chinese students actively use online BBS (bulletin board system) and knowledge distribution websites (such as Zhihu, Quora, etc.) to help them with their everyday problems. The Chinese interviewed mentioned that when they encounter difficult academic tasks, they often turn to the relevant online communities for answers.

There are also other kinds of technological solutions that are specifically designed to enhance migrant integration through language courses and culturally relevant information. In Germany, for instance, the mobile app 'Ankommen' had been developed to help asylum seekers to integrate in Germany by providing information on German language courses, information on German ways of living, and social customs, as well as tips from other non-Germans in the country likely to be helpful to student migrants. In addition, various websites are available in both Finland and Germany to assist with language learning processes and to offer tandem

opportunities where locals and foreigners pair up to teach each other their native languages.

Commercial infrastructure

The commercial integration infrastructure, which is closely related to the notion of 'migration industry' has been explored in the literature regarding its role in facilitating emigration (Hernández-León, 2008, p. 154). However, commercial infrastructure has also been increasingly expanding its operations to the country of destination with a view to helping migrants with their integration into the host societies.

One key component of commercial infrastructure that has facilitated student migration concerns the study abroad agencies. These agencies have become increasingly involved in helping students to obtain their permanent residence permits or become naturalized citizens through investment migration or other forms of employment arrangements. This is especially evident in countries like Australia, which has opened access to fast-track migration through investment migration, which favors rich migrants.

In the German case, a commercial infrastructure that affects the students' integration includes language schools and *Studienkollegs* (Studienkolleg für ausländische Studierende). The language schools usually offer intensive German language courses for incoming students to help them with passing the compulsory language exam for university application. *Studienkollegs* are privately run or affiliated with the German universities or universities of applied sciences that offer specialized courses as preparation for studying at HEIs. The interviews revealed that the language schools and *Studienkollegs* are often the first point where Chinese students get a chance to improve their German language skills, become acquainted with German society and culture, and build their networks abroad.

6.2.2.2 Weak integration trap

The findings revealed an interesting phenomenon among some of the Chinese students interviewed: they had managed to adapt to day-to-day life in the host society and managed to fulfill the basic study requirements of the university, but once they had adapted to these daily and study lives, they ceased to invest further effort in improving their host language proficiency or trying to interact with host nationals. Although the interviewees acknowledged that it was important to learn and improve their local language proficiency, they had been frustrated at the difficulty of the

process. In some cases they decided to focus on other more important aspects of their lives instead of proceeding with integration. This phenomenon is called here weak integration trap.

The weak integration trap draws our attention to the individual and structural factors contributing to the better integration of international students. The findings showed that an individual factor that explains why some Chinese students were stuck in the weak integration trap was a lack of *aspirations* for further integration. There appeared to be three reasons why the students lacked integration aspiration. First, many interviewees acknowledged the importance and the benefits of further integration, but found excuses not to make the effort, or lacked the perseverance to do so. This phenomenon was called the 'comfort zone effect'. Second, some of the students considered it more important to acquire professional skills that would be more valued in the labor market than acquiring high proficiency in the local language, establishing networks with local people, or knowing the local culture. Third, some of the students admitted to having doubts about staying permanently in the host society due to obstacles to family reunification, job uncertainties, and potential career development constraints (better known as 'bamboo ceilings').

The research findings show that in addition to individual factors, there are also structural factors which may result in weak integration among Chinese students: insufficient, inconsistent or conflictual integration infrastructure contributed to the students being stuck in the weak integration trap. First, lacking support from the integration infrastructure can prevent the students' integration. This finding supports earlier findings showing that international students often need more practical and specific information to assist them with the procedures for applying for a work permit or in learning to network with potential employers (Arthur & Flynn, 2011).

Second, conflictual interaction across various dimensions of integration infrastructure can lead to students getting negative integration experiences. While the overall goal of the host country legislation and policies may be to retain international students, the evolution of the regulatory infrastructure may influence negatively the integration aspirations of the students. For instance, the EU and host country immigration policies differentiate between EU/EEA and non-EU/EEA nationals, meaning that for the non-EU/EEA nationals the constraints on job-seeking are significantly higher. Meanwhile, family reunification policy also appears to constitute a barrier in the EU and host country immigration policies and laws. Such structural components become one of the key considerations in the decision about staying on in host countries.

Third, uneven distribution of integration infrastructure across different migrant groups is a further contributive factor. The flourishing development of integration infrastructures, especially governmental and educational infrastructures, is often geared towards assisting asylum seekers, refugees, and other categories of vulnerable migrants (Heikkilä & Peltonen, 2002; Joppke, 2011). In contrast, highly-skilled and student migrants are often expected to integrate by themselves, since they are viewed as having fewer problems in their integration and adaptation paths (Chaloff & Lemaitre, 2009). Nevertheless, the results of the present doctoral research imply that this is not to case among Chinese students. The students seem to face many challenges in their social, cultural and academic integration.

6.2.2.3 Social integration

In the doctoral study conducted, the term 'social integration' was used to refer to students' social networks and involvement in local communities, which may include activities in the neighborhood, academic organizations, student organizations, leisure time clubs, voluntary organizations, and so on. As international students move across national borders, the challenges of everyday social, linguistic, and cultural integration come to the fore (Tinto, 1975, 1997).

The findings revealed that it is relatively easy for Chinese students to form friendship networks with *co-national* students, which confirms earlier research findings (Bochner et al., 1977; Furnham & Alibhai, 1985; Hendrickson, Rosen, & Aune, 2011). According to the research findings, the co-national networks of Chinese students can facilitate their integration through essential social, psychological, and academic support. This finding supports previous research findings that co-national networks play a vital role in the integration process as they may enhance the students' understanding of their new living environment, provide various supportive actions (Maundeni, 2001), and attenuate the stress of adapting to new social and cultural environments (Kim, 2000).

On the other hand, it became evident that engaging exculsively with co-nationals may inhibit the students from forming friendship networks with host-nationals, prevent them from acquiring or improving their domestic language skills, and impede intercultural learning processes (cf. Kim, 2000). In practice, however, the situation seems to be more complex. Even though most Chinese students had close contacts with co-national communities, many of them were still willing to put in the effort to make friends with internationals and host-nationals in order to gain more insight into different cultures and to learn foreign languages. It may be assumed that

this is at least partially attributable to the fact that Chinese student communities are smaller in Finland and Germany than in the Anglophone countries.

Social integration has been proven to facilitate Chinese students' better academic integration by enhancing their linguistic proficiency and improving their inter-cultural awareness. Nevertheless, this is not an absolute prerequisite for better academic integration: it was noted in Germany that the Chinese students without strong social ties with German students managed to achieve their academic goals by turning to other Chinese for help. A key strategy for studying difficult subjects appeared to be learning in a team with others, regardless of nationality, so that through mutual teaching and learning, the students' study efficiency was greatly enhanced.

In contrast to the findings of earlier research showing that international students often lack meaningful host-national contacts (Schartner 2015; Young *et al.* 2013), many of the Chinese students interviewed for this study had managed to establish meaningful host contacts, despite cultural differences and language problems. The results also contradict earlier research claiming that most European master's students are capable of successful academic integration, while non-European, especially those from Southern and Confucian Asia, have substantial academic, social, and emotional adjustment problems (Rienties, Beausaert, Grohnert, Niemantsverdriet, & Kommers, 2012; 2013; 2014).

The findings imply that the maintenance of native ethnic identity, co-national networks, and transnational ties with the home country does not limit the Chinese students' integration into the societal host contexts. Although researchers have presented various interpretations of the interconnections between migrants' transnational ties and integration, the results of the present study are in accordance with major research on migrants' transnational contacts and their role in integration in the host country. For instance, Schunck (2014) showed that the first generation's transnational involvement does not seem to lower its propensity to become integrated into the receiving society. Overall, the findings show that, consistent with previous research findings (Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007; Lucassen, 2006), transnational communication and other cross-border activities are today a normal part of international students' lives.

6.2.2.4 Cultural integration

The research results underline that language skills, especially in local languages, are essential for the successful integration of Chinese students into the local host

communities. In addition to the local languages, the findings indicate the important mediating role of English for the Chinese students' cultural integration. While the existing literature has highlighted the importance of proficiency in English in enhancing international students' integration (Spencer-Oatey et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2012), this study proposes that proficiency in both English and the host culture's local language is crucial for the Chinese students' integration. For international students residing in non-Anglophone countries, the influence of proficiency in the host language on integration is important. Lack of proficiency in the host language may inhibit students from socializing with the host community and from gaining full access to opportunities and facilities both within and outside the academic circle. In particular, for students wishing to stay in the host country after graduation, knowledge of the local language is crucial, while competence in English is an important facilitating factor in academic environments. The finding that both the host language and English are important for the students' integration supports previous findings among students from non-Anglophone countries. For instance, Akhtar and Kroner-Herwig (2015) reported that the German language proficiency of international students is negatively associated with the acculturative stress they experience. Meng et al. (2017), who examined Chinese students in Belgium, showed that the students' social and academic adaptation, social connectedness and global competence were mediated by skills in both English and the local language.

In the cases of both Finland and Germany, the Chinese students interviewed were influenced by the host country culture and values. For instance, the students who studied in Finland were often impressed by *equality* in Finnish society. Some of them said that from living in Finland, they had learned to treat others equally and in return expected to be treated equally themselves, regardless of social status, income, or profession. The students who studied in Germany said they had learned to become more punctual, and always agree on a time before meeting others. Some interviewees reported that having lived in Germany for a long time, they were accustomed to following the rules and laws. When they went back to China, they were, in contrast, not used to not following rules. In addition, many interviewees in Finland and Germany were influenced by the *sense of rigidity*, which they had began to learn to practice during their studies abroad.

The students interviewed also mentioned cases where cultural differences affected them. These cases concerned different ways of thinking, learning, and conducting social relations. For instance, one of the senior students compared the German tradition of analytical thinking and debate culture with Chinese traditions as follows:

> I think integration is a very bloody word, that after you become integrated, the uncomfortable feeling will always accompany you that on the surface you look like a German, but in fact it is a burden you have to carry with you. Take the critical thinking and debate culture in Germany for example, they like to think this is a constructive way of solving problems.….Germans like to tear the whole thing apart, and analyse where a problem is, then they will find the solution, and tell you point by point they are right. This kind of analytical thinking and debate culture is totally different from the humane way of dealing with conflict as low key as possible in China. It conflicts with the humane touch of Chinese society where unnecessary conflicts are usually avoided. (Male, Higher Education Studies)

6.2.2.5 Economic integration

Since it is not possible for international students to work full-time, their economic integration mainly refers to the experiences of internships, apprenticeships, job seeking, part-time jobs, and entrepreneurship during their studies.

It was noted that the prospect of finding and securing employment after graduation was the primary concern of many Chinese students who wished to remain in the host society. This finding supports earlier research on the importance of job seeking and placements for international students before graduation (Arthur & Flynn, 2011; Shen & Herr, 2004; Spencer-Rodgers, 2000). The students interviewed often compared the prospects of working in the host country to conditions in China. Not only salary, stability, safety, and lifestyle factors were considered; the students also attached great importance to their families when planning their future career goals.

A key barrier in the job searching and decision-making processes of the Chinese students (whether to stay or not) pertained to language barriers: insufficient proficiency in the host language and/or English were the most significant cultural barriers. Likewise in the previous research literature, language proficiency is often considered the single most important factor for international student adjustment (Arthur & Flynn, 2011; Nunes & Arthur, 2013). This doctoral research revealed that the situation is partly different in Finland and Germany. In Finland, since most of the international students study on programs offered through the medium of English, they rarely graduate with a proficient command of Finnish or Swedish[6]. As a consequence, the international graduates have very limited options in the Finnish labour market. This is the case especially in the public sector and in smaller private

[6] There are two official languages in Finland: Finnish and Swedish.

firms which usually require a high competence in Finnish (or Swedish). Instead, the companies which operate in international environments and/or in the STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) field do not necessarily require local language skills but the graduates' technical and professional skills may be more valued than their language skills. Thus it is often easier for international students from the STEM field to find a job in Finland. Some of the interviewees seemed to be aware of this: especially those with major subjects in the field of computer sciences, believed that it was more important for them to acquire better technical skills to compete with other jobseekers, rather than trying to learn Finnish.

In contrast, in Germany most Chinese students study on programs offered in German. Although they often face significant challenges during their studies, after graduating they can have wider choices of job opportunities since their German skills were greatly enhanced during their studies. Although the Chinese students studying on German-taught programs might have significantly more difficulties with academic integration during their studies, upon graduation they had better chances of finding employment opportunities than did the Chinese students in Finland. The relatively robust German economy and its close economic connections with China can also be a contributing factor. Thus the Chinese students not only obtained their degrees with a set of skills demanded by the labor market but also acquired German language fluency to enable them to work in Germany. It is obvious that these two advantages greatly enhance their chances of finding employment in comparison to their counterparts in Finland, who mostly graduated from English-taught programs.

Moreover, the findings imply that the Chinese students with *prior work experience* in China were better economically integrated than those students without any work experience. For those with previous work experience, moving to study in Finland or Germany meant a discontinuation of their career development in China. Thus they often had clear career goals in mind post graduation and were constantly preparing themselves for their future careers. Their previous job experiences, albeit in other countries, were also valued when they applied for new jobs. This finding was particularly noticeable among those students who had previously worked in computer science and engineering.

In practice, the immigration policies in the host countries and the EU regulations greatly influenced the Chinese students' future career choices and options. In particular, since the immigration laws and policies differentiate between EU/EEA and non-EU/EEA nationals, employers naturally favor host country nationals and EU/EEA nationals over non-EU/EEA nationals, which influences the Chinese students' possibilities of seeking promising job opportunities. Moreover,

uncertainties about obtaining job-related residence permits and permanent residence permits after graduation were also listed as a factor contributing to the Chinese students' doubts about staying long term following graduation.These findings support earlier research on the importance of immigration policies for international students' decision-making and job seeking choices (Han, Stocking, Gebbie, & Appelbaum, 2015; Mosneaga & Winther, 2015). In addition, the constraints on family reunification are another primary concern for many Chinese students. The limited possibility of bringing their parents to Europe can be one of the key barriers to their long-term settlement.

The findings also imply that the students' transnational contact with China and other countries could have a positive impact on their economic integration in the host country. A transnational turn is perhaps the most notable intervention in migration scholarship over the last three decades, stressing the need to examine the transnational dimensions of cross-border migration (Carling & Collins, 2018). The transnational approach allowed to analyze people's cross-border activities comprising the sending and reciieving country perspectives under the same umbrella (Pitkänen, Içduygu, & Sert, 2012). Also, the idea that migration can be understood as a single linear movement from origin to destination has been questioned. In this research, transnational contacts were considered an important asset for the Chinese students when they looked for jobs in companies doing business with China or became entrepreneurs themselves. The Chinese students who chose not to work in Finland after graduation acknowledged that knowledge of the Finnish and Nordic cultures helped them with business dealings with Finnish or Scandinavian companies. Some students also utilized their social networks in China and the host country to set up small businesses during their studies. The most common form of entrepreneurship was as an international buyer setting up an online shop on a Chinese website (such as Alibaba and WeChat) to sell European products to Chinese customers, taking advantage of the lower prices of certain products in Europe.

7 DISCUSSION

Abundant past research has set out to explore the drivers of international migration and the integration of migrants after arriving in the destination. This study continues these discussions in the field of higher education by building on new theoretical approaches and empirical data to investigate the drivers and integration paths of Chinese students migration to two European non-Anglophone countries, Finland and Germany. The present research focused on examining the influence of the migration industry in facilitating and channeling Chinese student migration and on the challenges, coping strategies, and processes involved in the Chinese students' integration into academic and societal contexts in Finland and Germany. By building on the exisiting theoretical frameworks of migration and integration, such as the migration industry theory, the migration infrastructure theory, and the migration aspiration theory, the study provides novel knowledge of the individual and structural factors facilitating and hindering Chinese students' migration and integration. This chapter reviews the practical and theoretical implications and limitations of the research. The last section provides some directions for future research.

7.1 Practical implications

On the basis of the research findings, the following practical implications may be presented:

First, given the complex power relationships that evolve between education migration industry agents, universities, and international students, it is vital to recognize the role that the migration industry plays in international student mobility, especially from large sending countries such as China. Although the collaborative networks between the education migration industry and HEIs in Finland and Germany are still emerging, they may evolve to be closer and more influential in the future, as international student recruitment competition is growing exponentially on a global scale. For instance, in the U.K. and Australia, universities routinely establish multiple agent relationships to promote their higher education overseas, and will pay

commission for every student recruited (Collins, 2012; Huang, Raimo, & Humfrey, 2016).

As some Chinese students are interested in obtaining not only the best possible higher education diploma overseas but also increasingly seek longer-term migration and settlement opportunities in the host countries, the education migration industry in non-Anglophone countries could in the future articulate opportunities for long-term migration settlement in addition to facilitating student mobility.

The research findings suggest that the Finnish and German universities and universities of applied sciences should consider increasing collaboration with multiple stakeholders to attract talented international students. The HEIs can collaborate closely with the education agency branch services (such as the DAAD or CIMO) in China to use various online platforms and overseas education fairs to provide potential applicants with more practical guidance and information. As this research emphasized the importance of the education migration industry in facilitating and channeling student mobility, the HEIs could selectively collaborate with credible and prestigious education agencies to promote their recruitment practices in China to attract more talented students. However, the improvements in recruitment practices are not enough; improvements are also needed in integration measures.

The research conducted provides practically applicable information of the role of language in non-Anglophone countries. The doctoral research assessed the significance of the mediating role of both English and the host language in Finland and Germany. It was apparent that the role of English and the host languages differs in the integration of Chinese students into academic and societal environments. For those students wishing to stay in the host country after graduation, knowledge of the local language is a crucial factor, while competence in English is an important facilitating factor for integration in academic environments. Particularly in Finland, for those students who did not wish to stay in the host society after graduation, it was sufficient to improve their English language proficiency to achieve academic integration. However, in order to motivate international students to remain in the host society after graduation, there is a need for HEIs to highlight the importance of learning the local languages, and create favorable conditions for learning them efficiently.

The research findings suggest that to facilitate better transition from studies to employment in the host country higher education institutions, employers and policy-makers should reassess the efficiency and consistency of their current integration polices and policy measures. The findings show that for non-EU/EEA students like

Chinese students, their future decision-making and employment are heavily dependent on the integration policies, and the availability of support from HEIs and host societies. Many students expressed the need for more comprehensive campus services to provide more specific information on job opportunities, especially in English, for the benefit of international students. Students were also interested in information about extending their residence permit for job seeking purposes or in the transition to work permits or how to network with local employers. University career counseling could help students to explore new educational or vocational options and incorporate international experiences into future career planning.

A good example of linking international students to potential employers might be the mentoring program that proved to be successful in the Tampere region (co-ordinated by the Work Place Pirkanmaa project). The program helped international students to expand their professional networks through mentors and through holding personal and group meetings with employers' representatives (Shumilova & Cai, 2016). Local employers, especially small and medium sized firms (SMEs), ought to be more open-minded towards employing international graduates and to provide them with opportunities in the form of internships and trial periods, in spite of possibly limited skills in the host language. Policy-makers in particular have a vital role in retaining international students. Policy-makers should address both legal and non-legal obstacles through expanding post-study work and residency options and co-ordinated efforts with HEIs, local businesses, and other local actors to create better job entry support. In addition, policy-makers should consider adjusting future policies for immigrants' family reunification so that international graduates wishing to stay permanently in the host country could have the opportunity to bring their families from the sending country.

Since finding job opportunities and building close social networks are seen as powerful retaining factors after graduation, opportunities for social networking during studies are of help in creating stronger attachment to the host country. Therefore, it is essential to support the social and economic integration of international students through which the students become part of the host society (Mosneaga & Winther, 2015). Taken together, these conclusions suggest that well-coordinated co-operation between HEIs, policy-makers, local employers and other stakeholders is necessary to enhance the opportunities to attract and retain the Chinese and other international students.

Finally, the research findings show that the Chinese students' families in China play a significant role in the process of deciding to study abroad and whether to stay or return. Thus, migrants' intentions and decisions to stay or leave may be influenced

by socio-cultural environments in different societal spheres and their life developments (Aksakal et al., 2018; Pitkänen et al., 2018). Therefore, the recruiters of universities and other HEIs should endeavor to include the families of potential students in marketing and information sharing programs. The HEIs could also consider creating potential events to include not only students but also their family members to show that the HEIs are safe and secure locations that allow students to learn and develop.

7.2 Theoretical implications

The theoretical implications of this doctoral research derive from the examination of multiple factors and considerations that shape Chinese students' decisions about study abroad, their destination choices and whether to pursue post-graduation careers in the host country. Several theoretical implications may be presented:

First, past research has reported that international students' decisions to study abroad are driven by multiple motivations such as experiencing other cultures, interest in other countries' higher education systems or, in a particular prestigious university, pursuing a certain specialization, or broadening their horizons in general (King & Findlay, 2012; King & Ruiz-Gelices, 2003). This research highlights the role of the migration industry in helping students by mobilizing the available socio-economic resources, as well as opening doors to more study information and opportunities that facilitate education migration. the research showed that the migration industry may be an effective tool methodologically and analytically in that it proposes new ways of analyzing migration to focus not only on the movements of migrants, but also on how they are moved by others. Following the migration industry theory, this study has drawn critical attention to the role of the education migration industry in Chinese student mobility, moving the attention away from focusing solely on international students in these process. The migration industry theory approach clearly adds nuances to the existing theories examining international student mobility in the light of push and pull theory or the social network approach. Whilst these theoretical approaches are important, push-pull models usually list factors in origin and destination areas but fail to make clear how the various factors combined lead to migration. Push-pull models also fail to explain why there should be a difference between push areas and pull areas in the first place (de Haas, 2010) and therefore end up with a list of factors at best. The social network approach also has certain limitations. Migration networks should not be seen as a theoretical

approach, but rather as a methodological approach to better understand migrants' lives in between the places of origin and destination (Faist, 2000). Neither households nor social networks are specific to migration. and neither can be conceived of as coherent, single-interest decision-making social units (Goss & Lindquist, 1995).

Second, the term 'integration' is one of the focal terms of migration studies. Within this field of study, there are differences in the understanding of concepts and definitions that relate to immigrant integration in one way or another. In this research, integration is generally defined as 'the mutual adaptation processes between the host society and migrants themselves, both as individuals and as groups' (IOM, 2018b). This definition stresses integration as a mutual adaptation process highlighting that both the newcomers and the mainstream people need to adapt in the changing environments and that integration should be beneficial not only to the host society but also to the migrants. Migrants' efforts to be accepted and contributive members of the destination country cannot be successful without the host society's changing and acceptance of foreign arrivals. Therefore, integration is a mutual adaptation process implies 'a sense of obligation and respect for a core set of values that bind migrants and their host communities in a common purpose, based on principles of protection of fundamental rights, respect, tolerance and non-discrimination' (IOM, 2018b).

Third, whereas the existing literature on the integration of international students has mainly focused on the academic circles, this research proposed a conceptual framework which encompasses four conceptual domains: academic, social, cultural, and economic integration. While *academic integration* mainly refers to the students' integration into the higher education system, *social integration* concerns the students' social networks and involvement in local communities, student organizations, leisure time clubs, voluntary organizations, and so on. *Cultural integration* involves issues related to the students' language fluency that facilitate communication with local people to gain a better understanding of cultural characteristics and an understanding of the tacit cultural knowledge and cultural expectations of the host population. Finally, *economic integration* refers to the students' experiences in terms of internships, apprenticeships, job-seeking, part-time jobs, and entrepreneurship during their studies. It is important to remember that these conceptual domains are endogenous and influence each other. For instance, the students' cultural knowledge of the host society and its history contributes to better social and academic integration. Moreover, while it is important for the students to focus on their academic integration due to demanding coursework, social integration helps them alleviate

feelings of loneliness, stress, and homesickness, and may thus contribute to their academic integration.

Finally, built on past theories of students'approaches to learning, in particular the ideas presented by Marton and Säljö (1976) and Mezirow (2000; 1991), the fourth theoretical implication of this study derives from identifying three stages of academic integration that many Chinese students go through during their studies abroad. At the first stage, the students have to develop their language skills to reach the surface learning stage to be able to understand the content of teaching. In the second stage, the students need to constantly develop their language skills to reach a higher level of language proficiency to gain a deeper understanding of the subject matter. Eventually the students become proactively engaged in learning and carry out specific learning tasks both independently and socially in different contenxts (Zimmerman, 1990, 2013). In the last stage, the students will (at least ideally) move on to the stage of transformative learning to develop critical thinking and innovative capabilities, so that they have the capacity to develop autonomous and independent thinking, and critically reflect on the existing assumptions upon which our interpretations are based, and become active creators of new knowledge.

Traditionally it has been argued that students adopting a surface approach mainly focus on rote learning, reproduce content, and primarily study to pass tests, while students with a deep approach to learning are intrinsincally interested and try to understand what they study (Trigwell, Prosser, & Ginns, 2005). Approaches to learning are assumed to be related to the perceived demands of the learning environments and are not seen as purely personal characteristics (Nijhuis, Segers, & Gijselaers, 2005).This research, however, suggests that for international students such as Chinese students, their transition from surface learning to deep learning may be heavily dependent on improvement of their language skills, which are crucial for facilitating their understanding of the content of teaching and for communicating better with teachers and peers. Rote learning can be used as a pathway and strategy for deep learning, as shown by the experiences of the Chinese students in study III.

The research results suggest that going through surface and deep learning is essential for creating transformative learning experiences, training critical thinking abilities and becoming active co-creators of knowledge. In practice, transformative learning can be frustrating and awkward if students lack the skills required for reflection (Cranton, 1994). Transformative group learning can be utilized to 'foster transformative learning by becoming critically reflective of the assumptions and renew reference of others (objective reframing) and of themselves (subjective framing)' (Mezirow, 1997, p. 61). However, some authors doubt if collaborative

learning is possible given the current competition, time pressures, and external pressure to train the leaders of tomorrow (Moore, 2005). This research shows that many of the Chinese students interviewed questioned the efficiency of the collaborative learning and critical thinking process observed in classrooms, since the debate could easily fall into superficial discussion based on personal experiences instead of transformative collaborative learning processes that involve questioning, negotiating, and creating a shared understanding of alternative ways of knowing. According to the empirical findings of this research, the perceptions of three stages of academic integration and learning transformations can shed light on future research that applies the three stages of academic integration in the analysis of learning transformation among other groups of international students.

Fifth, this research proposes a theoretical framework of integration aspiration and integration infrastructure to understand the Chinese students' integration into the societal context of the host society. The relationship between integration aspiration and integration infrastructure involves the interplay of agency and structure. The nature of integration aspiration, is derived from the students' wish to stay on in the host society after graduation, while the nature of integration infrastructure, is derived from the host communities' attitudes and actions towards foreigners. The findings imply that there is a need to investigate the interactions between the different dimensions of integration infrastructure that condition migrants' integration aspirations and processes. According to the research findings, many Chinese students' aspirations to remain long-term or permanently in the host society can be inhibited by structural barriers. This calls for more understanding and research into the coherence of the different dimensions of integration infrastructure. The findings also show that an inconsistent and unsynchronized integration infrastructure may leave Chinese students stuck in a 'weak integration trap', inhibiting them from staying on in the host society after graduation. These findings call for more scholarly and public attention to integration infrastructure developed to better support international students' integration to prevent them from staying in the weak integration trap.

7.3 Limitations and directions for future research

To understand the emergent phenomenon of Chinese student mobility and integration in Finnish and German contexts is a challenge. There has been little research to deal with international student mobility and integration from the intersection of educational and migration studies. Therefore, some limitations should be conceded and directions for future research will be suggested.

It is acknowledged that there are certain limitations in the research conducted for this dissertation.

First, one of the original intentions of this doctoral research was to develop a theoretical framework to understand the mobility and integration of Chinese students in academic and societal contexts, and to produce meaningful research results that inform students, educators, and policy-makers on better integration practices. A general challenge for studying the integration of students (or migrants in general) might be a lack of differentiation between an ideal state of integration and a more practical reality of integration processes. This research introduced a conceptual framework for understanding international students' integration through four dimensions: academic, social, cultural, and economic, but in practice, it may be quite hard for students to integrate well on all of the four dimensions. As this research noted, a 'full integration' might be just an ideal state. In practical life, there are many obstacles to integration. In addition to external factors, the neuroplasticity of human brains, especially the capability for learning a new language, decreases when one reaches adulthood (Long, 1990). In fact, there remains a question whether a weak integration can be a state of norm among many first generation migrants who have moved to the host country after the adolescent period. There is also reason to ascertain why social and cultural integration is still a challenge for graduates or other migrants although in case they were economically integrated. If highly skilled migrants are highly independent and mobile, how can one differentiate between 'trapped in weak integration' and 'successfully living in niche'?

Second, many studies, as well as this doctoral research, have conceptualized and investigated integration through various instruments focusing mainly on the migrants' integration into formal institutions. It would be interesting and useful to examine the international students' integration experiences within informal institutions and informal interactions and the ways they adapt to different types of underlying norms and conventions in the host society.

Third, while the study acknowledged the important influence of 'transnational relations' (Faist, 2000), especially kinship relations, on Chinese students' integration

processes, it did not explore to what extent such transnational relations can have an impact on the students' future plans and aspirations for integration. Due to development of technologies reducing the costs of telecommunication and travel, the Chinese and other international students can maintain transnational communication with their relations in their home countries and other countries very easily. It would be worthwhile for future research to explore how transnational relations influence Chinese students' social relationships in host, home, or other societies. What implications do transnational involvement have for Chinese students' integration aspirations and processes?

Fourth, the data collection in Finland and Germany resulted in 58 transcripts, which were analyzed using thematic content analysis. The advantage of thematic analysis is that it provides a highly flexible approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Braun and Clarke (2006) and King (2004) argued that thematic analysis is a useful method for examining the perspectives of different research participants, highlighting similarities and differences and generating unanticipated insights. Thematic analysis is also useful for summarizing the key features of a large data set, as it forces the researcher to take a well-structured approach to handling data, helping to produce a clear and organized final report (King, 2004). However, the interpretive power of thematic analysis may be limited if it is not used within an existing theoretical framework (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Although the conclusions and implications of this study may hopefully be relevant in the case of other Chinese students in other countries, the mechanism underlying the phenomenon and the generalizations that can be made from this research still need to be validated by future research. However, as a qualitative study, this research mainly aimed to produce arguments based on explicit logic, in some way generalizable, or have some demonstrable wider resonance (Mason, 2002, p. 8). Furthermore, the trustworthiness of the analysis in the sub-studies was supported by verbatim quotations from the interviews in order to establish clear links with the raw data.

Fifth, the recruitment strategies used in this research were online sampling and snowball sampling, which have both advantages and disadvantages. An advantage is that online sampling and snowball sampling can produce in-depth results relatively quickly. Moreover, trust can be developed faster through referrals made by acquaintances or peers than other more formal methods of identification. (Atkinson & Flint, 2001) A disadvantage is that the research participants are not randomly drawn but depend on voluntary participation and the subjective choices of the respondents first accessed, which may entail a risk of 'self-selection bias' (Griffiths, Gossop, Powis, & Strang, 1993). The aim of this doctoral research was to attain a

picture of the characteristics of the current mobility of Chinese students to Finland and Germany, and obtain an understanding of the experiences of students with different backgrounds. The research participants came from very diverse socio-economic and academic backgrounds with varied challenges and experiences of migration and integration. Thus, it can be assumed that the risks of voluntary respondents causing self-selection bias was hedged by snowball sampling.

Finally, since all the data used in this analysis were self-reported based on the interviewees' subjective and contextual knowledge, there remain potential limitations in terms of intentional or unintentional misinterpresentations, and tendencies to report socially desirable answers. There always remain possibilities for different interpretations, verbalizations or even misunderstandings between the interviewees and the researcher.

Future research could address issues related to the Chinese students' integration through a three-way approach: including migrants, host societies, and home societies. In fact, the recent major shift in the European Commission's policy framing introduced this kind of three-way approach, which added the countries of origin in addition to 'reciprocity of rights and obligations of third-country nationals and host societies for facilitating immigrants' full participation' (Penninx & Garcés-Mascareñas, 2016). Although this research mainly adopted the viewpoint of the Chinese students on their integration aspirations, challenges, strategies and processes, it also addressed the host societies' impact on Chinese students' integration through the concept and analysis of integration infrastructure. However, it is also evident that sending countries' diaspora policies can have a significant impact on the return intentions of migrants, such as Chinese students who are about to graduate. The fact that many students were stuck in a 'weak integration trap' is also partially due to the fact that they hesitate between whether to stay or return, being tempted by the many incentives that the Chinese government has introduced to attracting returnees from overseas. Future research should increasingly acknowledge the role that countries of origin play in the integration processes of international students.

The research findings illustrate that the maintenance of native ethnic identity, co-national networks, and transnational ties to the home country and other countries do not limit the Chinese students' integration into academic contexts. However, this research did not explore how the students' 'transnational relations' (Faist, 2000), especially kinship relations, could influence their integration into the host societal contexts. As mentioned above, it is not yet known to what extent such transnational relations can influence the students' integration aspirations and future plans. In

future research it would be worthwhile to explore in greater detail how the students' transnational activities shape their integration aspirations and integration processes. Will students' transnational relations influence the students' integration aspiration causing them to become stuck in the 'weak integration trap'? It is also worthwhile to understand more minutely the positive impact of the students' transnational activities can have on their integration into surrounding societies, such as through building economic connections between host and sending societies, the students enhanced the economic and cultural exchange between different societies (Pitkänen et al., 2012; Pitkänen & Takala, 2012).

This research proposes the theoretical framework of integration aspiration and integration infrastructure that enabled an understanding of integration because of the interplay between these two concepts. Future research on the convoluted interaction between integration aspiration and integration infrastructure could test how applicable the 'weak integration trap' is across different migrant groups and different societal contexts. Furthermore, it could use and refine different sociological and statistical analyses across various contextualizations of integration to explain the varied integration aspirations and uneven distribution of integration infrastructure across different migrant groups and host countries, thus helping to gain new insights into migration and integration.

According to the research findings, many Chinese students go through three stages of academic integration: from surface learning to deep learning, finally achieving transformative learning. Future research could explore whether these stages are applicable to wider groups and populations of international students. In addition, more longitudinal studies are needed to determine the long-term effects of different learning approaches, as well as experimental studies with a control group and pre- and post measurements that could shed light on the actual changes in the students' surface, deep and transformative learning. Mixed methods of qualitative and quantitative studies, together with longtitudinal studies might provide opportunities to measure how international students' approaches to learning differ during their migration trajectories. It should also be taken into consideration that characteristics of the learning environments and teaching approaches may also differ over time.

Finally, future research will need to increase the existing knowledge of the study-to-work transition of international students. In Europe the political and economic reframing of international graduates as ideal highly-skilled immigrants to retain in the local labor markets is still a relatively new phenomenon. The results of this research indicate that Chinese students who have previous work experience have the

clearest integration aspirations and best economic integration outcomes. Previous working life connections and work experiences have thus positive influences on preparing the students for future careers in a foreign country. As previous research suggests that the best way to learn is to become engaged in real-life processes as early as possible during one's studies, higher education institutions should prepare teachers and students to make such transitions between school and work (Young, Tuomi-Gröhn, & Engeström, 2003). Future research is needed to investigate the areas where there is hardly any empirical knowledge, for instance, the actual job seeking experiences of international students. There is a need to explore ways in which the HEIs can strengthen their collaboration with local employers and policy-makers to help international students who are willing to stay after finishing their studies.

In addition, cross-country comparative research is needed to compare international students' attitudes and expectations in different EU countries towards finding employment in their host society. This study identified certain similarities and differences between integration challenges and processes between Chinese students in Finland and Germany. For instance, the Chinese students studying on German-taught programs have significantly higher pressure and greater difficulties with their academic integration than do Chinese students studying on English-taught programs in Finland. However, they also have better chances of finding employment after graduation because of greater proficiency in German language. Future research could address the dynamics of international students' job choices between multiple locations through longitudinal studies monitoring their actual post-study experiences, job searches or working experiences in their host country, their home country or a third country. The worldwide increase in temporary and circular migration suggests that only a few international student graduates will stay permanently at their foreign destinations, and even those who stay on may leave after a few years (Morris-Lange & Brands, 2015; Pitkänen & Carrera, 2014; Pitkänen et al., 2018). Surveys among former international students who have left their host countries suggest that more than 50 percent of leavers consider returning to the countries where they finished their studies (Hanganu & Heß, 2014). Along with new research topics and approaches, mixed research methods, such as combining interviews, questionnaires, or case studies, future research may afford different insights into international students' economic integration and study-to-work transition.

REFERENCES

Aksakal, M., Schmidt, K., Korpela, M., & Pitkänen, P. (2018). Introduction: Temporary Migration in European-Asian Social Spaces. In P. Pitkänen, M. Korpela, M. Aksakal, & K. Schmidt (Eds.), *Characteristics of Temporary Migration in European-Asian Transnational Social Spaces* (pp. 1-25). Switzerland: Springer.

Alba, R., & Foner, N. (2015). *Strangers no more: Immigration and the challenges of integration in North America and Western Europe*: Princeton University Press.

Altbach, P. G. (1998). *Comparative higher education: Knowledge, the university, and development*: Greenwood Publishing Group.

Altbach, P. G. (2004). Globalisation and the university: Myths and realities in an unequal world. *Tertiary Education and Management, 10*(1), 3-25. doi:10.1080/13583883.2004.9967114

Andrews, T. (2012). What is social constructionism? . *Grounded Theory Review: An International Journal, 11*(1).

Arthur, N., & Flynn, S. (2011). Career development influences of international students who pursue permanent immigration to Canada. *International Journal for Educational and Vocational Guidance, 11*(3), 221-237. doi:10.1007/s10775-011-9212-5

Atkinson, R., & Flint, J. (2001). Accessing hidden and hard-to-reach populations: Snowball research strategies. *Social research update, 33*(1), 1-4.

Baas, M. (2007). The language of migration: The education industry versus the migration industry. *People and Place, 15*(2), 49.

Beech, S. E. (2015). International student mobility: the role of social networks. *Social & Cultural Geography, 16*(3), 332-350. doi:10.1080/14649365.2014.983961

Beech, S. E. (2018). Adapting to change in the higher education system: international student mobility as a migration industry. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 44*(4), 610-625. doi:10.1080/1369183X.2017.1315515

Beine, M., Noël, R., & Ragot, L. (2014). Determinants of the international mobility of students. *Economics of Education Review, 41*, 40-54. doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econedurev.2014.03.003

Berger, P., & Luckmann, T. (1966). *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. London: Penguin.

Bhagwati, J., & Hamada, K. (1974). The brain drain, international integration of markets for professionals and unemployment: A theoretical analysis. *Journal of Development Economics, 1*(1), 19-42. doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/0304-3878(74)90020-0

Bochner, S., McLeod, B. M., & Lin, A. (1977). Friendship patterns of overseas students: A functional model. *International Journal of Psychology, 12*(4), 277-294.

Bourdieu, P., & Wacquant, L. J. (1992). *An invitation to reflexive sociology*: University of Chicago press.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77-101. doi:10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Brinkmann, S. (2014). Interview. In T. Teo (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Critical Psychology* (pp. 1008-1010). New York, NY: Springer New York.

Brinkmann, S. (2018). The Interview. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research* (Fifth edition ed., pp. 576-599). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Brooks, R., & Waters, J. (2011). *Student mobilities, migration and the internationalization of higher education*: Springer.

Brown, L., Edwards, J., & Hartwell, H. (2010). A taste of the unfamiliar. Understanding the meanings attached to food by international postgraduate students in England. *Appetite, 54*(1), 202-207. doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appet.2009.11.001

Carling, J. (2014). *The role of aspirations in migration*. Paper presented at the Determinants of International Migration, International Migration Institute, University of Oxford, Oxford. https://s3.amazonaws.com/academia.edu.documents/34771461/Carling_2014_The_role_of_aspirations_in_migration_2014-07.pdf?AWSAccessKeyId=AKIAIWOWYYGZ2Y53UL3A&Expires=1524656154&Signature=3%2F%2BJ3cPB1F0SDL6x9fAMQGedOYI%3D&response-content-disposition=inline%3B%20filename%3DThe_role_of_aspirations_in_migration.pdf

Carling, J., & Collins, F. (2018). Aspiration, desire and drivers of migration. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 44*(6), 909-926. doi:10.1080/1369183X.2017.1384134

Carling, J., & Schewel, K. (2018). Revisiting aspiration and ability in international migration. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 44*(6), 945-963. doi:10.1080/1369183X.2017.1384146

Castles, S., de Haas, H., & J. Miller, M. (2013). Theories of Migration *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World* (5 ed., pp. 28-31): Palgrave Macmillan.

Chaloff, J., & Lemaitre, G. (2009). Managing Highly-Skilled Labour Migration: A Comparative Analysis of Migration Policies and Challenges in OECD Countries. *OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers, 79*. Retrieved from doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/225505346577

Choldin, H. M. (1973). Kinship networks in the migration process. *The International Migration Review, 7*(2), 163-175.

Choudaha, R., & Chang, L. (2012). Trends in international student mobility.

Choudaha, R., & Hu, D. (2016). With Poor Job Prospects for Chinese Students, Is It Still Worth Investing in a US Education? *South China Morning Post*.

CIMO. (2018). *Statistics on foreign degree students in Finnish higher education institutions in 2016* (6B/2017). Retrieved from Finland: http://cimo.fi/instancedata/prime_product_julkaisu/cimo/embeds/cimowwwstructure/165112_FactsExpress6B_2017.pdf

Collins, F. L. (2008). Bridges to learning: international student mobilities, education agencies and inter-personal networks. *Global Networks, 8*(4), 398-417.

Collins, F. L. (2012). Organizing student mobility: education agents and student migration to New Zealand. *Pacific Affairs, 85*(1), 137-160.

Cortazzi, M., Jin, L., McNamara, D., & Harris, R. (1997). Communication for learning across cultures. *Overseas students in higher education: Issues in teaching and learning*, 76-90.

Cranton, P. (1994). *Understanding and Promoting Transformative Learning: A Guide for Educators of Adults*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Creswell, J. (2012). *Qualitative Design and Inquiry: Choosing Among the Five Approaches* (3 ed.). CA: Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Darwish, A.-F. E., & Huber, G. L. (2003). Individualism vs Collectivism in Different Cultures: A cross-cultural study. *Intercultural Education, 14*(1), 47-56. doi:10.1080/1467598032000044647

de Haas, H. (2010). Migration transitions: a theoretical and empirical inquiry into the. *DEMIG Project Working Paper 1*. Retrieved from http://demografi.bps.go.id/phpFileTree/bahan/kumpulan_tugas_mobilitas_pak_chotib/Kelompok_10/Referensi_paper/de_Haas_2010b_Migration_Transitions_A_Theoretical_and_Empirical_Inquiry_into_The_Developmental_Drivers_of_International_Mig.pdf

De Jong, G. F., & Gardner, R. W. (1981). *Migration decision making: multidisciplinary approaches to microlevel studies in developed and developing countries*: Elsevier.

Dirkx, J. M., Mezirow, J., & Cranton, P. (2006). Musings and Reflections on the Meaning, Context, and Process of Transformative Learning:A Dialogue Between John M. Dirkx and Jack Mezirow. *Journal of transformative education, 4*(2), 123-139. doi:10.1177/1541344606287503

Dixon-Woods, M., Shaw, R., Agarwal, S., & Smith, J. (2004). The problem of appraising qualitative research. *Quality & safety in health care, 13*(3), 223-225. doi:10.1136/qshc.2003.008714

Dörr, S., & Faist, T. (1997). Institutional conditions for the integration of immigrants in welfare states: a comparison of the literature on Germany, France, Great Britain, and the Netherlands. *European Journal of Political Research, 31*(4), 401-426.

Economist. (2018). Studying abroad: A Formative Experience *The Economist, 427,* 6-7.

Ennis, R. H. (1996). *Critical thinking* (Vol. 14): Prentice Hall Upper Saddle River, NJ.

Entwistle, N., McCune, V., & Hounsell, J. (2003). Investigating ways of enhancing university teaching-learning environments: Measuring students' approaches to studying and perceptions of teaching. In E. De Corte, L. Verschaffel, N. Entwistle, & J. van Merriënboer (Eds.), *Powerful learning environments: Unravelling basic components and dimensions* (Vol. 89107, pp. 89-107). Oxford: Elsevier Science.

Esser, H. (2004). Does the "New" Immigration Require a "New" Theory of Intergenerational Integration? 1. *International Migration Review, 38*(3), 1126-1159.

EU. (2018, 01/Aug/2018). Mobility and Cross-Border Cooperation. Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/higher-education/mobility-cbc_en

Eurostat. (2018). Mobile students from abroad. Retrieved 01/Aug/2018, from Eurostat http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/education-and-training/data/database

Faist, T. (2000). *The volume and dynamics of international migration and transnational social spaces* (1 ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Faist, T. (2006). The transnational social spaces of migration.

Faist, T. (2010). The crucial meso level. *Selected Studies in International Migration and Immigrant Incorporation.Amsterdam: AUP*, 59-90.

Faist, T., & Ulbricht, C. (2017). Moving from Integration to Participation? Notes on the Interrelationship between Communal and Associative Relationships. *Review of European and Russian Affairs, 11*(1).

Favell, A. (2001). Integration policy and integration research in Europe: a review and critique. In T. A. Aleinikoff & D. Klusmeyer (Eds.), *Citizenship today: global perspectives and practices* (Vol. 349, pp. 351-352). Washington, DC: Brookings Insitution Press.

Favell, A. (2010). Integration and nations: the nation-state and research on immigrants in Western Europe. *Selected studies in international migration and immigrant incorporation, 1*, 371-404.

Feldman, G. (2011). *The migration apparatus: Security, labor, and policymaking in the European Union*: Stanford University Press.

Findlay, A., & Li, F. L. N. (1998). A Migration Channels Approach to the Study of Professionals Moving to and from Hong Kong. *International Migration Review, 32*(3), 682-703. doi:10.1177/019791839803200305

Findlay, A. M. (2011). An Assessment of Supply and Demand-side Theorizations of International Student Mobility. *International Migration, 49*(2), 162-190.

Foley, L. J. (2012). Constructing the respondent. In J. F. Gubrium, J. A. Holstein, A. B. Marvasti, & K. D. McKinney (Eds.), The SAGE Handbook of Interview Research: The Complexity of the Craft (2 ed., pp. 305-315). Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications, Inc. Retrieved from http://methods.sagepub.com/book/handbook-of-interview-research-2e. doi:10.4135/9781452218403

Fry, H., Ketteridge, S., & Marshall, S. (2003). Understanding student learning *A handbook for teaching and learning in higher education* (pp. 22-36): Routledge.

Furnham, A., & Alibhai, N. (1985). The friendship networks of foreign students: A replication and extension of the functional model. *International Journal of Psychology, 20*(3-4), 709-722.

G.H.K.Consulting, & Renming University. (2011). *EU-China Student and Academic Staff Mobility: Present Situation and Future Developments*. Retrieved from http://ec.europa.eu/education/international-cooperation/documents/china/mobility_en.pdf

Garam, I., & Korkala, S. (2015). *At school, in the University, Abroad*. Retrieved from Finland: http://www.cimo.fi/instancedata/prime_product_julkaisu/cimo/embeds/cimowwwstructure/78242_Faktaa_1B_2015.pdf

Gergen, K. J., & Gergen, M. M. (2012). Social Constructionism. In L. M. Given (Ed.), The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods (pp. 817-820). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412963909

Immigration Law (Zuwanderungsgesetz), 3 C.F.R. (2005).

Gold, S. (2005). Migrant networks: A summary and critique of relational approaches to international migration. In M. Romero & E. Margolis (Eds.), *The Blackwell companion to social inequalities* (1 ed., pp. 257-285): John Wiley & Sons.

Goldstein, A. (2003). Researcher on the Couch: Is "Understanding the Self" critical for Qualitative Research? Retrieved from https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/665a/f9c5805bb9e0fd471de8cd9c10205ac06424.pdf

Gopinath, D. (2015). Characterizing Indian Students Pursuing Global Higher Education:A Conceptual Framework of Pathways to Internationalization. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 19*(3), 283-305. doi:10.1177/1028315314563783

Goss, J., & Lindquist, B. (1995). Conceptualizing international labor migration: a structuration perspective. *International Migration Review*, 317-351.

Griffiths, P., Gossop, M., Powis, B., & Strang, J. (1993). Reaching hidden populations of drug users by privileged access interviewers: methodological and practical issues. *Addiction, 88*(12), 1617-1626.

Grzymala-Kazlowska, A. (2018). From connecting to social anchoring: adaptation and 'settlement' of Polish migrants in the U.K. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 44*(2), 252-269. doi:10.1080/1369183X.2017.1341713

Guilmoto, C. Z., & Sandron, F. (2001). The Internal Dynamics of Migration Networks in Developing Countries. *Population: An English Selection, 13*(2), 135-164.

Hammersley, M. (1990). What's Wrong with Ethnography? The Myth of Theoretical Description. *Sociology, 24*(4), 597-615. doi:10.1177/0038038590024004003

Hampden-Turner, C. M., & Trompenaars, F. (2008). *Building cross-cultural competence: How to create wealth from conflicting values*: Yale University Press.

Han, X., Stocking, G., Gebbie, M. A., & Appelbaum, R. P. (2015). Will they stay or will they go? International graduate students and their decisions to stay or leave the US upon graduation. *PloS one, 10*(3), e0118183.

Hanganu, E., & Heß, B. (2014). *Beschäftigung ausländischer Absolventen deutscher Hochschulen: Ergebnisse der BAMF-Absolventenstudie 2013*: Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge.

Hannan, A. (2007). Interviews in Education Research. Retrieved from http://cecs6200.pbworks.com/w/file/fetch/69409200/Using%20Interviews%20in%20Education%20Research.pdf

Haug, S. (2008). Migration networks and migration decision-making. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 34*(4), 585-605.

Heckmann, F. (2005). *Integration and integration policies: IMISCOE network feasibility study*. Retrieved from https://www.ssoar.info/ssoar/handle/document/19295

Heikkilä, E., & Peltonen, S. (2002). *Immigrants and integration in Finland*. Retrieved from Turku:

Hendrickson, B., Rosen, D., & Aune, R. K. (2011). An analysis of friendship networks, social connectedness, homesickness, and satisfaction levels of international students. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 35*(3), 281-295. doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2010.08.001

Heng, T. T. (2018). Different is not deficient: contradicting stereotypes of Chinese international students in US higher education. *Studies in Higher Education, 43*(1), 22-36. doi:10.1080/03075079.2016.1152466

Hernández-León, R. (2005). The migration industry in the Mexico-US migratory system. *California Center for Population Research*.

Hernández-León, R. (2008). *Metropolitan migrants: the migration of urban Mexicans to the United States*: Univ of California Press.

Hernández-León, R. (2013). Conceptualizing the migration industry. In T. Gammeltoft-Hansen & N. Nyberg Sorensen (Eds.), *The migration industry and the commercialization of international migration* (pp. 42-62). London: Routledge.

Huang, I. Y., Raimo, V., & Humfrey, C. (2016). Power and control: managing agents for international student recruitment in higher education. *Studies in Higher Education, 41*(8), 1333-1354. doi:10.1080/03075079.2014.968543

Hunger, U. (2003). Brain drain oder brain gain: Migration und Entwicklung. In D. Thränhardt & U. Hunger (Eds.), *Migration im Spannungsfeld von Globalisierung und Nationalstaat* (pp. 58-75). Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.

ICEF. (2015, 5/Nov/2015). The state of international student mobility in 2015. Retrieved from http://monitor.icef.com/2015/11/the-state-of-international-student-mobility-in-2015/

Infopankki.fi. (2018, 12.12.2016). Moving to Finland as an entrepreneur. Retrieved from https://www.infopankki.fi/en/moving-to-finland/non-eu-citizens/becoming-an-entrepreneur-in-finland

IOM. (2018a, 19 July 2018). International students. Retrieved from https://migrationdataportal.org/themes/international-students

IOM. (2018b). *IOM and Migrant Integration*. Retrieved from Geneva: https://www.iom.int/files/live/sites/iom/files/What-We-Do/docs/IOM-DMM-Factsheet-LHD-Migrant-Integration.pdf

Jokikokko, K. (2005). Interculturally trained Finnish teachers' conceptions of diversity and intercultural competence. *Intercultural Education, 16*(1), 69-83. doi:10.1080/14636310500061898

Jonkers, K., & Tijssen, R. (2008). Chinese researchers returning home: Impacts of international mobility on research collaboration and scientific productivity. *Scientometrics, 77*(2), 309-333. doi:10.1007/s11192-007-1971-x

Joppke, C. (2011). Trends in European immigration policies. *A threat against Europe*, 17-32.

Kahanec, M., & Zimmermann, K. (2011). High-skilled immigration policy in Europe. *DIW Berlin Discussion Paper, 1096*. Retrieved from doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1767902

Kelle, U. (2010). The development of categories: Different approaches in grounded theory. In A. C. Bryant, Kathy (Ed.), *The Sage handbook of grounded theory* (Vol. 2, pp. 191-213). London: SAGE.

Kim, Y. Y. (2001). *Becoming intercultural: An integrative theory of communication and cross-cultural adaptation*: Sage.

King, N. (2004). Using Templates in the Thematic Analysis of Text. In C. Cassell & G. Symon (Eds.), Essential guide to qualitative methods in organizational research (1 ed., pp. 256-270). London: SAGE Publications Ltd. Retrieved from http://sk.sagepub.com/books/essential-guide-to-qualitative-methods-in-organizational-research. doi:10.4135/9781446280119

King, R., & Findlay, A. (2012). Student Migration *An Introduction to International Migration Studies* (pp. 259-280): Amsterdam University Press.

King, R., & Ruiz-Gelices, E. (2003). International student migration and the European 'Year Abroad': effects on European identity and subsequent migration behaviour. *International Journal of Population Geography, 9*(3), 229-252. doi:doi:10.1002/ijpg.280

Kitto, S. C., Chesters, J., & Grbich, C. (2008). Quality in qualitative research. *Medical journal of Australia, 188*(4), 243.

Kivisto, P., & Faist, T. (2009). *Beyond a border: The causes and consequences of contemporary immigration*: Sage.

Kram, K. E. (1985). On the researcher's group memberships. In D. N. Berg & K. K. Smith (Eds.), *The Self in Social Inquiry: Researching Methods* (pp. 247-266). London: Sage.

Lee, E. S. (1966). A theory of migration. *Demography, 3*(1), 47-57.

Leung, M. W. H., & Waters, J. L. (2013). British degrees made in Hong Kong: an enquiry into the role of space and place in transnational education. *Asia Pacific Education Review, 14*(1), 43-53. doi:10.1007/s12564-013-9250-4

Levitt, P., & Jaworsky, B. N. (2007). Transnational Migration Studies: Past Developments and Future Trends. *Annual Review of Sociology, 33*(1), 129-156. doi:10.1146/annurev.soc.33.040406.131816

Levitt, P., & Schiller, N. G. (2004). Conceptualizing Simultaneity: A Transnational Social Field Perspective on Society1. *International Migration Review, 38*(3), 1002-1039. doi:doi:10.1111/j.1747-7379.2004.tb00227.x

Li, H. (2018). Aspiration and Integration infrastructure: A study on Chinese students' integration in Finland and Germany. *Working Papers - Centern on Migration, Citizenship and Development, 160*.

Li, H., & Pitkänen, P. (2018). Understanding Integration of Mainland Chinese Students: The case of Finland. *Nordic Journal of Migration Research, 8*(2). doi:10.1515/njmr-2018-0008

Li, M., & Bray, M. (2007). Cross-border flows of students for higher education: Push–pull factors and motivations of mainland Chinese students in Hong Kong and Macau. *Higher Education, 53*(6), 791-818. doi:10.1007/s10734-005-5423-3

Lincoln, Y. S., & Denzin, N. K. (2003). *Turning Points in Qualitative Research: Tying Knots in a Handkerchief*: AltaMira Press.

Lindquist, J., Xiang, B., & Yeoh, B. S. A. (2012). Opening the black box of migration: Brokers, the organization of transnational mobility and the changing political economy in Asia. *Pacific Affairs, 85*(1), 7-19.

Long, M. H. (1990). Maturational constraints on language development. *Studies in second language acquisition, 12*(3), 251-285.

Lonka, K., & Lindblom-Ylänne, S. (1996). Epistemologies, conceptions of learning, and study practices in medicine and psychology. *Higher Education, 31*(1), 5-24. doi:10.1007/bf00129105

Loyens, S. M. M., Gijbels, D., Coertjens, L., & Côté, D. J. (2013). Students' approaches to learning in problem-based learning: Taking into account professional behavior in the tutorial groups, self-study time, and different assessment aspects. *Studies in Educational Evaluation, 39*(1), 23-32. doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.stueduc.2012.10.004

Lucassen, L. (2006). Is transnationalism compatible with assimilation? Examples from Western Europe since 1850. *IMIs-Beiträge, 29*.

Marton, F., & Säljö, R. (1976). On qualitative differences in learning: I—Outcome and process. *British journal of educational psychology, 46*(1), 4-11.

Marton, F., & Säljö, R. (1984). Approaches to learning. In F. Marton, D. Hounsell, & N. Entwistle (Eds.), *The Experience of Learning: Implications for teaching and studying in higher education' presents results of research from studies into the way students learn in higher education* (pp. 39-58). Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, Centre for Teaching.

Mason, J. (2002). *Qualitative researching* (2 ed.). London: Sage.

Massey, D. S., Arango, J., Hugo, G., Kouaouci, A., & Pellegrino, A. (1999). *Worlds in Motion: Understanding International Migration at the End of the Millennium: Understanding International Migration at the End of the Millennium*: Clarendon Press.

Massey, D. S., Arango, J., Hugo, G., Kouaouci, A., Pellegrino, A., & Taylor, J. E. (1993). Theories of International Migration: A Review and Appraisal. *Population and development review, 19*(3), 431-466. doi:10.2307/2938462

Massey, D. S., Arango, J., Hugo, G., Kouaouci, A., Pellegrino, A., & Taylor, J. E. (1999). Worlds in Motion: Understanding International Migration at the End of the Millennium. *OUP Catalogue*.

Maxwell, J. A., & Chmiel, M. (2014). Generalization in and from Qualitative Analysis. In U. Flick (Ed.), The SAGE handbook of qualitative data analysis (pp. 540-553). London: SAGE Publications Ltd. Retrieved from http://methods.sagepub.com/book/the-sage-handbook-of-qualitative-data-analysis. doi:10.4135/9781446282243

Mazzarol, T., & Soutar, G. N. (2002). "Push-pull" factors influencing international student destination choice. *International Journal of Educational Management, 16*(2), 82-90.

McMahon, M. E. (1992). Higher education in a world market. *Higher Education, 24*(4), 465-482. doi:10.1007/bf00137243

Mezirow, J. (1978). Perspective Transformation. *Adult Education, 28*(2), 100-110. doi:10.1177/074171367802800202
Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative dimensions of adult learning*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
Mezirow, J. (1994). Understanding transformation theory. *Adult education quarterly, 44*(4), 222-232.
Mezirow, J. (1997). Transformative learning: Theory to practice. *New directions for adult and continuing education, 1997*(74), 5-12.
Mezirow, J. (2000). *Learning as Transformation: Critical Perspectives on a Theory in Progress. The Jossey-Bass Higher and Adult Education Series*: ERIC.
Mezirow, J. (2003). Transformative learning as discourse. *Journal of transformative education, 1*(1), 58-63.
Migri.fi. (2018a, 01/08/2018). Extended permit to look for work. Retrieved from https://migri.fi/en/extended-permit-to-look-for-work
Migri.fi. (2018b). Finnish citizenship. Retrieved from https://migri.fi/en/finnish-citizenship
Ministry of Education of P. R. of China. (2018). 2017 sees increase in number of Chinese students studying abroad and returning after overseas studies. Retrieved from http://en.moe.gov.cn/News/Top_News/201804/t20180404_332354.html
Moore, J. (2005). Is Higher Education Ready for Transformative Learning?:A Question Explored in the Study of Sustainability. *Journal of transformative education, 3*(1), 76-91. doi:10.1177/1541344604270862
Morris-Lange, S., & Brands, F. (2015). *Train and Retain. Career Support for International Students in Canada, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden*: Sachverständigenrat deutscher Stiftungen für Integration und Migration GmbH (SVR).
Mosneaga, A., & Winther, L. (2015). Managing International Student Migration: the Practices of Institutional Actors in Denmark. *International Migration, 53*(1), 14-28. doi:doi:10.1111/imig.12071
Nield, K. (2009). The Problems of Applying Labels of Learning Style to National Cultures. *International Journal of Learning, 16*(7).
Nijhuis, J. F. H., Segers, M. S. R., & Gijselaers, W. H. (2005). Influence of Redesigning a Learning Environment on Student Perceptions and Learning Strategies. *Learning Environments Research, 8*(1), 67-93. doi:10.1007/s10984-005-7950-3
Noorderhaven, N. G., & Halman, L. C. J. M. (2003). Does Intercultural Education Lead to More Cultural Homogeneity and Tolerance? *Intercultural Education, 14*(1), 67-76. doi:10.1080/1467598032000044665
Nunes, S., & Arthur, N. (2013). International students' experiences of integrating into the workforce. *Journal of Employment Counseling, 50*(1), 34-45. doi:doi:10.1002/j.2161-1920.2013.00023.x
OECD. (2013). ZusammenfassungZuwanderung ausländischer Arbeitskräfte. Paris: OECD Publishing. doi:https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264191747-3-de
OECD. (2018). *International Migration Outlook 2018*.
Pandit, K. (2009). Leading Internationalization. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers, 99*(4), 645-656. doi:10.1080/00045600903120552
Paul, R. (1984). Teaching critical thinking in the" strong" sense: A focus on self-deception, world views, and a dialectical mode of analysis. *Informal Logic, 4*(2).
Penninx, R., & Garcés-Mascareñas, B. (2016). The Concept of Integration as an Analytical Tool and as a Policy Concept. In B. Garcés-Mascareñas & R. Penninx (Eds.), *Integration Processes and Policies in Europe: Contexts, Levels and Actors* (pp. 11-29). Cham: Springer International Publishing.

Pitkänen, P., & Carrera, S. (2014). Transnational migration in transition: State of the art report on temporary migration, 383. Retrieved from http://www.uta.fi/edu/en/research/projects/eura-net/publications/State-of-the-art_EURA-NET.pdf

Pitkänen, P., Içduygu, A., & Sert, D. (2012). Current Characteristics of Migrant Transnationalism *Migration and Transformation:* (pp. 207-224): Springer.

Pitkänen, P., Korpela, M., Schmidt, K., & Aksakal, M. (2018). Conclusion: Characteristics, Experiences and Transnationality of Temporary Migration. In P. Pitkänen, M. Korpela, M. Aksakal, & K. Schmidt (Eds.), *Characteristics of Temporary Migration in European-Asian Transnational Social Spaces* (pp. 233-247). Switzerland: Springer.

Pitkänen, P., & Takala, T. (2012). Using transnational lenses to analyse interconnections between migration, education and development. *Migration and Development, 1*(2), 229-243.

Potter, J., & Hepburn, A. (2005). Qualitative interviews in psychology: problems and possibilities. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 2*(4), 281-307. doi:10.1191/1478088705qp045oa

Reichert, S., Tauch, C., Geddie, K., & Crosier, D. (2005). Trends IV: European universities implementing bologna: European University Association Brussels.

Relph, E. (1976). *Place and placelessness* (Vol. 1): Pion.

Rienties, B., Beausaert, S., Grohnert, T., Niemantsverdriet, S., & Kommers, P. (2012). Understanding academic performance of international students: the role of ethnicity, academic and social integration. *Higher Education, 63*(6), 685-700. doi:10.1007/s10734-011-9468-1

Rienties, B., Heliot, Y., & Jindal-Snape, D. (2013). Understanding social learning relations of international students in a large classroom using social network analysis. *Higher Education, 66*(4), 489-504. doi:10.1007/s10734-013-9617-9

Rienties, B., Luchoomun, D., & Tempelaar, D. (2014). Academic and social integration of Master students: a cross-institutional comparison between Dutch and international students. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International, 51*(2), 130-141. doi:10.1080/14703297.2013.771973

Rosenzweig, M. R. (2008). *Higher education and international migration in Asia: brain circulation.* Paper presented at the Annual World Bank conference on development economics.

Samuelson, P. A. (1951). *Economics-an introductory analysis*: Mcgraw-Hill Book Company, Inc.; New York; London; Toronto.

Sayers, J., & Franklin, T. (2008). Culture shock! Cultural issues in a tertiary course using reflective techniques. *Reflective Practice, 9*(1), 79-88.

Schartner, A. (2015). 'You cannot talk with all of the strangers in a pub': a longitudinal case study of international postgraduate students' social ties at a British university. *Higher Education, 69*(2), 225-241. doi:10.1007/s10734-014-9771-8

Schreier, M. (2012). *Qualitative content analysis in practice*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Schunck, R. (2014). Transnational activities and immigrant integration in Germany *Transnational Activities and Immigrant Integration in Germany* (pp. 179-199): Springer.

Scollon, R., & Scollon, S. W. (2001). Discourse and Intercultural Communication. In D. Schiffrin, D. Tannen, & H. E. Hamilton (Eds.), *The handbook of discourse analysis* (1 ed., pp. 538). Oxford: Blackwell Publishers

Sell, R. R., & Dejong, G. F. (1978). Toward a motivational theory of migration decision making. *Journal of population, 1*(4), 313-335. doi:10.1007/bf00972555

Shen, Y.-J., & Herr, E. L. (2004). Career Placement Concerns of International Graduate Students: A Qualitative Study. *Journal of Career Development, 31*(1), 15-29. doi:10.1177/089484530403100102

Shenton, A. K. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for information, 22*(2), 63-75.

Shumilova, Y., & Cai, Y. (2016). Three Approaches to Competing for Global Talent: Role of Higher Education. In B. Krishna & F. Charlotte (Eds.), *Global Perspectives and Local Challenges Surrounding International Student Mobility* (pp. 114-135). Hershey, PA, USA: IGI Global.

Silverman, D. (2006). *Interpreting qualitative data: Methods for analyzing talk, text and interaction*: Sage.

Spencer, S., & Cooper, B. (2006). Social integration of migrants in Europe: a review of the European literature 2000-2006. *Gaining from migration (A joint European Commission/Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development project of July 2007)*.

Spencer-Rodgers, J. (2000). The Vocational Situation and Country of Orientation of International Students. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development, 28*(1), 32-50. doi:doi:10.1002/j.2161-1912.2000.tb00226.x

10 § 1 Einbürgerung (Naturalisation) 10 C.F.R. (2016).

Süssmuth, R., & Weidenfeld, W. (2005). Introduction: Challenge integration: Living together in a Europe of diversity. In R. Süssmuth & W. Weidenfeld (Eds.), *Managing Integration - The European Union's Responsibilities towards Immigration* (pp. 4): Migration Policy Institute.

Thayer-Bacon, B. J. (1993). Caring and its relationship to critical thinking. *Educational Theory, 43*(3), 323-340. doi:doi:10.1111/j.1741-5446.1993.00323.x

Thornberg, R., & Charmaz, K. (2014). Grounded theory and theoretical coding. *The SAGE handbook of qualitative data analysis*, 153-169.

Tilly, C. (1990). Transplanted networks. In V. Yans-McLaughlin (Ed.), *Immigration reconsidered: History, sociology, and politics* (pp. 79-95). New York: Oxford University Press.

Tinto, V. (1975). Dropout from higher education: A theoretical synthesis of recent research. *Review of educational research, 45*(1), 89-125.

Tinto, V. (1997). Classrooms as communities: Exploring the educational character of student persistence. *Journal of higher education*, 599-623.

Todaro, M. P., & Maruszko, L. (1987). Illegal migration and US immigration reform: A conceptual framework. *Population and development review*, 101-114.

Triandis, H. C., & Gelfand, M. J. (1998). Converging measurement of horizontal and vertical individualism and collectivism. *Journal of personality and social psychology, 74*(1), 118.

Trigwell, K., Prosser, M., & Ginns, P. (2005). Phenomenographic pedagogy and a revised Approaches to teaching inventory. *Higher Education Research & Development, 24*(4), 349-360. doi:10.1080/07294360500284730

UOE. (2018). *UOE data collection on formal education. Manual on concepts, definitions and classifications*. Retrieved from MONTREAL, PARIS, LUXEMBOURG http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/uoe2016manual_11072016_0.pdf

van Meter, K. M. (1990). Sampling and cross-classification analysis in international social research *Comparative methodology: Theory and practice in international social research.* (pp. 172-186). Thousand Oaks, CA, US: Sage Publications, Inc.

Van Mol, C., & Ekamper, P. (2016). Destination cities of European exchange students. *Geografisk Tidsskrift-Danish Journal of Geography, 116*(1), 85-91. doi:10.1080/00167223.2015.1136229

Wang, C.-C. D. C., & Mallinckrodt, B. (2006). Acculturation, attachment, and psychosocial adjustment of Chinese/Taiwanese international students. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 53*(4), 422.

Waters, J., & Brooks, R. (2011). International/transnational spaces of education: Taylor & Francis.

Wingens, M., Windzio, M., Valk, H. d., & Aybek, C. (2011). Immigrant Settlement and the Life Course: An Exchange of Research Perspectives and Outlook for the Future. In M. Wingens, M. Windzio, H. d. Valk, & C. Aybek (Eds.), A Life-Course Perspective on Migration and Integration (pp. 297). Dordrecht: Springer. Retrieved from http://www.oapen.org/record/413371. doi:10.1007/978-94-007-1545-5

Wissenschaft Weltoffen. (2018). *Wissenschaft weltoffen kompakt 2018*. Retrieved from http://www.wissenschaftweltoffen.de/kompakt/wwo2018_kompakt_en.pdf

Wu, Q. (2015). Re-examining the "Chinese learner": a case study of mainland Chinese students' learning experiences at British Universities. *Higher Education, 70*(4), 753-766. doi:10.1007/s10734-015-9865-y

Xiang, B., & Lindquist, J. (2014). Migration infrastructure. *International Migration Review, 48*(s1), S148.

Xiang, B., & Shen, W. (2009). International student migration and social stratification in China. *International Journal of Educational Development, 29*(5), 513-522.

Young, M., Tuomi-Gröhn, T., & Engeström, Y. (2003). From Transfer to Boundary-crossing Between School and Work as a Tool for Developing Vocational Education: An Introduction. In T. Tuomi-Gröhn & Y. Engeström (Eds.), *Between School and Work: New Perspectives on Transfer and Boundary Crossing* (pp. 1-19). Oxford: Pergamon (Elsevier Science).

Young, R., & Collin, A. (2004). Introduction: Constructivism and social constructionism in the career field. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 64*(3), 373-388. doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2003.12.005

Young, T. J., Sercombe, P. G., Sachdev, I., Naeb, R., & Schartner, A. (2013). Success factors for international postgraduate students' adjustment: exploring the roles of intercultural competence, language proficiency, social contact and social support. *European Journal of Higher Education, 3*(2), 151-171. doi:10.1080/21568235.2012.743746

Zhang, S. (2018). Chinese oversea students reached 600,000 since last year. Retrieved from http://www.gov.cn/shuju/2018-04/01/content_5278951.htm

Zheng, P. (2014). Antecedents to international student inflows to U.K. higher education: A comparative analysis. *Journal of Business Research, 67*(2), 136-143. doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2012.11.003

Zimmerman, B. J. (1990). Self-Regulated Learning and Academic Achievement: An Overview. *Educational Psychologist, 25*(1), 3-17. doi:10.1207/s15326985ep2501_2

Zimmerman, B. J. (2013). Theories of self-regulated learning and academic achievement: An overview and analysis *Self-regulated learning and academic achievement* (pp. 10-45): Routledge.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: THEMES FOR SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Interviews conducted with Chinese tertiary-level degree students studying in Finland and Germany were based on the following themes.

1. Participant's personal information

Demographic background information about the interviewee (including the name, age, gender, current education level of study, area of specialization, years of work experience, hukou status, single child or not, scholarship recipient or not, previous travel abroad and migration experiences, etc.)

2. Migratory background and drivers of migration
   - 2.1. Previous study or work experience in China or abroad
   - 2.2. Reasons for coming to study in the current host country
   - 2.3. Assistance used for coming to study in the current host country
   - 2.4. Use of education migration agency (used or not, reasons and experiences of using education migration agency)

3. Integration into academic contexts
   - 3.1. Current host language and English level, other language skills
   - 3.2. Academic integration experiences, challenges, and coping strategies
     - Understanding teaching content
     - Classroom participation
     - Group learning
     - Independent and critical thinking
     - Assessment
     - Informal interaction with teachers and classmates
   - 3.3. Comparison of study experience of Finnish or German education and Chinese education

4. Integration into societal contexts
   4.1. Social integration experiences, challenges, and coping strategies
      - Social network with co-nationals, host-nationals, and internationals
      - Community participation (such as local clubs, voluntary organization, Chinese student and scholar association, religious associations, etc.)
      - Feeling of loneliness
      - Transnational communication with family, friends, or others in China
      - Transnational communication with contacts in other countries
   4.2. Cultural integration experiences, challenges, and coping strategies
      - Current host language skills
      - Aspiration to learn host language
      - Cultural knowledge of the host society
      - Identification with German culture or identity
   4.3. Economic integration experiences, challenges, and coping strategies
      - Part-time job experiences (internship, part-time job, etc.)
      - Preparation for employment after graduation (job seeking, entrepreneurship, etc.)
      - Transnational economic ties with China or other countries (receiving or sending money, transnational entrepreneurship or businesses, etc.)
   4.4. Transformation since study abroad
      - Personal transformation
      - Transformation of view of Finland/Germany and Europe (Western societies)
      - Transformation of view of China (in the world)
   4.5. Future plans
      - Future plans and aspirations (stay in the host country, return to China, migrating to other countries, or not sure)
      - Consideration about their family in China

APPENDIX 2: INFORMATION SHEET

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in a research project, entitled Chinese Student Migration in Non-English Speaking EU Countries: A Comparative Study on Transformative Impact. The purpose of this research is to study how the tertiary-level student migration from China to Non-English speaking EU countries (Finland, Germany, and the Netherlands) has transformed the livings of Chinese students themselves, the circumstances in the social and educational communities, and the sending Chinese communities. Social network analysis and semi-structured interview will be used in this research. If you agree to participate, you will be interviewed. This will take approximately one hour of your time.

Risks that you may experience from participating are considered minimal. There are no costs for participating. There are no benefits to you other than to further research on migrants' rights and obligations.

This study will pay special attention to ensuring that the conducting of the research or the research findings cause no negative effects of any kind to participants. The study will adhere to the ethics guidelines set forth by the Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity (www.tenk.fi/en) and the instructions of the Ethics Committee of the Tampere region. Your information collected for this study is completely confidential and no individual participant will ever be identified with his/her research information. Data from this project will be saved on password protected computer which only researchers of the project will have access. However, Finnish ethics boards may review this study's records. After the end of this research, the research data collected will be carefully archived for secondary research where strict anonymisation measures will be taken to ensure the privacy of research participant is well protected.

Your participation in this project is voluntary. You may choose not to take part in this project, or if you decide to take part, you can change your mind later and withdraw from the project. You are free to not answer any questions or withdraw at any time.

If you have questions about the project or research procedures, you are free to contact the local project coordinator at the address and phone number below. If you have questions about your rights as a study participant or complaints about your treatment as a research subject, contact Ms. Lina Kohonen (acting secretary general) of Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity Tel. +358 50 594 1909 E-mail: tenk(at)tsv.fi

Hanwei Li

Ph.D. Researcher

TRANSMIC project, School of Education, Tampere University, FINLAND

GSM: +358 50 318 7421

Email: Hanwei.li@uta.fi

Street Address: Virta 453, Åkerlundinkatu 5, FI-33014

APPENDIX 3: CONSENT FORM

CONSENT FORM

Research project

Chinese Student Migration in Non-English Speaking EU Countries: A Comparative Study on Transformative Impact

I have been asked to participate in the above-mentioned scientific research project. I have received both written and oral information on the research and the opportunity to pose questions about it to the researchers.

I understand that participation in the research is voluntary and that I have the right to decline or withdraw my consent at any time without offering any reason. I also understand that information will be treated in confidence.

Place and date

_____ ___. ___ . _____

Place and date

_____ ___. ___ . _____

I hereby consent to participate in the research:

Signature of interviewee

_____

Name in capital letters

_____

Recipient of the consent:

Signature of researcher

_____

Name in capital letters

_____

APPENDIX 4: SUMMARIUM

Hanwei Li

The journey of thousand miles: Chinese student migration and integration in Finland and Germany

1. OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH AIMS

An ancient motto in Chinese says that, "read a thousand books, travel a thousand miles". This ancient quote inspired generations of Chinese students to explore the world beyond a thousand books in history; it still motivates the Chinese students today. With China's economic development and faster transportation, Chinese students are setting foot on different parts of the world seeking for knowledge, experiencing new cultures and learning about the world from different angles beyond a thousand books. While past research has repeatedly documented the drivers and experiences of Chinese students studying in Anglophone countries such as the U.S.A. and the U.K., little is known about their experiences in non-Anglophone countries. Past research has documented the experiences of international tertiary students going to study abroad, adjusting to new environments and new cultures. This research, however, aims to shift from the traditional angles to examine the topic from new perspectives.

First, the study seeks to examine the drivers of Chinese student mobility. Instead of listing all the factors that might account for their study migration, it focuses more on an angle that has so far been less covered and documented, namely the role of the *migration industry* that has facilitated and channeled Chinese students' mobility. It examines how the migration industry has influenced motivations, migratory paths, and choices of destination among Chinese students, and conditioned the feasibility and actualization of their studies abroad.

Second, this research also looks at Chinese students' integration paths from new perspectives. While past research has often addressed international students'

integration within academic contexts, the present research considers their integration not only into the academic settings, but also into the societal environments. It proposes to examine the integration of Chinese students through a conceptual framework of four dimensions across academic and societal contexts: academic, social, cultural, and economic integration. Central to this conceptual framework is academic integration, which is one of the key areas of students' lives and one of the focuses of this research. The research shows how difficult academic integration has been for Chinese students and identifies the strategies used to overcome the challenges. It also indicated that the four dimensions of integration are only a conceptual division for the convenience of conducting data analysis. In practice, the four dimensions are essentially endogenous, related and influence each other.

Finally, this doctoral research presents a new perspective on whether the Chinese students would like to or can manage to stay in the host society. It proposes a theoretical framework of *integration aspiration* and *integration infrastructure* to examine the students' integration into societal contexts, which is often related to their post-graduation plans. Although not every Chinese student would like to stay after graduation, it is still important for those wishing to stay to try to integrate into the host society in addition to the academic environment. This points to a phenomenon of *weak-integration trap* discovered in this research, namely that many Chinese students get stuck once they have reached a plateau of weak integration. This is often the result of students' lack of aspiration for further integration and of insufficient support from the integration infrastructure. Additionally, the students' 'transnational relations' (Faist 2000) back in China, especially their kinship relationships, still have a profound influence on the students' decisions regarding their future, and their aspirations for further integration.

In conclusion, this research offers new vantage points from which to contemplate the two research questions from different levels and dimensions of analysis that introduce new perspectives into the research on international student mobility and especially on the Chinese students' integration aspirations, processes and trajectories. Further exploration of the topic offers a new vision and possible implications for the cross-border mobility of Chinese students for themselves and for the host societies.

2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This doctoral dissertation presents a synthesis of four sub-studies. The sub-studies focused on examining the drivers of Chinese student migration and their integration experiences in academic and societal contexts in Finland and Germany. Study I focused on the drivers of Chinese student migration, while the focus of Studies II, III and IV was on Chinese students' integration experiences in Finland and Germany. The research questions were as follows:

RQ1 What drives Chinese student mobility to non-Anglophone countries like Finland and Germany?

RQ 1a Why do Chinese students choose to study in Finland and Germany?

RQ 1b How do the students manage to come to study in these countries?

RQ2 How do Chinese students integrate in Finland and Germany during their studies?

RQ 2a How do Chinese students integrate into the academic contexts?

RQ 2b How do the students integrate into the societal contexts, especially if they plan to stay in the host country?

3. METHODS OF THE DATA GATHERING AND ANALYSIS

3.1 The type of research data

Semi-structured interviews served as the main research method used for collecting data in Studies I, II, III and IV. In 2015, 30 mainland Chinese tertiary-level degree students in Finland and 28 students in Germany in 2016. Two methods were used to recruit research participants: First, international offices of universities and universities of applied sciences across Finland and Germany were approached with a request to send a research invitation to all registered mainland Chinese students in their organizations. Students who volunteered to participate in the research contacted the researcher through email, instant message, or by phone. Second, snowball sampling was used. The research participants were encouraged to distribute the invitation letter among their friends to recruit more participants for the research. Ethical review of the research and the data collection was requested from and provided by the Ethical Committee of Tampere Region and Maastricht University.

The group of respondents included tertiary students from a wide variety of backgrounds in terms of gender, age, major subject, previous work, and study experience, duration of residence and current location. Among the interviewees, there were students who were studying in Finland or Germany for just one semester and students who had been residing in the respective countries for longer periods, even for more than five years. As the duration of study and integration phases of the interviewees were diverse, the researcher was able to explore which features of integration manifest in the different phases since their move abroad.

3.2 Data analysis

Data-collection resulted in 58 transcripts that were analyzed primarily by the researcher and using thematic content analysis. All interviews were audio recorded, transcribed, anonymized, and encoded in Atlas.ti using substantive (Kelle, 2010) and theoretical coding (Thornberg & Charmaz, 2014). The aim of the analysis was to consolidate, reduce, and interpret the interview data to create categories describing the main topics of the research. First, after familiarization with the data, thematic codes consisting of pre-existing themes were generated based on the theoretical framework and the preliminary analysis of the interview transcripts. Next, the analysis started with line-by-line coding, structured according to the theoretical framework. The unit of analysis in the coding system was one paragraph, and paragraphs could be given multiple codes. In the third analytical step, every statement in the codes was further analyzed and placed under an appropriate heading or thematic 'node along with any others which were sufficiently similar' (Hannan, 2007). This inductive process generated a number of sub-themes that will be presented in the following section, supported by verbatim quotations from the Chinese students interviewed, in order to establish a clear link with the raw data.

4. OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 Drivers of Chinese student migration to Finland and Germany: The role of the migration industry

The analysis of the research data revealed the importance of the migration industry in facilitating and channeling Chinese student migration to Finland and Germany. The findings also show that the student migration from China to Finland and Germany is more intensively mediated than before, and that migration is increasingly becoming the outcome of a complex combination of individual agency and social structures. Only taking into consideration of commercial education migration agencies and other intermediaries – large or small, legal or illegal, formal or informal – can render a comprehensive picture of the drivers of Chinese student migration in the face of a changing reality.

Chinese students are increasingly reliant on the migration industry to facilitate their studies abroad for three main reasons: First, the education migration industry in China exemplifies a fully-fledged industry that provides services for all phases of migration. It offers services in the form of a comprehensive package, including for choosing where to study, preparing packages of application material, polishing CVs, personal statements, academic transcripts, booking the flights and picking up the students upon arrival at their destinations. In practice, the education migration industry has become a one-stop solution for successful migration that guarantees success before the contract is concluded, which is an advantage unmatched by relying on migrant networks. Second, the education migration industry has more information available regarding the study opportunities available and professional staff who helps the students to prepare the application package, which not only saves the students' time, but also allows them to apply for many universities in a short time. Third, the education migration industry has established formal or informal collaboration agreements with some overseas higher education institutions (HEIs) which can speed up the application processes and help the students to obtain offers more easily.

The migration industry approach offered a novel lens to look at student migration, shifting the focus from the movements of student migrants to how they are moved by the education migration industry. It provided an effective methodological and analytical tool to study student migration in four ways: First, this research shows that the education migration industry facilitates and channels student mobility, which has resulted in a diversification of migration destinations, as exemplified by Chinese students' mobility to non-Anglophone countries like Finland

and Germany. Second, although the migration industry may be complementary in relation to migrant networks, it increasingly plays a replacement role. Here, migrant networks refer to a narrow definition of networks of migrants themselves. The highly specialized and professional services of the education migration industry offer information and help that cannot be matched by the help the migrants can get from their networks. As a consequence, the Chinese students nowadays rely predominantly on the education migration industry instead of migrant networks. Third, the break in the exchange and reciprocity relationship leads to the individualization of the Chinese student migration. Nowadays, in addition to a wider choice of migration destinations, successful migrants no longer have the obligation to help potential migrants in their home communities as reciprocity of favors. Fourth, the development of a migration industry has become a double-edged sword: on the one hand, those with sufficient financial capital can enjoy easier access and faster processes; on the other hand, those with limited financial capital are at a disadvantage in the competition for scarce resources, such as prestigious overseas higher education. This explains why the student migration from China has become more accessible, but also more financially burdensome.

4.2 Integration of Chinese students in Finland and Germany

This section presents and compares the main findings related to the integration processes, challenges and trajectories of Chinese students in Finland and Germany. To better understand the integration of Chinese students, this research differentiates between integration into academic and societal contexts. Academic contexts include the higher education environments in which the students' academic lives are embedded, while societal contexts refer to the social, cultural, and economic environments in which the students live within the host societies.

The concept of integration

Within this field of study, the concepts and definitions that relate in one way or another to newcomer's integration are understood in very different ways. In this research, integration is generally defined as 'the mutual adaptation processes between the host society and migrants themselves, both as individuals and as groups' (IOM, 2018b). From the host society perspective, integration is understood here to refer to 'the process or endeavor through which the migrants become part of the enlarged membership circle in the host community, while maintaining their ethnic and cultural heritage' (see Article IV, p. 9). From the migrants' perspectives, integration is seen

to pertains to 'the process or state of development of the migrants' capability (or ability) to pursue their aspirations in the host society, to improve upon life chances to gain access to valuable social resources, and to become accepted members of the surrounding society, which may include contexts outside the host country/society' (see Article IV, p. 9).

Four dimensions of integration

In scientific debate, several theoretical perspectives and conceptual axes exist that elaborate some aspects of integration. Past research on the integration of international students has very often centered on their integration into academic contexts, while research focusing on the societal integration has mainly been concerned with other types of international migrants. Drawing on the existing literature on both, this research proposes a four-faceted conceptual framework of integration consisting of the following domains: academic, economic, social, and cultural integration.

In this research, *academic integration* refers to the process of international students, and in this research Chinese students, becoming adapted to the academic contexts. It includes how the students get used to the new teaching and learning environments, how they participate in classroom discussion, their informal interaction with teachers and other classmates in class, and so forth. *Social integration* refers to the students' social networks and involvement in local communities and may include activities in the neighborhood, student organizations, leisure time clubs, and voluntary organizations and so on. In this research, the functional model of international student networks (Functional Model of Friendship Networks [FMFN]) developed by Bochner, Mcleod, and Lin (1977) was adopted. Bochner at al. (1977) categorize students' networks into three categories: co-national networks that affirm and express the culture of origin, networks with host nationals, which facilitate academic and professional aspirations and multinational networks for recreation purposes. Further, *cultural integration* refers to the processes of gaining an understanding of the basic rules and norms of the host society, as well as of the cultural expectations of the host nationals. Each society possesses tacit cultural norms that are hidden and thus more difficult to perceive. Acquiring tacit cultural knowledge is an important factor in the integration process as it helps newcomers to understand the cultural expectations of the host population. Finally, since it is not possible for international students to participate in full-time jobs while studying full time, *economic integration* refers here to the students' experiences in terms of internships, apprenticeships, job-seeking, part-time jobs and entrepreneurship during their studies.

It is important to realize that despite the above distinctions between the four dimensions of integration, in practice they all originate from the same process of mutual adaptation between the newcomers and the host society, and that the conceptual dimensions are endogenous, interrelated and influence each other. For instance, the students' cultural knowledge of the host society and its history contributes to better social and academic integration. Moreover, while having a network of fellow students may help the students alleviate feelings of loneliness, stress, and homesickness, it may also contribute to their academic integration.

Integration of Chinese students in academic contexts

Built on past theories of students' approaches to learning, such as the concept of deep approach to learning originating in the work of Marton and Säljö (1976), and transformative learning theory by Jack Mezirow (1991, 2000), this study identified three stages of academic integration that many Chinese students go through during their studies abroad. At the first stage, students need to develop their language skills to reach a surface learning stage to be able to understand the content of teaching. At the second stage, students need to continuingly develop their language skills to reach a higher level of language proficiency to gain a more profound understanding of the learning content. Eventually students become proactively engaged with learning and carry out specific learning practices both independently and socially in different contexts (Zimmerman, 1990, 2013). In the last stage, after having achieved deep learning, the students move on to the stage of transformative learning to develop critical thinking and innovative thinking capabilities, so that they have the ability to develop autonomous and independent thinking, critically reflect on the existing assumptions upon which interpretations are based and become active creators of new knowledge.

Traditionally, past research has argued that students adopting a surface approach mainly focus on rote learning, reproduce content and primarily study to pass tests, while students with a deep approach to learning are intrinsically interested and try to understand what they study (Trigwell et al., 2005). This research, however, suggests that for Chinese students, their transition from surface learning to deep learning may depend heavily on improving the language skills, which is crucial for facilitating their understanding of the content of teaching and for communicating better with teachers and peers. Meanwhile, rote learning can be used as a pathway and strategy for deep learning, as shown by the experiences of the Chinese students in Article III (Li, 2018). The present research results suggest that going through surface and deep

learning is essential for the last stage of creating transformative learning experiences, training critical thinking abilities, and becoming active co-creators of knowledge.

Although the academic environments are partly different in Finland and Germany, the Chinese students interviewed in those countries experienced several similar challenges while integrating into the academic contexts.

The data analysis revealed that there are different nuances in the issue of language learning between in the Finnish and the German cases. In the case of Finland, all the interviewees had come to study in Finland on programs offered through the medium of English. Although they had passed an English language test, their English skills were often still inadequate to meets the study demands. In the German case, most Chinese students were studying on programs offered in German, while there were still some students who went to study in Germany on programs offered through the medium of English. The findings revealed that the students who studied on the programs offered in German had significant difficulties in keeping up with the teaching since they had studied German only for one to two years before entering the classroom with native speakers. The difficulties that Chinese students reported when studying in German-taught programs were much greater than those of reported by the students studying in English in Finland. Many students mentioned that they not only had difficulties understanding the course content, but also failed a lot of courses although they had never failed any course in China.

The findings also showed that some of the Chinese students may be less talkative in class because of their shyness, not being confident about their language ability, or reluctant to challenge their lecturers or peers. Some students found it difficult to keep up with the content of teaching or otherwise had very little to contribute. These findings concur with those of earlier research suggesting that students from a Confucian cultural background may adopt a less active learning strategy, and be hesitant about voicing their own opinions in the classroom, while western students are more used to participating actively in class (e.g. Duanmu, Li, & Chen, 2009).

The findings imply that differences in intellectual background could make it difficult for some Chinese students to understand the content of teaching. This was especially obvious among the master's students, studying either in Finland or Germany. The differences in the intellectual background may concern subject related knowledge or cultural knowledge. The knowledge gap related to the subject studied appeared often to be caused by differences in learning focus and learning material between China and Finland or Germany, so that some of the students found they still had extensive knowledge gaps to fill by themselves through self-study to fully understand the new content of teaching. On the other hand, a gap in cultural

knowledge may affect the students' understanding of the content taught; this was the case especially among the students of social sciences or humanities.

It is evident that the requirements of western higher education, where Socratic/Aristotelian rhetoric and argumentation are the norm, may be unfamiliar to East Asian students who may be more used to a transmission style of teaching and learning (Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 2008; Scollon & Scollon, 2001). Nevertheless, the findings show that independent and critical thinking is essential for the students' transformative learning, and that it was also one of the most difficult stages of transformation for the Chinese students. Among many students interviewed, a lack of systematic training in critical thinking and argumentation, or a lack of confidence in their arguments, could result in remaining silent in class. However, the findings also indicated that some students may reject total adoption of 'western style' but instead chose a 'middle way' - expressing their views while being sensitive to others' feelings and saving face.

4.3 Integration of Chinese students in the societal contexts

This section presents the main findings on the Chinese students' integration into societal contexts. It mainly includes the integration experiences of the students wishing not only to successfully complete their studies but also intending to stay in the host country.

Strong and weak integration

The research conducted identified different states between 'strong integration' and 'weak integration'. For the purposes of this research, 'weak integration' was defined as the preliminary level of integration, whereas the 'strong integration' signifies a more advanced state of an immigrant's entry into the host society. However, the differentiation between weak and strong integration does not mean that they are dichotomous, rather it signifies a developmental continuum from weak to strong integration. From the perspective of international students, weak integration means that the students have not yet developed sufficient capabilities to pursue their aspirations in the host society. They have gained some but not the same educational and/or work opportunities, and access to valued social resources as have the native-born citizens. It also indicates that the students have not yet reached parity of life chances with the native majority group. On the other hand, from the perspective of the host society, the weak integration state means that the newcomer students are not yet recognized as a legitimate part of the national community.

Economic integration

According to the research findings, a key barrier in job search processes and decision-making (whether to stay or not) pertained to cultural differences and language barriers. Insufficient proficiency in the host language and/or English were the most significant cultural barriers among the Chinese students. The findings in Germany showed that although Chinese students who studied on German-taught programs had significantly more difficulties with academic integration during their studies, they also had better chances of finding employment than did the Chinese students in Finland. The Chinese students graduating from German-taught programs not only obtained their degrees with sets of skills demanded by the labor market but also acquired language fluency in German to enable them to work in the country. The relatively robust German economy and its close economic connection with China may also be one factor contributing to this phenomenon. These two advantages greatly enhanced the Chinese students' chances of finding employment in comparison to their counterparts in Finland who mostly graduated from English-taught programs.

The findings also showed that Chinese students with prior work experience in China were better economically integrated than those students without any work experience. Meanwhile, due to the rapid economic development of China in recent years, one of the key advantages of many Chinese students in seeking job opportunities is their knowledge of Chinese language and China's business culture. Transnational contacts with China did not appear to be a negative factor for their economic integration. Quite the reverse: transnational relations were considered an important asset for the Chinese students when they looked for jobs in companies doing business with China or became entrepreneurs themselves. Moreover, the Chinese students who chose not to work in Finland or Germany after graduation acknowledged that knowledge of the Finnish and German languages and cultures helped them in business dealings with Finnish or German companies. Some students also utilized their social networks in China and the host country to set up small businesses during their studies. The most common form of entrepreneurship was an international buyer setting up an online shop on a Chinese website (such as Alibaba and WeChat) to sell European products to Chinese customers, taking advantage of the lower prices of certain products in Europe.

The weak integration trap:

The findings revealed an interesting phenomenon: it was found that some Chinese students had managed to adapt to day-to-day life in the host society and managed to fulfill the basic study requirements of the university but, once they had adapted to the daily and study lives, they ceased to invest much effort in improving their host language skills, trying to interact with people from host community. While these interviewees acknowledged that was is important to learn and improve their proficiency in the local language, they were frustrated at the difficulty of these learning processes. In some cases, they had decided to focus on other more important aspects of their lives instead of persevering with integration. This phenomenon was called in the study conducted weak integration trap.

The *weak integration trap* occurs when the international students have acquired the capability to manage their day-to-day life in the host society. Even though they may have established some networks with host-nationals, internationals and co-nationals, may have a job, or be even married to a host-national, they still have not yet gained the same educational and work opportunities as long-term native-born citizens. Moreover, they have not yet gained the sense of belonging, dignity, or acceptance as full members of the host society. It is not uncommon for Chinse students to stay in the host society for many years without becoming fluent in the local language, which created barriers in their lives and job-seeking processes in the host society after graduation.

From the experiences of the Chinese students' interviewed in Finland and Germany, it can be concluded that the weak integration trap is the result of a combination of a lack of integration aspiration (intrinsic factor) and a lack of adequate support from the integration infrastructure (extrinsic factor).

Integration aspiration was defined in this study as a person's motivational drive to take the actions needed to become an active and competent member of the host society. This might be achieved through various activities, such as learning the local language, socializing with host nationals, looking for job opportunities, and so forth. For the Chinese students who got stuck in the 'weak integration trap', their lack of aspiration to further integration after having reached the state of weak integration was often due to three reasons. First, the students were stuck in a 'comfort zone' so that they lacked the perseverance to make constant efforts at further integration. Second, the students might attach greater importance to acquiring professional skills, more valued in the labor market than other aspects of integration, such as learning or improving their proficiency in the local language. Third, the interview analysis

showed that the students might be uncertain about staying permanently in the host country; this was mainly due to the various regulatory infrastructure barriers to family reunification, and concerns about the long-term prospects of their career development.

Integration infrastructure can be understood as a part of a larger social infrastructure that utilizes the reproduction of knowledge, resources, facilities, laws and regulations in the society in question, which in turn conditions migrants' integration. Integration infrastructure can thus be seen to shape migrants' aspirations for integration and their future prospects of achieving it. Subsequently, by exploring how integration infrastructure conditions integration aspirations and processes, it is possible to gain a better understanding of integration itself. Essentially, this necessitates a re-orientation of our questioning about how the migrant influx produces integration infrastructure, to thinking about how integration infrastructure produces integration. Xiang and Lindquist (2014) introduced the concept of 'migration infrastructure' mainly to explain how migration is mediated by a number of social infrastructures. However, they have not considered the migrants' lives after their arrival at the destination, or the mediating role of various social infrastructures during the migrants' integration processes.

Inspired by Xiang and Lindquist (2014), this research divides integration infrastructure into six dimensions: educational (language and skills training), governmental (state labor or social welfare institutions), regulatory infrastructure (immigration laws and policies for residence permits and citizenship, home country diaspora policies), social (migrant networks), commercial (intermediaries and brokerage, companies), and technological (communication and technological tools). In relation to Chinese student migration and integration processes in Finland and Germany, integration infrastructure can be seen to facilitate or hinder the students' integration aspirations, processes and outcomes. For instance, the participating countries have introduced policies to allow international graduates to stay for a year (Finland) or 18 months (Germany) while looking for work. However, according to EU and local laws, local employers should prioritize hiring host-nationals and EU citizens over non-EU/EEA citizens. These regulations often require local employers to provide justification and additional documents for hiring a non-EU/EEA citizen over a local or EU/EEA citizen (Kahanec & Zimmermann, 2011). This policy contradicts the 'train and retain' policy since it discourages employers from hiring non-EU/EEA international graduates.

From the perspective of integration infrastructure, the research findings show that many Chinese students were trapped in the stage of weak integration due to

three possible reasons. First, the Chinese students often lack adequate support from the integration infrastructure. For instance, some interviewees expressed their concern about lacking help in language issues, and difficulties in finding social support when they encountered challenges in their academic or social integration. Second, conflictual interaction across different dimensions of integration infrastructure can also lead to Chinese students' falling into the weak-integration trap. For instance, the intensification of the regulatory infrastructure that not only restricts the migration inflow, but which also limits the possibilities for migrants' permanent settlement, has jeopardized the student migrants' aspiration for further integration. Finally, uneven distribution of integration infrastructure across different migrant groups serves as a contributing factor. Increasing the flow of migrants to developed EU countries has led to a flourishing development of integration infrastructures. However, most of the educational integration infrastructure is directed towards assisting in the integration of asylum seekers, refugees, and other categories of vulnerable migrants while international students and highly skilled migrants are often expected to integrate by themselves. Without intensive language training and integration courses, the Chinese students who study on courses taught through the medium of English may remain in the weak integration trap for many years without acquiring proficiency in the host language or an in-depth understanding of the host society.

5. OVERVIEW OF THE STUDIES

This doctoral dissertation provides a synthesis of four sub-studies and related articles. The four studies addressed a set of related research problems, while each of them had a different research focus and study design. This chapter gives an overview of the main foci and findings of the individual publications. Articles I-IV are provided at the end of the summary report.

Study I:

The aim of Study I was to describe the drivers of Chinese student migration in the Finnish context and to analyse the role of the migration industry in Chinese student migration. The resulting Article I first provides a brief review of past research, which often analyses student mobility through the lens of a push-pull model or social network theory. The article discusses the theoretical constraints of these two theories and suggests that the migration industry approach may be more appropriate to articulate the various levels of analysis of international student migration. Then the

features related to the development of education migration industry in China and its role in facilitating and channelling Chinese students' migration to Finland are discussed. The education migration industry facilitates student migration from initial choice of universities and study destinations to the preparation and sending of university application material, and finally applying for a visa and preparing for departure. The findings of Study I show that the education migration industry may be complementary in relation to migrant networks, it increasingly plays a replacement role in facilitating Chinese student migration. Moreover, Study I investigated the theoretical and practical implications of migration industry development in China and envisaged future development trends in Chinese student migration. Article I thus provides an insight into the shifting logic of contemporary student migration and underlying societal transformations, which is increasingly affected and shaped by the migration industry.

Study II:

The second sub-study investigated mainland Chinese students' integration experiences in Finland. Answers were sought to the following questions: 1) what challenges do mainland Chinese students encounter in their integration into Finnish academic and societal contexts? 2) How do mainland Chinese students integrate academically, socially, culturally and economically? The related article identifies four conceptual domains of integration – academic, social, cultural, and economic – as central to the students' integration processes. The article analyses the Chinese students' integration challenges and coping strategies in the four domains of integration and estimates the role of English and Finnish languages in mediating the students' integration into the host academic and societal environments. A further goal of the Study II was to provide information about whether the maintenance of transnational ties and co-national networks facilitates or hinders Chinese student integration in the host society. The research findings show that both English and the local language mediate the Chinese students' integration. Contrary to earlier research suggesting that international students lack meaningful host-national contacts (Schartner, 2015), many of the Chinese students interviewed for this study had managed to establish meaningful host contacts despite cultural differences and language problems. Many of the Chinese students interviewed were willing to put in the effort to make foreign friends in order to gain increased insight into different cultures and to learn foreign languages. The study showed that the maintenance of native ethnic identity, co-national networks and transnational ties from the home

country can facilitate Chinese student integration abroad through the promotion of meaningful cross-cultural contacts that contribute to the host society.

Study III:

The aim of Study III was to present an analysis of the academic integration experiences of mainland Chinese tertiary-level students in Germany. The study explored the challenges that the students face during their academic integration, the strategies they employ, and the relationship between their academic and social integration. Four major challenges were identified and analysed: language barrier, knowledge gap, pedagogical differences, and cultural differences. The findings of Study III show that one of the biggest challenges for the Chinese students' successful academic integration is their lack of German language proficiency. Although every student had passed a German language test before entering a German HEI, the difficulty of using a foreign language in academic contexts combined with a knowledge gap, pedagogical differences and cultural differences still made academic integration extremely challenging for them. An important outcome of the study is that social integration serves as a facilitator for enhancing academic integration but is not a prerequisite for academic success. Group learning with peers was found to enhance learning outcomes. Overall, the Chinese students have exploited their own advantages in academic integration by exploring feasible strategies and benefiting from their past learning experiences. Article III suggests that academic integration as a long and challenging process for international students should be acknowledged by the German HEIs, and that more institutional support and guidance are needed.

Study IV:

Study IV examined the integration experiences of those Chinese students who wished to stay in Finland or Germany after graduation. Since both Finland and Germany aim not only to attract but also to retain international students, Chinese students' integration into academic and societal contexts deserves more scholarly focus. The study proposes theoretical frameworks of integration aspiration and integration infrastructure for analysing Chinese students' integration, focusing particularly on their integration into the societal contexts. The related Article IV introduces a phenomenon observed among Chinese students, called 'weak integration trap'. The study revealed several implications of the weak integration trap among Chinese students, such as leading to a feeling of alienation in the host environment, failure to complete studies or to find a job to stay in the host society

after graduation. The theoretical frameworks of integration aspiration and integration infrastructure offered useful tools to understand the reasons contributing to Chinese students getting stuck in the weak integration trap. This weak integration trap is often the result of a lack of integration aspiration among Chinese students, whose aspiration for integration is often conditioned by different dimensions of integration infrastructure. The findings show that insufficient, inconsistent and unevenly distributed integration infrastructure can result in Chinese students' lack of aspiration for integration, leading them to becoming trapped in a weak integration stage. Integration aspiration and integration infrastructure enable a continuous processual understanding of integration through interplay between these two concepts, providing an analytical lens for advancing future migration research and for understanding societal transformation in its contemporary form.

6. IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS

The findings of the doctoral research conducted lead to proposing novel directions to explore the drivers of Chinese student migration and the experiences of those student migrants after arriving in their destination countries. Based on the research findings, several practical and theoretical implications may be presented.

6.1 Practical implications

The research suggests that the Finnish and German universities and universities of applied sciences can collaborate with multiple stakeholders to attract talented international students from abroad. They can collaborate closely with the education agency branch services (such as the DAAD or CIMO) in China to use various online platforms and overseas education fairs to give potential applicants more practical guidance and information. The HEIs can also selectively collaborate with credible and prestigious education agencies to promote their universities in China and to attract more talented students. Further, the present research has discussed the significance of the mediating role of both English and the host language in non-Anglophone countries such as Finland and Germany. In order to retain those students wishing to remain in the host society after graduation, there is a need for HEI administrators and teachers to explain the importance of learning the local language and to create conditions to enable students to learn efficiently. Moreover, the findings suggest that to facilitate a better transition from studies to employment in the host countries, HEIs, employers and policy-makers should reassess the efficiency and consistency of their current polices and policy measures, and co-

ordinate their future efforts to help international students. For Chinese and other non-EU/EEA students, their future decision-making and employment are heavily dependent on the integration policies and the availability of support from HEIs and host societies. Linking international students with potential employers through mentoring programs can be a good practice to enhance job-seeking opportunities for students by expanding their professional networks. Finally, the research findings reveal that the Chinese students' families in China play a significant role in their studying abroad and decisions to stay or return to China. Policy-makers should consider easing future policies for immigrants' family reunification so that migrants including the international graduates wishing to stay permanently in the host country have the option of bringing their families from the sending country.

6.2 Theoretical implications

The research conducted highlights the role of the migration industry in helping students to mobilize socio-economic resources available as well as to open doors to more study information and opportunities that facilitate their education migration. Following the migration industry theory, this study has drawn critical attention to the role of the education migration industry within Chinese student mobility, shifting the attention away from focusing solely on individual students in these processes. Second, this research proposed a conceptual framework of international students' integration encompassing four conceptual domains: academic, social, cultural, and economic integration. Although there are distinctions between these dimensions, they are endogenous and influence each other. Further, based on past theories of students' approaches to learning, this study identifies three stages of academic integration that the Chinese students often go through during their studies abroad: surface learning, deep learning, and transformative learning. These findings can inform future research for analyzing transformative forms of learning among other groups of international students. The research findings offer new ways to reconsider the role of group learning, critical thinking, and the ways of shifting university education to empower students and educators towards a model for transformative learning. Finally, this research proposes the theoretical frameworks of integration aspiration and integration infrastructure to understand the Chinese students' integration into the host society. The research implies that there is a need to examine the interactions between different dimensions of integration infrastructure that condition international students' integration aspirations and integration experiences. Moreover, the findings show how the inconsistent and unsynchronized integration infrastructure may leave many Chinese students stuck in a weak integration trap,

inhibiting them from staying on in the host society after graduation. It calls for more scholarly and public attention to integration infrastructure developed to better support international students' or highly skilled migrants' integration to prevent them from staying in the 'weak integration' trap.

7. LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This research has several limitations. First, it is based on a qualitative approach, which aims to create conceptually and empirically grounded analysis rooted in the data collected only once, in 2015 in Finland and in 2016 in Germany. It is possible that the situation of the interviewees, given their aspiration to stay and integrate in the host country or other circumstances, will have changed over time. Second, while the study acknowledged the important influence of 'transnational relations' (Faist, 2000), especially kinship relations, on Chinese students' integration processes, it did not explore to what extent such transnational relations can have an impact on the students' future plans and aspirations for integration. Due to the development of technologies reducing the costs of telecommunication and travel, the Chinese students can maintain transnational communication with their relations in their home countries and other countries easily and are embedded in various transnational social fields and spaces (Faist, 2006; Levitt & Schiller, 2004), move through transnational channels (Findlay & Li, 1998), and utilize transnationally stretched resources for their academic, social and economic lives. Following one of the core questions raised by Kivisto and Faist (2009, pp. 129-130) it is worthwhile for future research to explore how the novelties in communication technologies influence Chinese students' social relationships in host, home, or other societies. What implications do transnational involvement have for Chinese students' integration?

In future, more studies are needed to address issues related to the Chinese students' integration through a three-way approach: including the migrants, host societies, and home societies. It would be interesting to explore the ways in which the home country policies have shaped and conditioned the students' migration and integration aspirations and processes. In addition, future research could explore whether the three stages of academic integration are applicable to wider groups and populations of international students. More longitudinal and experimental studies are needed to identify the long-term effects of different learning approaches on the Chinese students' learning transformations. Finally, future research will need to enhance the existing knowledge of the study-to-work transition of Chinese students.

This study identified certain similarities and differences between integration challenges and processes in Finland and Germany. For instance, the Chinese students studying on German-taught programs have significantly higher pressure and greater difficulties with academic integration than do Chinese students studying on English-taught programs in Finland. However, they also have higher chances of finding employment after graduation because of greater proficiency in German. Still, future cross-country comparative research is needed to compare the students' attitudes and expectations in different EU countries towards finding employment in the host country. Future research could address the dynamics of the students' job choices between multiple locations through longitudinal studies monitoring their actual post-study experiences, job seeking or working experiences in their host societies, their home countries, or in third countries. Along with new research topics and approaches, mixed methods approaches, such as combining interviews, questionnaires, and/or case studies, future research may afford different insights into the Chinese and other international students' integration and study-to-work transition.

REFERENCES

Bochner, S., McLeod, B. M., & Lin, A. (1977). Friendship patterns of overseas students: A functional model. *International Journal of Psychology, 12*(4), 277-294.

Faist, T. (2000). *The volume and dynamics of international migration and transnational social spaces* (1 ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Faist, T. (2006). The transnational social spaces of migration.

Findlay, A., & Li, F. L. N. (1998). A Migration Channels Approach to the Study of Professionals Moving to and from Hong Kong. *International Migration Review, 32*(3), 682-703. doi:10.1177/019791839803200305

Hampden-Turner, C. M., & Trompenaars, F. (2008). *Building cross-cultural competence: How to create wealth from conflicting values*: Yale University Press.

Hannan, A. (2007). Interviews in Education Research. Retrieved from http://cecs6200.pbworks.com/w/file/fetch/69409200/Using%20Interviews%20in%20Education%20Research.pdf

IOM. (2018). *IOM and Migrant Integration*. Retrieved from Geneva: https://www.iom.int/files/live/sites/iom/files/What-We-Do/docs/IOM-DMM-Factsheet-LHD-Migrant-Integration.pdf

Kahanec, M., & Zimmermann, K. (2011). High-skilled immigration policy in Europe. *DIW Berlin Discussion Paper 1096*. Retrieved from doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1767902

Kelle, U. (2010). The development of categories: Different approaches in grounded theory. In A. C. Bryant, Kathy (Ed.), *The Sage handbook of grounded theory* (Vol. 2, pp. 191-213). London: SAGE.

Kivisto, P., & Faist, T. (2009). *Beyond a border: The causes and consequences of contemporary immigration*: Sage.

Levitt, P., & Schiller, N. G. (2004). Conceptualizing Simultaneity: A Transnational Social Field Perspective on Society1. *International Migration Review, 38*(3), 1002-1039. doi:doi:10.1111/j.1747-7379.2004.tb00227.x

Marton, F., & Säljö, R. (1976). On qualitative differences in learning: I—Outcome and process. *British journal of educational psychology, 46*(1), 4-11.

Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative dimensions of adult learning*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Mezirow, J. (2000). *Learning as Transformation: Critical Perspectives on a Theory in Progress. The Jossey-Bass Higher and Adult Education Series*: ERIC.

Schartner, A. (2015). 'You cannot talk with all of the strangers in a pub': a longitudinal case study of international postgraduate students' social ties at a British university. *Higher Education, 69*(2), 225-241. doi:10.1007/s10734-014-9771-8

Scollon, R., & Scollon, S. W. (2001). Discourse and Intercultural Communication. In D. Schiffrin, D. Tannen, & H. E. Hamilton (Eds.), *The handbook of discourse analysis* (1 ed., pp. 538). Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Thornberg, R., & Charmaz, K. (2014). Grounded theory and theoretical coding. *The SAGE handbook of qualitative data analysis*, 153-169.

Trigwell, K., Prosser, M., & Ginns, P. (2005). Phenomenographic pedagogy and a revised Approaches to teaching inventory. *Higher Education Research & Development, 24*(4), 349-360. doi:10.1080/07294360500284730

Xiang, B., & Lindquist, J. (2014). Migration infrastructure. *International Migration Review, 48*(s1), S148.

Zimmerman, B. J. (1990). Self-Regulated Learning and Academic Achievement: An Overview. *Educational Psychologist, 25*(1), 3-17. doi:10.1207/s15326985ep2501_2

Zimmerman, B. J. (2013). Theories of self-regulated learning and academic achievement: An overview and analysis *Self-regulated learning and academic achievement* (pp. 10-45): Routledge.

ORIGINAL PUBLICATIONS

PUBLICATION I

The Role of the Migration Industry in Chinese Student Migration to Finland: Towards a New Meso-level Approach

Hanwei Li

In X. Du, F. Dervin, & H. Liu (Eds.), Nordic-Chinese Intersections on Education: Palgrave Macmillan (2019 Forthcoming).

PUBLICATION II

Understanding Integration of Mainland Chinese Students:

The case of Finland

Hanwei Li, Pirkko Pitkänen.

Nordic Journal of Migration Research, 2018, 8(2). doi:10.1515/njmr-2018-0008
https://content.sciendo.com/view/journals/njmr/8/2/article-p107.xml

DE GRUYTER OPEN

Article • DOI: 10.1515/njmr-2018-0008 NJMR • AoP

Nordic Journal of Migration Research

UNDERSTANDING THE INTEGRATION OF MAINLAND CHINESE STUDENTS: *The Case of Finland*

Abstract

This study examines the integration experiences of mainland Chinese tertiary-level students in Finland, a non-Anglophone country. The article identifies four conceptual domains of integration – academic, social, economic and cultural – as central to the students' integration processes. Data for analysing the Chinese students' integration experiences were collected through semi-structured interviews (n = 30), and the research findings showed that both English and the host language Finnish mediated the Chinese students' integration into the host academic and social environments. Although the students initially faced challenges in their studies and daily lives, many of them managed to establish meaningful cross-cultural social contact and overcame cultural differences and language barriers to integrate into the new academic environment. The findings suggest that the maintenance of transnational ties and co-national networks can facilitate Chinese international student integration abroad, through promotion of meaningful cross-cultural contacts that contribute to the host society.

Keywords

Chinese students • Social integration • Academic integration • Cultural integration • Economic integration

Received 31 August 2016; Accepted 6 November 2017

Hanwei Li*, Pirkko Pitkänen

Faculty of Education, University of Tampere, Finland

1 Introduction

Extensive research has examined the integration of refugees, labour migrants and second-generation migrants (Bevelander & Pendakur 2014; Schunck 2014). However, much less research has been conducted on the integration of international tertiary students in their new host societies. There are two potential reasons for this, the first being that international student mobility is often seen as 'temporary'. Secondly, international students constitute a 'less problematic' group of foreign arrivals and are expected to naturally integrate by themselves. However, both these assumptions no longer hold true.

In relation to the former assumption of 'temporariness', international students have become a key target in the global competition for the best and the brightest. Many countries have begun introducing 'train and retain' policies to encourage their international students to stay and find a job after graduation. For instance, many European countries, including Finland and Germany, have implemented a policy that allows tertiary-level international students an extension on their residence permits after graduation, to allow for job-seeking. International students are thus no longer seen as temporary migrants, but rather, it is hoped that their stay in the host country will increase motivation for a long-term settlement; their temporary movement is potentially envisioned as part of a deliberate strategy for permanent migration (Tremblay 2005).

To address the latter issue of natural integration, international students may not integrate as successfully and smoothly as has been assumed. These students may experience multiple challenges in their new social and academic host environments, including establishing new friendship networks, coping with financial issues and adapting to local linguistic, cultural and pedagogical differences. Their integration experiences are directly related to the attitudinal climate prevailing in the host society, as well as the students' connections with their home countries and their families. As evidenced, the integration experiences of international students deserve more scholarly attention than has been afforded to them.

This article analyses the integration experiences of mainland Chinese tertiary-level students in Finland. While the number of Chinese students in the Finnish higher education institutions (HEIs) is relatively small compared to that in more popular destinations such as the US, the UK and Australia, this case study of Finland exemplifies the increase in Asian students seeking overseas education opportunities in non-Anglophone countries.

In the past decade, the total number of Chinese students in the European Union (EU) has soared to between 118,700 and 120,000,

* E-mail: stflihanwei@gmail.com

which is about six times more than it was in 2000 (Mathou & Yan 2012). While a large proportion of students are located in the UK (around 40% in total), an increasing number of students are moving to non-Anglophone EU countries, such as France, Germany, the Netherlands and Finland (GHK Consulting & Renming University 2011). Abundant research has been carried out on the integration factors and experiences of international and/or Chinese students in English-speaking countries, such as the US and the UK (Wang & Mallinckrodt 2006; Zhang 2013). However, significantly less research has focussed on non-Anglophone European countries.

There are various reasons why Chinese students have increasingly made the choice to study in non-Anglophone EU countries. Firstly, higher education in many non-Anglophone EU countries is often less commercialised compared to the HEIs in Anglophone countries, such as the UK and Australia. Second, acquiring proficiency in a second foreign language is considered a huge advantage when entering the labour market after graduation. Finally, many EU countries offer degree programmes or English-taught courses free of tuition fees or, alternatively, only charge a low tuition fees (such as Germany).[1]

According to United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) statistics, there were around 790,850 Chinese mobile students abroad in 2015, with Finland serving as the seventh most popular destination in Europe, hosting around 2,000 Chinese students (UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2016). There are four factors that may have contributed to Finland's success in attracting international students: 1) its position as one among the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries with the highest proportion of tertiary education institutions that offer English-taught programmes (Valle, Normandeau & Gonzalez 2015); 2) Finland's internationally renowned quality of education and the relatively high ranking of universities there; 3) absence of tuition fees;[2] and 4) its government policy that allows its international graduates to remain one extra year after graduation to find a job there.[3]

Given the large number of Chinese students studying abroad globally, combined with the limited amount of research focussing on non-Anglophone destinations, further research in this area is evidently needed. Finland presents an interesting case study for studying Chinese student integration experiences as it holds one of the highest percentages of international students compared to other OECD countries, with Chinese students constituting as one of its largest groups among its international students (Centre for International Mobility [CIMO] 2016; Valle, Normandeu & Gonzales 2015). In the study presented here, we sought to address the following research questions (RQs):

RQ1: What challenges do mainland Chinese students encounter in their integration into Finnish academic and societal contexts?

RQ2: How do mainland Chinese students integrate academically, socially, culturally and economically?

In the following sections, we first present a conceptual framework for understanding international student integration. This framework highlights four conceptual domains of integration (outlined in Figure 1), based on both an extensive literature review and the findings of our fieldwork on Chinese students in Finland. Using this theoretical framework, Chinese student integration experiences are analysed from the academic, social, cultural and economic perspectives. Finally, we conclude with a discussion of the main findings, looking at the contribution of this research to existing literature while acknowledging the limitations of this study.

2 Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

2.1 Defining Integration

Integration is significant both as a policy goal and as a widely debated research issue (Niessen & Schibel 2004). In this article, integration is seen as both a process and a goal, namely, for international students to become competent and active members of the host society. Successful integration pertains to the process or state where the international students have tapped their potential to reach their capabilities of leading a life close to or at the same level as natives. When it comes to social relations, they have established relatively robust relationships with the host community, while maintaining both their home community relationships and ethnic identities. Further, it refers to a situation where international students have attained at least a moderate level of language and possess the cultural competence to ensure their ability to thrive within their country of settlement.

2.2 Domains of Integration

Past literature has previously highlighted several indicators for successful integration. Esser (1980, 2006) distinguishes between four dimensions of integration – the cultural, structural, social and emotional processes. The cultural dimension denotes the acquisition of knowledge and skills, norms, customs, lifestyles and so on. The structural dimension refers to the position and participation of migrants in relevant spheres within the receiving society. The social dimension refers to interaction and contact with the autochthonous population and, finally, the emotional dimension concerns aspects of identity and belonging. Berry (2011) defines integration as one of the four acculturation strategies of sojourners; integration takes place when the non-dominant group has an interest in maintaining their own home culture while still participating as an integral part of the larger host society and interacting with other groups within. Theoretical models focussing on international student integration have stressed the importance of academic and social integration of students. In particular, Tinto's (1997, 1975) theory of student retention suggests that sufficient academic and social integration into university institutional communities will greatly influence students' persistence in their studies.

In scientific debate, several theoretical perspectives and conceptual axes exist, which elaborate some aspects of integration. This could potentially form a basis for empirical analysis. Considering the existing literature on Chinese students in Finland, this study and its proposed conceptual framework both rest on a four-faceted conceptualisation of the term 'integration'. Integration is considered to consist of the following conceptual domains: academic, economic, social and cultural integration.

2.2.1. Academic Integration

Many studies have addressed academic integration and its impact on student dropouts in HEIs. According to Tinto (1975, 1997), a person's academic integration can be measured based on grade performance and intellectual development during his/her studies. While international students enter university from various backgrounds and with differing motivations, their integration into the higher education system will ultimately determine their persistence or dropout. Later research has assessed the validity of Tinto's model and suggests that the students' academic integration, together with their educational objectives, predict their persistence in HEIs (Bers & Smith 1991). In addition to formal studies, informal interaction with faculty members plays a

vital role in the students' academic integration processes (Terenzini & Pascarella 1977).

2.2.2. Economic Integration

Newcomer participation in the labour market is often the most widely recognised indicator for successful economic integration. In practice, however, international graduates often find it difficult to get a job in their host countries due to a combination of factors, including lack of domestic language proficiency, lack of work experience, complicated visa extension procedures, closed professional networks or discrimination in the labour market (Shumilova & Cai 2015). Since it is not possible for international students to participate in full-time jobs while studying full time, the students' experiences in terms of internships, apprenticeships, job-seeking, part-time jobs and entrepreneurship during their studies are defined as evidence of their economic integration in this article.

2.2.3. Social Integration

It is evident that the social integration of international students facilitates their employment opportunities. This social integration refers to their social networks and involvement in local communities and may include activities in the neighbourhood, academic organisations, student organisations, leisure time clubs, voluntary organisation and so on. Bochner, McLeod and Lin (1977) have developed a functional model of international student networks (Functional Model of Friendship Networks [FMFN]) by classifying their social networks into three categories: co-national networks that affirm and express the culture of origin; networks with host nationals, which facilitate academic and professional aspirations; and multinational networks for recreation purposes. Although the FMFN model by Bochner, McLeod and Lin (1977) is somewhat dated, it is still often cited in literature on student migration (Hendrickson, Rosen & Aune 2011; Schartner 2015) and is largely relevant to such discussions.

Research has shown that it is relatively easy for international students to form friendship networks with 'co-national students' (Bochner, McLeod & Lin 1977; Furnham & Alibhai 1985; Hendrickson, Rosen & Aune 2011). The co-national networks play a vital role in the integration process as they may enhance the students' understanding of their new living environment, provide various supportive actions (Maundeni 2001) or attenuate the stress of adapting to new social and cultural environments (Kim 2000). However, exclusive engagement with co-nationals may in turn inhibit international students from forming friendship networks with representatives of the host society (Church 1982), prevent them from acquiring or improving their domestic language skills (Maundeni 2001) and impede intercultural learning processes (Kim 2000).

In terms of 'host-national friendships', there can be seen to be many benefits for international students developing these relationships. Past research has shown that international students report less homesickness, less loneliness and greater satisfaction, if they have more host-national friendships (Church 1982; Hendrickson, Rosen & Aune 2011).

Finally, 'multinational friendships' are found to dominate international student networks (Bochner, McLeod & Lin 1977). For students with adequate English skills, it is relatively easy to form multinational friendships with other international students, and research has shown that international students are able to easily locate their support among their international peers (Montgomery & McDowell 2009; Young & Schartner 2014). Multinational friendship can be seen as a viable, and in fact logical, alternative to the host national ties that were traditionally viewed as the single most important factor for achieving a sense of belonging within host environments (Kashima & Loh 2006). Schartner (2015) raises the question of whose need it is to achieve integration with host nationals, or is it the HEIs' endeavour to enable 'internationalisation at home'? His research, as a whole, calls for a more comprehensive and inclusive understanding of integration.

2.2.4. Cultural Integration

In recent years, it is widely acknowledged that integration is not only limited to social and economic factors, but that there is a need for a common basis of cultural[4] knowledge to create more profound understandings of new living contexts. Language proficiency that facilitates communication with local people is a crucial factor in gaining a more profound understanding of cultural characteristics. Past literature on international student integration experiences in Anglophone countries has highlighted the importance of English language proficiency in enhancing international student integration (Spencer-Oatey *et al*. 2016; Wang *et al*. 2012). Moreover, gaining an understanding of the basic rules and norms of the host society, as well as of the cultural expectations of the host nationals, facilitates the 'cultural integration' processes of international students. However, it is difficult to identify unambiguous indicators for cultural integration since the question of what exactly constitutes the core of the society, in terms of basic values and norms, is debatable. Specifically, it can be seen that in many societies with high immigration rates, the cultural orientation of the community has become increasingly heterogeneous, multifaceted and fluid. Furthermore, each society possesses tacit cultural norms that are hidden and, thus, more difficult to perceive. Acquiring tacit cultural knowledge is an important factor in the integration process as it helps newcomers to understand the cultural expectations of the host population.

Foreign language proficiency is generally regarded as an important aspect of cultural integration. Past research has noted that proficiency in English is closely related to the academic success and overall adaptation of international students in English-speaking countries (Lewthwaite 1996). However, for the international students residing in non-Anglophone countries, the influence of host language proficiency on integration is similarly important. For instance, Akhtar & Kröner-Herwig (2015) reported the German language proficiency of international students to be negatively associated with acculturative stress. Meng, Zhu and Cao (2017) examined Chinese international students in Belgium and showed that their social and academic adaptation, social connectedness and global competence in their host society were mediated by both English ability and local language skills.

Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual aspects that we used to examine Chinese student integration experiences in Finland. Although the four aspects of integration are charted separately, it should be noted that they are endogenous and closely related to each other. Integration in one sphere will influence the other aspects of integration.

3 Data and Methods

The data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 30 mainland Chinese tertiary-level students in Finland from 2015 to 2016.[5] Two main methods were used to recruit interviewees. International offices of HEIs across Finland were first approached with a request to send an invitation to all mainland Chinese students registered at their universities. Students who volunteered to participate in this research study were then contacted by the researcher, by email,

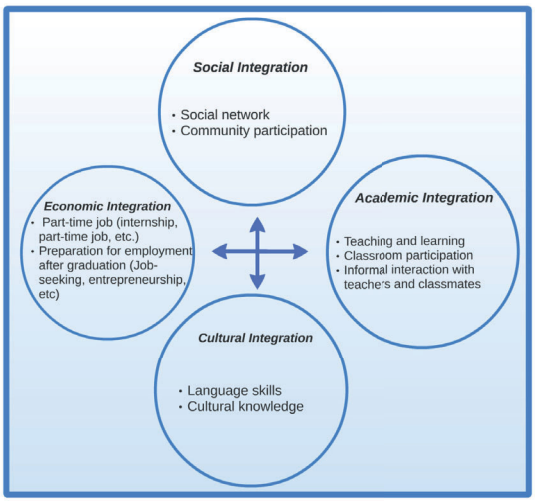


Figure 1. Conceptual Domains of International Student Integration

instant message or phone. Following this, snowball sampling was used as the research participants were encouraged to distribute the invitation letter among their friends for further participant recruitment. Permission to collect data from the research participants was provided by the Ethics Committee of the Tampere Region.[6]

This research looked at the two major types of Finnish tertiary-level study: universities and universities of applied sciences (UASs). Approximately half of the interviews were conducted in the Finnish city of Tampere, where two international universities and one UAS (polytechnic university) are situated. The remaining interviews were conducted with students from other major Finnish cities, such as Helsinki, Espoo, Turku, Joensuu and Oulu.

The group of respondents included students from a wide variety of backgrounds, in terms of gender, age, major subject, previous work and study experience, duration of residence in Finland and current location in Finland. Among the interviewees, 18 were female and 12 were male. The interviewees were studying in bachelor's, master's or doctoral programmes in various fields, including computer science, business management, engineering and so on. Two of the master-level students were working full time while carrying out their master's studies on a part-time basis.

Among the interviewees were students who had moved to Finland for one semester of study and students who had been residents in the country for >5 years. Given the diversity in the time intervals and integration phases of the participants, the authors were able to explore how different features of integration manifest in different phases. Students who had moved to Finland recently had the fresh experience of 'culture shock', while more senior students gave lively accounts about how they had managed to overcome integration problems at different stages, reflecting their development trajectories.

The interviews lasted between 1 hour and 3 hours and were conducted in mandarin Chinese by the first author. This shared language and cultural background facilitated communication between the interviewer and the interviewees (Welch & Piekkari 2006). While a list of interview questions was used for all interviews, flexibility and spontaneity were preserved by following up on the specific issues that emerged during the interview. All interviews were audio recorded, transcribed and anonymised for analysis.

Data collection resulted in 30 transcripts, which were analysed through thematic content analysis, primarily by the first author. Following familiarisation with the data, thematic codes consisting of pre-existing themes were generated based on the theoretical framework and preliminary analysis of the interview transcripts. In total, the thematic analysis identified 16 themes, which were arranged into the four domains of integration: academic integration (six themes), social integration (three themes), cultural integration (three themes) and economic integration (four themes). Next, the analysis entailed line-by-line coding, structured according to the four domains and 16 themes. The unit of analysis in the coding system was one paragraph, and paragraphs could be given multiple codes. In the third analytical step, every statement in the codes was further analysed and placed under an appropriate heading or thematic 'node, along with any others which were sufficiently similar' (Hannan 2007). This inductive process generated a number of sub-themes that are presented in the following section, supported by verbatim quotations from the interviews in order to establish clear links with the raw data.

In presenting the findings, no personal data are revealed that may cause the interviewees to be recognised. The anonymity of respondents was protected by only using gender and university subject major to characterise the respondents. Citations from the interviews conducted in mandarin Chinese were translated into English by the first author.

4 Chinese Students' Integration Experiences

4.1 Academic Integration

Most of the Chinese students interviewed reported difficulties in understanding the 'content of teaching' at the beginning of their studies. Several reasons contributed to such difficulties. Firstly, the students' English skills were inadequate in meeting the study demands of their universities. Even though they had studied English for many years and had passed an English language test before moving to Finland, the students still required an adaptation period to become familiar with using English in their studies and daily lives. Secondly, the interviewees needed time to adjust to their teachers' accents. Many students reported that their teachers' accents when speaking English was quite different from the American or British accent to which they were previously accustomed to. The students thus needed some time to learn to understand their teachers' speech.

Further, differences in 'intellectual background' made it difficult for some Chinese students to understand the content of teaching when sufficient instructions were not given. Even though the students were generally studying the same subject majors as in their earlier studies in China, some of them still found it difficult to adjust to the teaching in Finland, due to differences in teaching content and methodologies. Moreover, students who were studying under bilateral agreements between Finnish and Chinese universities still found themselves entering into completely new fields when coming to Finland. The course content was not synchronised between the two universities, and the students found themselves unprepared for their studies in Finland. As the following citation indicates, this created a significant barrier to the students' academic integration.

> Even though my major subject in Finland is International Business Law, most of the study material and law cases are from EU law. For a Chinese student who has little knowledge of EU law, it is very difficult to catch up with my classmates because they have a much better knowledge base than I have. (Female, International Business Law)

Besides difficulties in understanding subject content, the flexible and seemingly relaxed 'learning environments' in the Finnish higher education system posed challenges to Chinese students. In China, students are often faced with pressure from their teachers and peers to study hard. Each class has a monitor who distributes study-related information to students, helping them with both their academic and everyday lives. However, Finnish HEIs require more self-discipline. Students must direct their own studies according to their individual pace and manage their studies independently. To achieve academic success in Finland, students must be intrinsically motivated and highly disciplined. Thus, integrating within such a flexible education system can be challenging for those Chinese students who are less disciplined. One of the interviewees reflected on lessons that he had learned from his past study experiences:

> Some students think the education environment in Finland is very relaxed and flexible. Actually, it is not. Teachers are all the same throughout the world. They would like their students to become better, answer all the questions correctly and make fewer mistakes. Just because the teachers may forgive your mistake, does not mean you can be lazy and not work hard. They just think it is your own business and they would not mention it. The Finnish students who grow up in this environment are aware of that. However, I realised it too late as a foreign student. (Male, Computer Science)

'Pedagogical differences' between Chinese and Finnish higher education systems also required Chinese international students to adjust their learning strategies to meet the different study requirements. The Finnish HEIs value student independence and critical thinking, while the Chinese pedagogy traditionally focusses on lectures, pushing the students' ability to memorise the material and repeat it in exams. Since the educational goals of Finnish HEIs focus on learning and understanding subject content, this is especially challenging for students who struggle to comprehend the learning material well enough to produce critical opinions based on it.

Moreover, the lack of training in 'critical thinking' and questioning caused difficulty for Chinese students when participating in classroom discussions. Having been taught for years to respect the views of authority figures, some students found that questioning and challenging peers and lecturers engendered acute discomfort (Wu 2015). There were also other reasons that contributed to the Chinese students' silence in class. For one, some students were accustomed to giving the 'right answer' to teachers' questions and mentioned that they would be reluctant to blurt out whatever comes into their mind in class. Secondly, their silence in class could also be due to their individual personality traits, such as shyness and modesty. Thirdly, the lack of sufficient language skills prohibited some students from communicating effectively in class. Finally, some students felt that they needed to have a better understanding of the content taught to be able to offer their own opinions and feedback during classroom discussions.

Even though in the beginning, it was difficult for Chinese students to question the teachers' opinions and to actively participate in classroom discussions, many interviewees demonstrated successful transition after the initial settlement period. As the following citation shows, improved language skills and a better understanding of class content brought about more confidence when speaking in class.

> I realised that as a student, it is my right to ask questions in class. A student without questions is not a good student. Slowly, the more questions that I ask in the class, the more confident I get. The teachers like me more because I have my own ideas instead of sitting there like a stone. (Female, Higher Education)

Regarding the quality of education, while some interviewees appreciated the quality of Finnish higher education, not all of them were equally satisfied with teaching in Finland. Some interviewees complained about the quality of teaching in the UASs. Moreover, there appeared to be a gap between the quality of courses taught in English and Finnish within some universities. The gap was not only seen in the variety of courses available in each language but also in the supervision and the research opportunities available to international students writing their Master's theses.

4.2 Social Integration

It became evident that many Chinese students desired cross-cultural communication and companionship during their studies abroad. However, establishing friendship networks with local people or international students is not easy, especially if the student's language skills are not fluent enough.

In contrast, establishing 'co-national social networks' seemed to be relatively easy for Chinese students. The research revealed that co-national social networks provided students with information necessary for living in their host country, as well as providing essential social and psychological support. Even those interviewees who had foreign friends mentioned that they still maintained close strong social networks with local Chinese student communities.

> I have some very good Chinese friends here. They are like my family members. Some of the issues with study and relationships I would not share with my foreign friends since the cultural difference can be difficult for them to comprehend. However, I can always talk with my Chinese friends about those issues. (Female, Mechanical Engineering)

The interviewees discussed how Chinese students often supported each other in their academic work, such as when planning time schedules for their courses, discussing assignments, sharing research experiences, helping with proofreading, exchanging information about supervision and thesis writing, and so on. Chinese students also have established organisations to help one another with their academic and social lives. Many respondents had experiences of participating in the Chinese Students and Scholars Association (CSSA), an official organisation for overseas Chinese students and scholars, funded by local Chinese embassies. Across Finland, there are CSSA branches that organise various activities, such as orientation days, social events to celebrate major Chinese festivals and Chinese cultural events in association with the local Confucius Institute.

However, some respondents had noticed that engaging with only the Chinese community could be problematic for integration as it slows down the development of local language skills and reduces interaction with the local society and local culture:

> Many Chinese students came here, found a Chinese student community, and stayed inside the community ever since. They want to stay in their comfort zone, but actually, it is also a vicious circle. The fundamental reason for wanting to stay in the Chinese student circle is that their English is not good enough to communicate freely. (Male, Computer Science)

In terms of multinational social networks, the importance of becoming independent and taking the initiative to socialise outside the Chinese student community was highlighted by several students during the interviews. The research also revealed that it may be difficult for students to balance between their local Chinese community social networks and their international networks. On the one hand, the students cannot completely exclude themselves from the local Chinese communities. On the other hand, they can easily become exclusively engaged with the local Chinese community if they are not proactive in socialising with host-national and international students. Several interviewees mentioned that over-engagement with the local Chinese community can be problematic not only for their integration but also for their academic development.

> When I first came to Finland, I wanted to study hard and finish my Bachelor's degree so that I could apply for Master's degrees. However, in the University of Applied Sciences where I study, the other Chinese students do not go to class. They only learn make-up skills during the day, and play board games at night. They asked the new students not to go to class, because it is possible to pass the exams even though they do not study. After a while, I found my life was no different from my life before in China, since I was speaking Chinese every day. Then, I decided to stop making contact with them. (Female, Business Management)

According to the interviewees, socialising with international students was clearly beneficial for them. These students' English language skills improved and they gained knowledge about different cultures through their involvement in the international student community.

Some of the Chinese student interviewees reported difficulties in building 'social networks with Finnish students'. Several factors can be seen to contribute to such difficulties. First, all the Chinese interviewees had come to study in programmes taught in English. These programmes included very few Finnish students, which made it difficult for Chinese students to establish contact with locals. Second, while there were many references to the widespread phenomenon that 'Asians stick together' in the respondents' experiences; some of the interviewees said that the Finnish students also have closed circles and that it was difficult for outsiders to join these circles. Another important factor to consider was the Chinese students' limited Finnish language skills. While most of the interviewees agreed that Finnish language skills are essential for their integration into Finnish society, most of them did not speak Finnish fluently. Meanwhile, although most Finnish students spoke relatively fluent English, some interviewees mentioned that Finnish students were often reluctant to speak in English and preferred to speak Finnish.

However, despite the language barriers and cultural differences, many interviewees did note that they actually had some close Finnish friends. Their experiences suggest that being proactive and open-minded is of particular importance in integration. Finnish HEIs also actively contribute to international students' integration. Some universities had organised intercultural communication programmes, whereby international and Finnish students study together, promoting intercultural engagement. Additionally, one of the respondents had taken part in the 'Friendly Family' project, where international students are paired with Finnish families.

> I knew a Finnish old couple through the 'Friendly Family' programme. We were often cooking together. I told them a lot about China, including the food culture, Chinese politics, and so on. They also introduced me to many things in Finnish society that I did not know before. (Male, Computer Science)

The research findings also clearly point out that accommodation arrangements are important in facilitating the Chinese students' social integration. Living in an international student dormitory or sharing an apartment with Finnish or international students significantly improved the respondents' cross-cultural communication with other non-Chinese students. Since many of the interviewees said that they were unused to the Finnish partying and drinking culture, their roommates served as an important social bridge by giving them access to the culture in other ways.

4.3 Cultural Integration

As mentioned earlier, 'language skills', especially of the local language, are essential for the successful integration of Chinese students into the local host communities. However, most of the Chinese students in Finland are studying in English-taught programmes and, thus, it is unnecessary for them to learn Finnish. Although the majority of HEIs offer Finnish language courses, the Chinese students interviewed demonstrated that they lacked the commitment and perseverance to learn Finnish. Of all the interviewees, only one was able to speak fluent Finnish, while the others had limited proficiency. Many interviewees mentioned the difficulty of dividing their time and effort between their studies and learning a new language. They also noted that most Finnish people speak fluent English, especially in the higher education contexts. Thus, international students coming to study in Finland can adequately manage their daily lives in English, without learning Finnish. One of the doctoral students interviewed expressed the dilemma:

> Since I am doing my Ph.D. in Computer Science, it is not necessary for me to learn Finnish for my research, since we communicate through English and computer programming language. However, I cannot follow the Finnish news, or even ask for directions since I do not understand the language. I am totally estranged from Finnish society. I only read the news on Chinese websites. This way, even if I lived here for a hundred years, I would still be a Chinese. If I really decided to stay in Finland, I would have to learn Finnish. (Male, Computer Science)

One of the interviewees said that she realised that the importance of learning Finnish was not just in terms of communication but also 'for learning the Finnish culture'. The Chinese students mentioned several aspects of their lives that were influenced by the Finnish culture and its values. First, they were often impressed by 'equality' in Finnish society. Some of the students said that since living in Finland, they were impressed by how Finnish people tend to treat others equally, and in return, be treated equally themselves, regardless of social status, income or profession. Second, some interviewees said that they were impressed by the Finnish people's 'sense of responsibility' and 'rigidity'. Third, Chinese students were impressed by the trust shared between people in Finland. The interviewees said that, compared to China, they had experienced greater trust from others

in many aspects of Finnish society life. Fourth, several interviewees said that their awareness of environmental protection had improved during their stay in Finland. For instance, they had learned to sort their trash and to recycle. One of the interviewees was specifically impressed by the second-hand shops in Finland and felt that it was a good way to reuse second-hand products.

Some of the interviewees also mentioned that the 'cultural differences' between Finland and China made it difficult for them to integrate. For instance, differences between China and Finland in terms of the conceived family roles had caused concern for one respondent:

> There are some fundamental cultural differences between Finnish and Chinese culture. For example, the Finnish children would think the government raised them, and they would need to support themselves after they reached adulthood. Their parents also support themselves after retirement. However, as a Chinese, I will have to take care of my parents when they are old and retired. That is why the immigration policy that restricts the young immigrants from taking their parents to Finland is problematic for Chinese immigrants like me. (…) Eventually, I will have to make the choice between staying in Finland or returning home. (Male, Biochemistry)

Their responsibility, in the context of a single child, to take care of their parents was highlighted by several interviewees as one of the main reasons why they would consider returning to China in the long term. Currently, there are limited legal possibilities for the family reunion of migrants' parents. However, this may demand further research, especially as Finland seeks to attract and retain foreign (highly) skilled workers.

4.4 Economic Integration

It became evident that Chinese students with 'prior work experience' in China were better economically integrated than those students without any work experience. For those with previous work experience, coming to study in Finland meant a discontinuation of their career development in China. Thus, they often had clear career goals in mind past graduation and were constantly preparing themselves for their future careers. The language barrier was the primary reason why they could not integrate into Finnish economic life. However, some of the interviewees, especially those with subject majors in the field of computer science, believed that it was more important for them to acquire better technical skills to compete with other jobseekers, rather than trying to learn Finnish.

> As a computer engineer, I can communicate with others through computer program codes. If my programming skills were not as competitive as others were, the Finnish company would still choose to hire a Finn. Because no matter how good my Finnish is, I can never be as fluent in Finnish as a native speaker can. (Male, Software Engineering)

Besides the Finland study experience, which gave the students familiarity with Finnish culture and society, many interviewees believed that their personal knowledge of the Chinese language and of China's business culture was an important asset for them when looking for work in companies that were doing business with China. Moreover, for the Chinese students who chose not to work in Finland after graduation, they felt that their gained knowledge of the Finnish and Nordic cultures would still help them in future business dealings with Finnish or Scandinavian companies.

In order to relieve the financial burden of their studies in Finland, many of the interviewees had experiences of doing 'part-time jobs'. Working in local Chinese restaurants was the most common job. Taking care of the elderly or the disabled, cleaning and working on construction sites were other jobs mentioned by some interviewees. Even though many of them admitted that working in these low-skilled jobs took up time that they should have spent on their studies, one of the interviewees believed these part-time work experiences to be helpful for his personal growth and future career development.

Some of the interviewees had set up small businesses during their studies in Finland. The most common form of 'entrepreneurship' was as an international buyer setting up an online shop on a Chinese website (such as Alibaba) to sell European products to Chinese customers, taking advantage of the lower prices of certain products in Europe. The customers usually consisted of the students' transnational friendship and kinship networks. Moreover, the students used online social media (such as Weibo or WeChat) to distribute advertisements and attract potential customers. Their families and friends in China were also involved in these processes helping them with, for instance, the distribution of their products.

5 Conclusion

While previous research on international student integration has often adopted Tinto's model of student attrition and focussed more on social and academic integration (Mannan 2007; Terenzini & Pascarella 1977), this article introduces economic and cultural integration to construct and propose a theoretical framework, supported by empirical evidence on the integration of Chinese international students in Finland.

The overall contribution of this study to existing literature is fivefold. First, one research finding is the mediating role of both English and the host language. While the existing literature has highlighted the importance of proficiency in English in enhancing international students' integration (Spencer-Oatey *et al*. 2016; Wang *et al*. 2012), this study proposes that proficiency in both English and the host culture's local language is crucial for Chinese student integration in Finland. Lack of host language proficiency may inhibit students from socialising with the host community as well as from gaining full access to opportunities and facilities both within and outside the university. For students wishing to stay in the host country after graduation, knowledge of the local language is a topical factor, while competence in English is an important facilitating factor for integration in academic environments.

Second, the findings show that the maintenance of native ethnic identity, co-national networks and transnational ties from the home country in no way limits the students' integration into academic and societal host contexts. Contrary to Kim's (2000) argument that contact and friendships with host-nationals are more important for long-term adaptation, as co-national contacts only offer short-term support, the results of this study show that the co-national networks of Chinese students provided them with essential social, psychological and academic support. Economically, many students found internships or employment opportunities in positions linked to China, where their language skills, cultural knowledge and transnational contacts promoted the professional and institutional connection with China and were highly valued.

Third, as opposed to previous research that showed international student experiences to lack meaningful host-national contacts (Schartner 2015; Young *et al*. 2013), many of the Chinese students

interviewed in this case study had managed to establish meaningful host contacts, despite cultural differences and language issues. Many of the students were willing to put in the effort to make foreign friends in order to gain increased insight into different cultures and to learn foreign languages. Nonetheless, this must be partially attributed to the fact that Chinese student communities are smaller in Finland than in Anglophone countries.

Fourth, even though most of the Chinese students had passed an English language test before arriving in Finland, some of them still struggled with English in academic settings. The pedagogical and cultural differences between the Chinese and Finnish higher education systems were problematic for many students, especially with regard to the lack of development in critical thinking within the Chinese system. Some of the interviewees said that they were afraid to question their teachers' opinions and chose not to participate in the group discussions in class. However, after an initial settlement period, most of the Chinese students interviewed had indeed managed to adapt to Western teaching and learning styles and had managed to 'find their own voice' in their academic work and in class.

Finally, this research shows that while there are distinctions between the four dimensions of integration, they are also endogenous and influential for each other. For instance, language skills serve as the foundation that 'opens doors' to other aspects of integration. Meanwhile, the students' cultural knowledge of the host society and its history contributes to better social and cultural integrations. The findings also show that while the students may be largely focussed on their academic integration due to demanding course work, it is important not to neglect social integration. Social integration will not only alleviate international students' feelings of loneliness, stress and homesickness but may also ultimately contribute to their academic integration.

Notes

1. The Finnish higher education is free of charge for non-EU/European Economic Area (EEA) students before the autumn semester 2017.
2. As this article was being written, the Finnish government had decided to introduce tuition fees for non-EU/EEA students from August 2017 onwards.
3. After graduation, degree students may apply for a new residence permit to seek employment, pursue further studies or for family reasons.
4. The term 'culture' is conceptualized here as "acquired knowledge, learned patterns of behavior, attitudes, values, expectations, rituals and rules, and a sense of identity of history" (Webb & Read, 2000: 1).
5. This study was conducted at the University of Tampere, Finland. It was a part of the Marie Curie project TRANSMIC, coordinated by Maastricht University (https://law.maastrichtuniversity.nl/transmic/). The project was funded by the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme.
6. See http://www2.uta.fi/en/research/tutkimuksen-etiikka/ethics-committee-tampere-region.

References

Akhtar, M & Kröner-Herwig, B 2015, 'Acculturative stress among international students in context of socio-demographic variables and coping styles', *Current Psychology*, vol. 34, no. 4, pp. 803-815, DOI:10.1007/s12144-015-9303-4.

Berry, JW 2011, 'Integration and multiculturalism: ways towards social solidarity', *Papers on Social Representations*, vol. 20, no. 2, pp. 1-20.

Bers, TH & Smith, KE 1991, ',Persistence of community college students: the influence of student intent and academic and social integration'', *Research in Higher Education*, vol. 32, no. 5, pp. 539-556.

Bevelander, P & Pendakur, R 2014, 'The labour market integration of refugee and family reunion immigrants: a comparison of outcomes in Canada and Sweden', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, vol. 40, no. 5, pp. 689-709, DOI:10.1080/1369183X.2013.849569.

Bochner, S, McLeod, BM & Lin, A 1977, 'Friendship patterns of overseas students: a functional model', *International Journal of Psychology*, vol. 12, no. 4, pp. 277-294.

Church, AT 1982, 'Sojourner adjustment', *Psychological Bulletin*, vol. 91, no. 3, p. 540.

CIMO 2016, *International student barometer: Survey in Finnish higher education institutions*, Available from: <http://www.cimo.fi/instancedata/prime_product_julkaisu/cimo/embeds/cimowwwstructure/89922_ISB_summary_of_responses.pdf>. [Last accessed 23.12.207].

Esser, H 1980, *Aspekte der Wanderungssoziologie: Assimilation und Integration von Wanderern, ethnischen Gruppen und Minderheiten*, Luchterhand, Darmstadt, Neuwied.

Esser, H 2006, *Sprache und Integration: die sozialen Bedingungen und Folgen des Spracherwerbs von Migranten*, Campus, Frankfurt/Main.

Furnham, A & Alibhai, N 1985, 'The friendship networks of foreign students: a replication and extension of the functional model', *International Journal of Psychology*, vol. 20, no. 3–4, pp. 709-722.

GHK Consulting & Renming University 2011, *EU-China Student and Academic Staff Mobility: Present Situation and Future Developments*, European Commission, Available from: <http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/education/international-cooperation/documents/china/mobility_en.pdf>. [Last accessed 8.11.2017].

Global Times 2007, *Going to study non-English speaking countries become a new trend among Chinese students*, Available from: <http://language.chinadaily.com.cn/2007-02/16/content_811152.htm>. [Last accessed 7.6.2017].

Hannan, A 2007, *,Interviews in education research*', Available from: <http://cecs6200.pbworks.com/w/file/fetch/69409200/Using%20Interviews%20in%20Education%20Research.pdf>. [Last accessed 7.07.2017].

Hendrickson, B, Rosen, D & Aune, RK 2011, 'An analysis of friendship networks, social connectedness, homesickness, and satisfaction levels of international students', *International*

Journal of Intercultural Relations, vol. 35, no. 3, pp. 281-295, DOI:10.1016/j.ijintrel.2010.08.001.

Kashima, ES & Loh, E 2006, ‘,International students’ acculturation: effects of international, conational, and local ties and need for closure’, *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, vol. 30, no. 4, pp. 471-485.

Kim, Y Y 2001, *Becoming intercultural: an integrative theory of communication and cross-cultural adaptation*, SAGE Publications, Inc., Thousand Oaks, CA, viewed 24 December 2017, DOI: 10.4135/9781452233253.

Kim, YY 2000, *Becoming intercultural: an integrative theory of communication and cross-cultural adaptation*, Sage Publications.

Lewthwaite, M 1996, ‘A study of international students’ perspectives on cross-cultural adaptation’, *International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling*, vol. 19, no. 2, pp. 167-185.

Mannan, MA 2007, ‘Student attrition and academic and social integration: application of Tinto’s model at the University of Papua New Guinea’, *Higher Education*, vol. 53, no. 2, pp. 147-165.

Mathou, C & Yan, J 2012, ‘EU-China student and academic staff mobility: present situation and future developments’, *International Journal of Chinese Education*, vol. 1, no. 2, pp. 282-300.

Maundeni, T 2001, ‘The role of social networks in the adjustment of African students to British society: students’ perceptions’, *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, vol. 4, no. 3, pp. 253-276, DOI:10.1080/13613320120073576.

Meng, Q, Zhu, C & Cao, C 2017, ‘Chinese international students’ social connectedness, social and academic adaptation: the mediating role of global competence’, *Higher Education*, vol. 75, no.1, pp. 1-17, DOI:10.1007/s10734-017-0129-x.

Montgomery, C & McDowell, L 2009, ‘Social networks and the international student experience: an international community of practice?’ *Journal of Studies in International Education*, vol. 13, no. 4, pp. 455-466, DOI:10.1177/1028315308321994.

Niessen, J & Schibel, Y 2004, *Handbook on integration for policy-makers and practitioners,* European Commission, Directorate-General for Justice, Freedom and Security.

Schartner, A 2015, ‘You cannot talk with all of the strangers in a pub’: a longitudinal case study of international postgraduate students’ social ties at a British university’, *Higher Education*, vol. 69, no. 2, pp. 225-241, DOI:10.1007/s10734-014-9771-8.

Schunck, R 2014, ‘Immigrant integration’, in *Transnational activities and immigrant integration in Germany*, Springer, Switzerland, pp. 9-41.

Shumilova, Y & Cai, Y 2016, ‘Three Approaches to Competing for Global Talent: Role of Higher Education’ in *Global Perspectives and Local Challenges Surrounding International Student Mobility*, eds. Krishna Bista & Charlotte Foster, IGI Global, Hershey, PA, USA, pp. 114-135.

Shumilova, Y & Cai, Y 2015, ‘Three approaches to competing for global talent: the role of higher education’, in *Global perspectives and local challenges surrounding international student mobility*, p. 114.

Spencer-Oatey, H, Dauber, D, Jing, J & Lifei, W 2016, ‘Chinese students’ social integration into the university community: hearing the students’ voices’, *Higher Education*, vol. 74, no. 5, pp. 1-18, DOI:10.1007/s10734-016-0074-0.

Terenzini, PT & Pascarella, ET 1977, ‘Voluntary freshman attrition and patterns of social and academic integration in a university: a test of a conceptual model’, *Research in Higher Education*, vol. 6, no. 1, pp. 25-43.

Tinto, V 1975, ‘Dropout from higher education: a theoretical synthesis of recent research’, *Review of Educational Research*, vol. 45, no. 1, pp. 89-125.

Tinto, V 1997, ‘Classrooms as communities: exploring the educational character of student persistence’, *Journal of Higher Education*, vol. 68, no. 6, pp. 599-623.

Tremblay, K 2005, ‘Academic mobility and immigration’, *Journal of Studies in International Education*, vol. 9, no. 3, pp. 196-228.

UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2016, *Global Flow of Tertiary-Level Students,* UNESCO Institute for Statistics, Available from: <http://uis.unesco.org/en/uis-student-flow>. [Last accessed 9.8.2016].

Valle, RC, Normandeau, S & Gonzalez, GR 2015, ‚*Education at a glance interim report: update of employment and educational attainment indicators*’, *OCDE, Paris, January* 2015.

Wang, CD & Mallinckrodt, B 2006, ‘Acculturation, attachment, and psychosocial adjustment of Chinese/Taiwanese international students’, *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, vol. 53, no. 4, p. 422.

Wang, KT, Heppner, PP, Fu, C, Zhao, R, Li, F & Chuang, C 2012, ‘Profiles of acculturative adjustment patterns among Chinese international students’, *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, vol. 59, no. 3, p. 424.

Welch, C & Piekkari, R 2006, ‘Crossing language boundaries: qualitative interviewing in international business’, *Management International Review*, vol. 46, no. 4, pp. 417-437, DOI:10.1007/s11575-006-0099-1.

Wu, Q 2015, ‘Re-examining the “Chinese learner”: a case study of mainland Chinese students’ learning experiences at British Universities’, *Higher Education*, vol. 70, no. 4, pp. 753-766, DOI:10.1007/s10734-015-9865-y.

Young, TJ & Schartner, A 2014, ‘The effects of cross-cultural communication education on international students’ adjustment and adaptation’, *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, vol. 35, no. 6, pp. 547-562, DOI:10.1080/01434632.2014.884099.

Young, TJ, Sercombe, PG, Sachdev, I, Naeb, R & Schartner, A 2013, ‘Success factors for international postgraduate students’ adjustment: exploring the roles of intercultural competence, language proficiency, social contact and social support’, *European Journal of Higher Education*, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 151-171, DOI:10.1080/21568235.2012.743746.

Zhang, H 2013, *Academic adaptation and cross-cultural learning experiences of Chinese students at American universities: a narrative inquiry*, Northeastern University, Boston.

PUBLICATION III

Academic Integration of Mainland Chinese Students in Germany

Hanwei Li

Social Inclusion, 2017, 5(1), 13. doi:10.17645/si.v5i1.824
https://www.cogitatiopress.com/socialinclusion/article/view/824

COGITATIO

Social Inclusion (ISSN: 2183–2803)
2017, Volume 5, Issue 1, Pages 80–92
DOI: 10.17645/si.v5i1.824

Article

Academic Integration of Mainland Chinese Students in Germany

Hanwei Li [1,2]

[1] Faculty of Education, University of Tampere, 33100 Tampere, Finland; E-Mail: hanwei.li@staff.uta.fi
[2] Bielefeld Graduate School in History and Sociology, University of Bielefeld, 33615 Bielefeld, Germany

Submitted: 15 November 2016 | Accepted: 27 February 2017 | Published: 28 March 2017

Abstract
This article presents an analysis of the academic integration experiences of mainland Chinese tertiary-level students in Germany. Using Tinto's model, the article explores the challenges that Chinese students face during their academic integration, the strategies they employ, and the relationship between academic and social integration. The data were collected in spring 2016 by interviewing 26 mainland Chinese students studying either in German universities or universities of applied sciences. Four major challenges were identified and analyzed: language barrier, knowledge gap, pedagogical differences, and cultural differences. An important outcome of the study presented is that social integration serves as a facilitator for enhancing academic integration, but is not a prerequisite for academic success. Group learning with peers was found to enhance learning outcomes. Overall, Chinese students have exploited their own advantages in academic integration by exploring feasible strategies and benefiting from their past learning experiences. It is suggested that academic integration as a long and challenging process for international students should be acknowledged by the German HEIs, and that more institutional support and guidance are needed.

Keywords
academic integration; Chinese student; Germany; higher education; social integration

Issue
This article is part of the issue "International Migration and Ethnic Integration", edited by Yaojun Li (University of Manchester, UK) and Anthony Heath (University of Oxford, UK).

1. Introduction

While the migration studies literature generally focuses on the integration of labor migrants, family migrants, and asylum seekers, there is less research focusing on the integration of international students. This is partly because international student mobility is often seen as 'temporary', and international students constitute a 'less problematic' group of foreign arrivals. However, the number of students pursuing studies abroad continues to surge as higher education institutions around the world compete for the most talented students, and university enrolment continues to increase worldwide. International students have become the key target of many countries' battlefields of global competition for brightest and best. Canada, for example, has recently changed its electronic immigration selection system to make it easier for international students to become citizens. It counts half of students' time spent studying in Canada toward the period of residence required for citizenship (Smith, 2017). Meanwhile, many European countries, such as Germany, France, the Netherlands, and Finland, have also pursued a policy of allowing international university graduates an extension to their residence permits for job seeking after graduation. International students are no longer classed as 'temporary migrants', rather it is hoped that their stay in the host country will increase motivation for long-term settlement, and that their temporary movement could be part of a deliberate strategy for permanent migration (Tremblay, 2005). Thus, integration of international students has become topical and deserves more scholarly attention.

Nevertheless, international students still only constitute a minority of the total tertiary student population. Chinese students are the most numerous of the international tertiary-level students (UNESCO Institute for Statis-

tics, 2016). In 2013, over 4.1 million Chinese were studying abroad, representing 1.8 percent of all tertiary enrolments globally (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2016). Between the introduction of Deng Xiaoping's opening policy in the 1970s and 2015, around four million Chinese students went abroad to study, and this figure increases by approximately 19 percent annually. In 2016, about 520,000 Chinese students moved to study abroad (Ministry of Education of P. R. of China, 2016).

Chinese student migration mostly aims at the English-speaking countries (Chen & Ross, 2015; Gu & Schweisfurth, 2006; Kajanus, 2016), while Germany is the most popular destination among the non-English-speaking countries. According to the Institute of International Education, about 30,511 Chinese students were studying in Germany in 2015, making them the second largest group of international students in Germany (after Turkish students). The share of Chinese students of the international student population in Germany is around ten percent (Wissenschaft Weltoffen, 2016). Although most degree programs are still offered in German language (Bessey, 2012), Germany has become an increasingly popular choice for higher education among Chinese students.

Germany is a popular destination among Chinese students for several reasons. First, it is one of the few countries to offer all nationalities high quality higher education free of charge or for modest tuition fees, which is a major attractive factor for international students. Both English- and German-taught programs are provided for international students. Unlike many non-English-speaking countries that are recruiting international students for English-taught programs, most international students study on German-taught programs alongside native German students. German language is taught in universities across the globe and language institutes such as the Goethe Institut. Germany also arranges established standardized German language tests (DSH and TestDaF) in many countries in the world, where students can obtain a language certificate in support of their applications for studies in Germany. For those students who cannot reach the requirement to begin their academic studies in Germany, it is possible to start the studies in the *Studienkollegs* (*Studienkolleg für ausländische Studierende*) at German colleges and universities. These studies function as a 'bridge' to help international students enhance their German language skills, and become acquainted with German academic culture. Further, Germany has an organization specialized in promoting academic mobility between Germany and other countries. The German Academic Exchange Service DAAD (*Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst*) offers information on studying in Germany, on selecting a university, on admission criteria, and on preparing to embark on studies in Germany. It also offers various types of scholarships to students across the globe for exchange, studying German language, or studying on degree programs. The DAAD has offices in many countries of the world, including China, that actively offer information on how to apply to study in Germany, and on academic collaboration and mobility. For example, in China the DAAD has its own social network accounts on WeChat and Weibo that routinely distribute information on the application process for studying in Germany, presents introductions to specific German universities and cities, and reproduces testimonials from current students.

In addition, Germany is one of the first countries in the EU to actively seek to improve international students' access to the labor market. In the context of the recent political debate, international students were identified as future skilled workers. The aim was to make access to the labor market easier for them, especially in the information technology sector. International graduates holding a degree from a German university are in a favorable position for getting job offers. Moreover, due to their linguistic skills and intercultural communication skills, international students can serve as 'connectors' between their countries of origin and destination. The latter factor is particularly relevant for the export-oriented German economy (Aksakal & Schmidt-Verkerk, 2014).

Given this policy context, there has been growing concern over the extent to which German higher education institutions (HEIs) manage to provide appropriate and responsive academic and personal support for the integration of international students. While numerous surveys have examined the macro-level trends in student mobility and the quality of German HEIs, less attention has been paid to the experiences of individual international students.

The purpose of this paper is to investigate how Chinese students integrate into German academic environments, what challenges they encounter while studying in Germany, and what coping strategies they adopt for such challenges. The following research questions guided the study presented here: (1) what challenges do mainland Chinese students encounter while studying and living in Germany? (2) What strategies do Chinese students use to overcome challenges in their academic integration? and (3) Is there a connection between academic and social integration among Chinese students studying in Germany?

2. Integration of International Students: The Research Context

In earlier research on the academic and social integration and study progress of international students in a foreign academic setting, the terms 'integration', 'adaptation', and 'acculturation' have been used interchangeably in different settings, carrying largely similar connotations. This article chooses to use the term 'integration' because integration can be seen both as a goal and a process. When it comes to social relations, the goal of the German integration policy is that foreign newcomers will establish a relatively robust relationship with the host community, while not abandoning their home ethnic community and ethnic identity (Süssmuth, 2009). As

a goal integration refers a situation in which newcomers have attained at least a moderate level of language and cultural competence within the country of settlement that ensures their ability to thrive. It also implies that migrants actively try to become a part of the surrounding society (Budyta-Budzyńska, 2011). It can be said that a successful adaptation presupposes that newcomers integrate into their new living environments, which in turn is usually a result of a successful acculturation process.

2.1. Academic and Social Integration

Tinto (1975, 1997) developed a model of student attrition that laid a theoretical foundation for studying tertiary student retention. In his model, Tinto established the approximate parity between social and academic integration in their effects on dropout. The central concept proposed in Tinto's model is that a student's integration into the social and academic systems of the higher education institution is what ultimately results in perseverance or dropout. The higher the degree of integration of the students into the college system, the less likely they are to fail to fulfill a commitment and achieve goals leading to the completion of their degree programs. A person's academic integration can be measured in terms of the grade performance and intellectual development achieved during studies. While international students enter university with various backgrounds and motivations, their integration into the higher education system will ultimately determine their perseverance or dropout. Tinto describes two imperative conditions for successful retention: (1) institutional experiences (involving the education system); and (2) academic and social integration. Those who feel at home, participate actively in extra-curricular activities, and feel connected with fellow students and teachers are more likely to persevere in their studies.

The predictive validity of Tinto's model was tested in various settings. One study suggested that students' academic integration, together with educational objectives, predicts their persistence in the HEIs (Bers & Smith, 1991). In addition to formal studies, informal interaction with faculty members plays a vital role in the students' academic integration (Terenzini & Pascarella, 1977). However, Tinto's model does not specify the process by which institutional experiences affect student learning. While student characteristics prior to entry may affect their academic integration, the institutional experience results in a certain study effort and ultimately in student persistence. A study by Severiens and Schmidt (2009) examining institutional experiences of student learning, found a direct positive effect of the learning environment on international students' progress in their studies. A problem-based learning environment, more than conventional programs, helped students to develop their cognitive skills and stimulated them to acquire new knowledge. Problem-based learning also appeared to be successful in stimulating students to obtain credits, and achieve a higher level of social and academic integration.

One of the key themes among the studies using Tinto's model is the relationship between academic and social integration. The findings of Mannan (2007) show that academic and social integration complement each other among undergraduates. However, Rienties, Beausaert, Grohnert, Niemantsverdriet and Kommers (2012), who examined the validity of educators' impressions, found that international students are insufficiently adjusted to higher education in their host countries, both academically and socially, and that the extent of their academic success is multifaceted. International students with a (mixed) western background were better academically and socially integrated, and achieved a higher study performance than did domestic students. By contrast, international students with a non-western background were less socially integrated, but still achieved a similar study performance. The social adjustment of students was negatively related to their study performance. These findings suggest that the relationship between academic and social integration processes is complex in nature and merits further investigation.

Research on the social integration of international students has particularly emphasized the positive effect of establishing social networks with host nationals (Bochner, McLeod, & Lin, 1977a; Coles & Swami, 2012). Research has also shown that international students report less homesickness, less loneliness, and greater satisfaction if they have more host-national friends (Church, 1982; Hendrickson, Rosen, & Aune, 2011). Contacts with host nationals have also been shown to enable international students to develop local networks, attain a better understanding of local cultures, and acquire the necessary social skills (Li & Gasser, 2005). Yet in practice it may be difficult to make contacts with host-nationals. It is relatively easy for international students to form friendship networks with co-national students (Bochner, McLeod, & Lin, 1977b; Furnham & Alibhai, 1985; Hendrickson et al., 2011). While contact with co-nationals can play a vital role in the international students' social networks, engagement with co-nationals may inhibit them from forming friendship networks with representatives of the host society (Church, 1982), and from acquiring or improving skills in the host language (Maundeni, 2001), which impedes intercultural learning processes (Kim, 2000). Accordingly, Kim (2000) argues that co-national contacts only offer short-term support, while contacts and friendships with host-nationals are more important for social integration.

2.2. Chinese Learners in Western Higher Education

Studies focusing on the academic integration of Chinese students in western HEIs have produced mixed and sometimes contradictory results. Kennedy (2002) found that Chinese culture has an influence on Chinese students' learning styles: Chinese students are low in individualism and high in collectivism, and exhibit a strong sense of belonging to a social group and a preference to work together to solve problems (Kennedy, 2002; Nield, 2009;

Sayers & Franklin, 2008) Some studies have found that students from a Confucian cultural background have more difficulties in adjusting to the western teaching style than do their western peers. They may adopt a less active learning strategy, and be hesitant about voicing their own opinions in the classroom, while western students are more used to participating actively in class (Auyeung & Sands, 1996; Duanmu, Li, & Chen, 2009; Strohschneider & Guss, 1999; Vita, 2001; Yuen & Lee, 1994). In addition, Cortazzi and Jin (1997) have shown that Chinese and British students are likely to have different expectations regarding students' and teachers' roles. The Chinese students expect a teacher to be a 'knowledge model' who gives students clear guidance for them to follow, while British teachers act more as facilitators of students' learning by encouraging the learners' own creativity and independence.

However, there are other studies which contradict these findings, suggesting that, contrary to the Chinese student stereotype, Chinese learners have a stronger preference for high-level, meaning–based learning strategies and prefer to avoid rote learning. Kennedy (2002) found that Chinese students can adopt new learning styles when the learning context changes and new learning approaches are needed. Thus, more active and communicative modes of learning may be preferred to a traditional teacher-centered style. According to Durkin (2008), Chinese students approach their learning tasks by adopting a strategic attitude to learning. She found that most East Asian master's students opted for a middle way which synergizes their own cultural approach to critical thinking with western-style critical thinking and debate that are culturally acceptable to them. In this way international students, without being fully acculturated, become 'empathetic insiders', who understand and value the new practices, perceiving them as opportunities for growth and development. Zhang (2013) also found that some Chinese students would choose a middle way to improve their linguistic competence for better academic integration. Instead of approaching native speakers, some Chinese students tried to make friends with other non-Chinese students to practice their English and thus gain more confidence in intercultural communication.

2.3. Chinese Students in Germany

Given the relatively large number of Chinese students in German HEIs, little research has so far been conducted on this group. The existing literature suggests that Chinese students studying in Germany share some problems with those in other countries, such as language issues, financial stress, loneliness, and difficulties in academic integration. Zhu (2012, 2016) explored Chinese students' academic adjustment in four phases: pre-departure, initial, developing, and final phase. She found that Chinese students' insufficient preparation (language proficiency and knowledge about German universities) in the pre-departure phase led to difficulties in the initial phase. The students often described their initial experiences as a 'catastrophe', as they were not at all familiar with the academic system in Germany. In the developing phase, Chinese students reported progress in German language and knowledge about German universities, which facilitated their further development. One major challenge in the developing phase was to negotiate the difference in academic expectations between home and host universities. In the final phase, Chinese students showed understanding and appreciation of the expectations at German universities. German language proficiency, academic support, and personal effort together influenced the Chinese students' academic adjustment at German universities.

Moreover, Chinese students studying in Germany with German as the language of instruction reported greater challenges in their academic and social integration (Zhou, 2009). The study by Mao (2011) showed that only half of the international students had studied German before arriving in Germany, while the rest began learning German only on arriving in the country. Consequently, less than one third of Chinese students taking part in the study could report that their proficiency in German was 'good' or 'very good', even though their studies in a German university had already begun (Mao, 2011).

By examining a group of German and a group of Chinese students, Luo and Kück (2011) examined the similarities and differences between these students' learning behaviors and styles. They found that the learning styles of the two groups were amazingly close, as both groups were oriented towards improving their competence and being creative through self-motivation. In addition, they used similar learning methods, such as self-learning and asking questions, and viewed the lecturers as professional and moral examples in academic settings. This demonstrates that cultural differences do not necessarily affect the learning approaches of German and Chinese students.

Guan (2007) compared Chinese and German students' adjustment at the University of Bremen and the University of Göttingen. His research at the University of Bremen the former research suggested that the concept of self played an important role in the adjustment of Chinese students; while at the University of Göttingen he found that when facing difficulties Chinese students used different resources from their German counterparts to deal with the problem. Most Chinese students preferred to turn to books and media instead of talking with native Germans.

In sum, much of the literature on the academic and social integration of international students adopts a cultural perspective focusing on the tensions caused by attempts to cope with cultural differences in a new environment. The research presented in this article was contextualized in different literatures concerning the nature of international students' intercultural communication and intercultural experience. Yet the emphasis was not placed on cultural difference as such, but encompassed various challenges facing the students arising from cultural, peda-

gogical, linguistic, and institutional perspectives that are also due to the stress of integrating into the larger societal context in addition to the academic context.

Meanwhile, while much attention has been paid to 'cultural difference', less has been paid to the processes of learning, which may be identical across different cultural and academic settings. As the foregoing literature review shows, learning styles may be similar among students from different cultural backgrounds. Strategies for the academic integration of international students may prove to be just as useful when implemented in a brand new academic setting.

For the purposes of the research presented here, the list of relevant questions concerned how students cope with pedagogical and cultural differences, participate in classroom and group learning, interact with teachers and classmates inside and outside class, and how they succeed in their assessments. Social integration refers to a process or state where students establish relatively robust relationships with host-national individuals or communities and take part in diverse social activities. Since the focus of this article is on the academic integration of Chinese students, the examination of their social integration is limited to whether their social integration facilitates their academic integration.

3. Data and Methods

Data collected through semi-structured interviews were used to explore the challenges and coping strategies of academic integration among Chinese students in Germany. The author interviewed 26 mainland Chinese tertiary-level degree students in two German universities during spring and summer 2016. Most of the interview questions (except those eliciting demographic information) were open-ended questions enabling students to talk freely and in depth within the range of the research questions, while also allowing flexibility to delve into topics which were not expected at the beginning of the study. All interviews were conducted by the author in Mandarin Chinese to lower the potential barrier of cultural and linguistic difference, while allowing the students to delve deeper into the subject of interest. Most of the interviews were conducted at two German universities. Both universities are large research and teaching HEIs offering instruction in the main academic disciplines.

Multiple methods were used to recruit interviewees. First, the author asked the international offices of the two participating universities to send invitations to all mainland Chinese students registered in these universities to participate in the research. The students who volunteered to participate in the research were contacted by email, instant message, or telephone. Second, snowball sampling was used. The research participants were encouraged to invite their friends and other mainland Chinese students who might be interested in joining the research. Third, a research assistant helped to distribute the invitation to interviews through the local Chinese students' association network. Among the interviewees, 16 were female and 12 male students. All participants were in their twenties with an average age of 24 years for female and 26 for male students. The interviewees came from various academic backgrounds: five were studying natural sciences, four social sciences, three mechanical engineering, three medicine, three computer science, three sports management, two arts and humanities, two German linguistics, one English literature.

Most of the interviewees came from urban middle and upper middle class family backgrounds in China. The group of interviewees included students who had just come to study in Germany for one semester, and those who had come to Germany for more than five years. As the time interval and integration phases of the interviewees were diverse, the author was able to explore which features of academic integration manifest in different phases. Students who had moved to Germany recently had fresh experience of 'culture shock', while the senior students gave lively accounts of how they had managed to overcome academic integration problems in different stages and on their development trajectories. The interviews lasted from one to three hours. The shared language and cultural background facilitated communication between the interviewer and the interviewees. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. The interview data were analyzed using interpretative content analysis; particularly interesting insights were written down during the interview, but most of the analyses were carried out on the basis of the interview transcripts.

In the following section, the challenges and coping strategies of Chinese students' academic integration into Germany will be discussed in detail. In presenting the findings, no such personal data is revealed that would make the interviewees recognizable. The anonymity of respondents is protected, and no real name is disclosed in the article. In the quotations, gender and major subject will serve to characterize the respondents. Citations from the interviews conducted in mandarin Chinese were translated into English by the author.

4. Findings

4.1. Challenges in Academic Integration

Most of the Chinese students in Germany were studying abroad for the first time in their lives. The challenges they encountered during their academic integration can be categorized into the following themes: language barrier, knowledge gap, cultural difference, and pedagogical difference.

4.1.1. Language Barrier

All Chinese students interviewed stressed the importance of German linguistic proficiency in their studies. Indeed, many interviewees had come to study in Germany specifically because they wanted to be fluent in German.

Some mentioned that they wanted to be fluent in German because they were influenced by German culture and its specifics, such as football or automobiles. Some interviewees estimated that, in addition to achieving academic success in their major subjects, fluency in German was a great added value for their future careers, as the quotation below shows:

> It is very common for my generation to go to study in the UK, the cost is higher but you can graduate with your M.A. in one year (after completing the bachelor's degree). However, I chose to study in Germany because there are relatively fewer people speaking German compared to English. When I graduate, I would not only have a diploma from a country with a good reputation for higher education, but also speak two foreign languages. (Female, Medicine)

The language barrier has been mentioned repeatedly in many earlier studies as a major challenge to the integration of international students. However, the extent and severity of the language problems among Chinese students are greater in Germany than in English-speaking countries for three reasons as follows: First, German is the second or third foreign language for most of the Chinese students. While there are international high schools that teach German as a foreign language in China, most of the students study German for one to two years in China or in Germany, and then take the German language test DSH or TestDaf in order to be enrolled in a German HEI. However, even if they succeed in obtaining the language certificate, their linguistic capacity is often far from sufficient to accomplish their academic tasks. The following quotations show that studying in German is not easy for Chinese students:

> I think the most difficult challenge in studying here is the language. You don't know what the teacher is talking about, don't know what your classmates are talking about, and when you read the book you want to tear the book apart….You know that when we were in China, we studied English for many years from primary school to university and when we go abroad it is still difficult to use English. Not to even mention mastering German in the short term. Even if we had passed the language test, and had studied the language for two years, when we entered the classroom, we still found ourselves far behind. I think it is necessary for the German universities to reform the DSH test because most foreign students who passed the test are still not fluent enough in German. (Male, Media Studies)

> Although I had passed the DSH exam, I still had difficulty adapting to using German language in daily life as well as in academic settings. I found that the German language that people used in daily life was totally different from what we studied in class back in China. The use of vocabulary is different, and people from different regions have different accents. They also tend to speak faster than the listening material we learned from in our classes. It took me about one to two semesters to get used to using German in my daily life. (Male, Sports Management)

Second, the German language taught in China was not the same as the German that the students used in their academic and daily lives. Even for the students of German linguistics it took some time to get used to this:

> After coming here (Germany), I found that the things we learned in China were just on paper. I only realized after living in Germany that the (German) language is not spoken in that way (that we learned in China). The cassettes that we listened to in class were very slow, while in reality they speak much faster. When I listened to the German teacher explaining in German, it still took some time before I could truly adapt….I think it took around two months. (Female, German Linguistics)

For some other students not involved in studying German linguistics, it might take up to two years to get used to studying in Germany.

Third, the students who passed the German language tests were adequate in communicating in daily life in German, but their academic vocabulary for their major subjects was still limited. However, in the German-taught classes, German and international students studied together as the teachers did not take them and their special demands into account. This caused problems for some interviewees:

> The teachers will teach according to the tempo of German students, without taking into consideration the difficulty of foreigners to follow the class in their second or third foreign language. The pace of the class is often really fast, and there is some vocabulary or even teachers' writing on the blackboard that are incomprehensible for us. (Male, Electrical Engineering)

However, those students who had participated in the *Studienkollege* before they began their bachelor's studies in Germany, generally had better linguistic proficiency than those who had only taken language classes before entering German universities.

By contrast, Chinese students on English-taught international master's programs seemed to encounter fewer problems. Although they still needed to expand their vocabulary and improve their proficiency in spoken English, the language alone was less of an issue for them compared to those who studied in German.

4.1.2. Knowledge Gap

Notably, Chinese students studying their major subjects in either German or in English reported difficulties in understanding the contents of teaching:

> At the beginning of my studies I could understand at most 30 to 40 percent of the teaching. For some classes that were difficult, my understanding was even less than 30 to 40 percent, because even if I had taken the class in Chinese I wouldn't have been able to understand everything. I feel I was not as good as my fellow classmates. (Male, Electrical Engineering)

The difficulty of understanding the content of teaching was often due to gaps in the Chinese students' knowledge background due to differences in curriculum content and structure between German and Chinese universities. Even for the students coming to study in Germany under bilateral agreements the courses they had taken in China were not entirely compatible with the German courses:

> What we learn here is very difficult, combined with the abstruse language, it is really torture to understand what the book is trying to say. The classes in which we have background knowledge from classes we took in China were a bit better. But if we hadn't learned something before, we needed to start from the beginning, and this the most difficult part….Once we were required to understand the mechanism of a machine. In China, we had never studied the mechanism behind this machine before. There were at least two to three classes of knowledge gap between our current knowledge reserve and the knowledge required to accomplish this task. We had to work for ten days from 9 a.m. to 11 p.m. in the library with help from others to solve that. It almost drove us crazy. (Male, Machine Mechanics)

The curricula and the focus of studies in China may be so completely different from those in Germany that some students had to study those courses over again. Failing a course was a frustrating experience for many:

> Media studies in China generally focuses on practical issues, like how to do an interview and how to produce TV programs. But the courses we took here were more focused on the theoretical side. We have courses in sociology, history, philosophy, literature, etc. It makes me frustrated….It was often that after one semester, I still had no clue what some courses were about. I have never failed classes before, but failing classes here became so common that I became numb…many things I know in Chinese. But I don't know how to express myself in German. Thus, although I have abundant knowledge in my head, I couldn't tell it to others. (Male, Media Studies)

> In the first semester, I could understand most of the basic courses. But for some classes that required content-specific background knowledge, such as one class that called *Althochdeutsch* (Old High German OHG), I basically could not understand everything. (Female, German Linguistics)

Surprisingly, failing a lot of classes was a common theme mentioned by several interviewees. Many of them mentioned that they had never failed a class in China, but after they came to Germany, the combined challenge of studying a rigorous module in a foreign language caused them to fail classes more often than before. According to the rules in Germany, if a student fails class three times, he or she will no longer be allowed to study that major in any German university. This increased the stress the Chinese students were enduring.

4.1.3. Cultural Difference

Some of the interviewees mentioned that their difficulties in academic integration were caused by differences in cultural practices. This was especially evident among students of humanities and social sciences. In most cases, the students were not able to specify what they meant by 'culture'. This is understandable as cultural phenomena are often immanent, and hidden culture featuring tacit cultural knowledge (such as values and norm systems) is difficult to recognize. The situation was different with visible cultural characteristics. Cultural differences were obvious in cultural studies, for instance in learning experiences which required the students to read literature or review films. One of the interviewees said:

> Sometimes in the class, the teacher mentioned a certain author, film director or element of a genre of film and my classmates immediately responded. However, I might not have any clue of what they were referring to, or at least I would not know how to express it in German. Also, the same element, such as a portrait of a dragon in a film, is also quite different in a German film and in a Chinese film. Such cultural differences often cause difficulty for me to follow in class. I found the same difficulty understanding a Chinese film when it was shown in my class. (Female, Film Studies)

In some cases cultural differences were reflected in different ways of thinking and approaching knowledge. One of the senior students compared the German tradition of analytical thinking and debate culture with Chinese traditions as follows:

> I think integration is a very bloody word, that after you become integrated, the uncomfortable feeling will always accompany you that on the surface you look like a German, but in fact it is a burden you have to carry with you. Take the critical thinking and debate culture in Germany for example, they like to think this is a constructive way of solving problems…..Germans like to tear the whole thing apart, and analyze where a problem is, then they will find the solution, and tell you point by point they are right. This kind of analytical thinking and debate culture is totally different from the humane way of dealing with conflict as low key as possible in China. It conflicts with the humane

> touch of Chinese society where unnecessary conflicts are usually avoided. (Male, Higher Education)

4.1.4. Pedagogical Differences

While the classes in China often took the form of teacher-centered lecturing, the learning methods used in German classrooms may be more diverse, including group assignments, classroom discussion, and so on.

Having been provided with answers for many years and having being taught to respect the views of authority, some Chinese students found questioning and challenging peers and lecturers engendered acute discomfort (Wu, 2015). Most of the Chinese students interviewed reported that they would not join in the classroom discussion. The language barrier was the main issue preventing them from active engagement in class. The following students, who had already studied in German HEIs for four years, reported still having problems in taking part in classroom discussions:

> Until now I can basically know what the teacher was talking about in class, because the teacher must be talking around the main topic. But I have no way to predict what the classmates were about to say. My response reflex is still much slower than the native speakers, and it is not possible for the other students to repeat the content again. That is why I couldn't join in the classroom discussion so well, because I could understand what the teachers were talking about because their expressions are predictable, but following what the classmates were saying is still difficult. (Male, Sociology)

Many other reasons also contributed to a perceived lack of participation of Chinese students in class: First, accustomed to the Chinese teaching and learning environment, some Chinese students felt they were expected to give the 'right answer' to the teachers' questions. They would be reluctant to articulate what came into their minds in class. Second, their silence in class might also be linked to individual personality traits, such as shyness and modesty. They were not accustomed to the western debate culture in class, and would prefer to say nothing. Lastly, a number of students felt a need to know more about the teaching content to provide their own feedback in class, as seen in the following remark:

> In the beginning, I would not participate in the classroom discussion because I was really afraid that I would make a mistake if I spoke up in class, and that would make me feel ashamed. So I was basically answering the teacher's questions by heart by myself. Even if sometimes I found the answers from my classmates were wrong, I would still not correct them. (Female, Computer Engineering)

Moreover, examinations in German HEIs take different forms from those in China. While in China most exams are written exams, the German exams may also be oral. This form of examination could be quite intimidating for Chinese students, since they had never encountered an oral exam before.

Besides different forms of exams, the final mark usually entails several pieces of essay writing. The students interviewed were still struggling to use German language or, lacking experience in essay writing, might fail to deliver what their teachers were looking for in their work. In addition, the students studying humanities and social sciences were often required to write several essays throughout the whole semester, which could be a daunting and demanding task for the Chinese students. As one of the students said:

> There were four modules in our major for each semester. For each of the modules one essay of around 30 pages was required. Together we needed to write about 120 pages for one semester. It took me about one semester to adapt to such intensity of reading and writing. (Female, English Linguistics)

Some of the exams might also be group projects in which the students needed to collaborate to develop a business project or industrial model by themselves. Some of the students interviewed stated that this was the most difficult form of assessment since their knowledge deficit was still too big to fulfill the demand of completing the project by themselves. Coupled with the pressure from working with classmates from other cultural backgrounds this created acute stress for them to cope with. However, it was also a perfect opportunity for them to learn from their peers while doing a group project on their own.

5. Chinese Students' Academic Integration Strategies

5.1. Social Integration and Academic Integration

The research findings imply that social integration could facilitate Chinese students' academic integration, but those students who were not socially integrated still managed to achieve their academic goals. This result is similar to the findings of the study by Rienties et al. (2012), but additional explanations and nuances can be presented in light of the present study.

Based on the interview data, it can be said that social integration facilitates academic integration mainly through enhancing the students' proficiency in German language and their understanding of German culture. The interviewees explained their experiences as follows:

> I intentionally chose to live in a WG (shared dormitory) with five German flat mates. They are very patient in helping me improve my German, and always speak more slowly when talking to me. One of my flat mates said to me, "Why you still say it the wrong way? You have to listen carefully how we say it." I followed

> her advice and now my German is much better than before. (Female, English Linguistics)
>
> Spoken German cannot be learned only through taking classes. You have to get into contact with people. Because different people have different habits of speaking, and use different expressions. Some speak fast, slow, clear, or unclear. You have to get used to different speaking habits of different people. (Female, Computer Science)

While some students were frustrated by their initial failure and communication problems, and would prefer to socialize with only Chinese students, those who managed to step out from the co-national network had benefited from their efforts, which had facilitated their academic integration and enriched their personal lives:

> I think one of the major losses of many Chinese after coming here is that they seemed to have lost the capacity to communicate with other people like they did in China. That they were all hiding at home, do not get in touch with the society or the people. I think a social network is not something that you only establish when you need it. Like some of the assignments I need to do for my class, I got help from a friend of a friend. An established network will also help you gain more trust when you are looking for a job. (Female, Mass Media Studies)

However, the students studying very demanding subjects expressed their frustration with the heavy burden of study assignments so that they could not afford to spend as much time on social activities as local or exchange students. For them, social integration might impede academic integration since their study tasks were so burdensome that the students needed to concentrate and devote all their time to their studies. To facilitate better academic integration, the students managed to achieve their study goals by utilizing their social networks with other Chinese students, especially senior ones, and relying on the professionals that they could find in the internet:

> We often have group tutor sessions with senior Chinese students. They do not necessarily understand everything, but it is nevertheless helpful for us. (Female, Chemistry)

The findings show that, no matter whether with host-national, international or co-national students, teaching and learning from others greatly facilitates learning. As one of the Chinese students described his experience:

> I often discuss with my classmates. Some knowledge I can read for a day without understanding anything. But discussing with others for one hour can be more efficient than studying by myself for many days. Some knowledge you don't understand but others might have comprehended very well. Just a few examples and you will get the clue….Most of us are helping each other. Nobody can say that I understand everything in this class that I don't need to discuss with others. (Male, Electronics)

Further, the Chinese students rely on online networks with other Chinese to facilitate their better academic integration in Germany. There are various online discussion forums, social media, or websites such as Zhihu[1] (similar to Quora) that are dedicated to helping netizens solve difficult issues. As in the example mentioned above, one of the students had a pressing task so that it was only with the help of professionals that the students found online through a Chinese website that they managed to complete the assignment.

It can therefore be stated in summary that social integration is helpful for Chinese students' better academic integration, since it enhances their linguistic proficiency in German and enlightens them about German culture, enriches their personal lives, and helps them open doors to new opportunities. However, even without a host-national network, most Chinese students still managed to achieve their academic goals since they relied on their Chinese peers and senior students, as well as on professionals that they found online. Teaching and learning from others or in a team have proven to be an effective means to achieve better academic integration, no matter if the others are co-national, host-national, or international students.

5.2. Critical Thinking and Debate Culture

The Chinese students generally had to go through a phase of gaining a clearer understanding of the learning content, and then to the next stage of critical thinking. The most academically successful students generally developed their capability for critical thinking through their studies. Their better understanding of learning content generally built upon their improved German/English language skills. To compensate for the difficulties in following teaching in class, they would generally invest extra hours at home to digest the material before and after class. After their understanding of the learning material improved through intensive reading, the students would gradually develop critical thinking skills so that they began to form their own judgments about the learning material and express these in their academic work and in class:

> Most of the education in China stopped at the phase of understanding. However, they didn't teach the students to ask 'so what?' after they have acquired the knowledge. I think the main difference in German higher education is that they will give a broad perspective of the field by asking you to read different articles

[1] Zhihu is an online platform to ask questions and connect with people who contribute unique insights and quality answers.

> and book chapters in one semester. After you have established a systematic knowledge of the field, you will need to critically form your own opinion. This is what is lacking in Chinese higher education. And the process of critical and innovative thinking is also the beginning of academic research. I think it will take a long process to adjust to acquire the critical thinking capability. It is an enlightening process, and this process is lacking in Chinese higher education system. (Female, German Linguistics)

However, there were also students who took a negative view of the critical thinking strategy as a learning approach in German universities. One of the interviewees said:

> I think the critical thinking I witness in the classes here is quite superficial. Sometimes the students give their opinions and judgments on a certain topic based on their own experience or sometimes based on partial examples from reality. In the classes in China, the teacher told us in the first class: 'I don't expect you to give any opinion on the text for now. You need to fully understand the content first. So I will guide you to read the original text word by word so that you can have a better understanding of the author.' (Female, Sociology)

5.3. Benefit from Past Learning Experience

While the challenges posed by studying in a German HEI were great, some Chinese students could benefit from their previous study experiences in China that smoothed the transition. Their previous education in China had trained them to be resilient and tenacious, so that the challenges they faced in Germany were overcome by a 'can-do spirit'. One interviewee thought that Chinese students have been well trained to cope with learning tasks abroad after years and years of training in a highly competitive education system:

> I think my western peers can be easily frustrated since they are more self-centered and used to getting what they want. And when they cannot get what they want, they feel pain. They are the best and brightest students so that they always feel they can control their lives. But for us, we are used to not being able to have full control over our lives. No matter where you are born, after being through a college entrance exam, we have all experienced an abundant amount of failure training. Most of the Chinese students I know, as long as they have the perseverance to proceed, can finish their studies. I have never seen anyone develop psychological issues because of study pressure. (Female, Law)

Unlike many studies that assume rote learning is only a surface learning method adopted strategically by students to pass exams, one of the interviewees said that through memorizing, he managed to achieve a better understanding than before:

> There is an old Chinese saying that, read for a thousand times, the meaning will reveal itself. For some of the formulas I don't understand I will try to memorize them. After reciting, reiterating, and comparing with other examples, slowly you will know what it is about. (Male, physics)

Those students with adequate language skills felt that completing the study tasks was no longer a cause of concern. Adopting a strategic approach towards learning, one female student described her experience:

> I think an exam is something that the Chinese worry about the least, because we grew up with exams. Although you don't understand one hundred percent of what the teachers were saying in class, there is still hope. They will give us all the PowerPoints to study by ourselves. Even if you still don't understand, you can ask the teacher. (Female, Medicine)

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the difficulty of using a foreign language in academic contexts combined with knowledge gap, pedagogical differences, and cultural differences posed challenges for the Chinese students to achieve academic success. Many students expressed frustration at their lack of linguistic proficiency and adequate general knowledge causing them to fail many classes like never before. However, these challenges also served as a stimulus to come up with new strategies that were more appropriate for their own learning habits and personal dispositions.

Social integration has been proven to facilitate Chinese students' better academic integration by enhancing their linguistic proficiency and improving their cultural awareness. Nevertheless, this is not an absolute prerequisite for better academic integration since the Chinese students without strong social ties with German students also managed to achieve their academic goals by turning to other Chinese for help. The key strategy for studying difficult subjects appeared to be learning in a team with others, regardless of nationality, so that through mutual teaching and learning, the students' study efficiency was greatly enhanced.

The western way of critical thinking and debate was another key barrier that also revealed the underlying cultural difference between east and west. Some interviewees thought that criticism is a missing phenomenon in Chinese education, and that Chinese students only begin to achieve critical awareness after coming to study abroad. However, others doubt the efficiency of putting it into practice prematurely in class when the students have not yet reached advanced comprehension of the learning material. Meanwhile, analytical and critical thinking are claimed to be incompatible with Chinese cul-

ture, which emphasizes being humane and avoiding unnecessary conflict.

Contrary to the conventional stereotype of Chinese students who only rely on 'learning by rote' and passively listening to teachers in class, this research shows that the students were actually resourceful and innovative in pursing their academic goals through active participation and learning through various sources and platforms. Rote learning was utilized as a pathway to better deep learning. Some interviewees argued that the Chinese students are well-equipped to meet academic challenges in a foreign context since they are used to high pressure exams, and have acquired resilience and tenacity to meet the challenges of academic integration since they have lived through one of the most competitive education systems in the world.

Recognizing the challenges of Chinese students' academic integration and the strategies used to cope with these challenges helps the HEIs to adapt to the demands of foreign students. Most German HEIs provide orientation lectures and activities to facilitate the integration of international students. However, according to the findings of this study, such orientation activities did not sufficiently address the challenges international students face in adapting to German academic environments. It is recommended that the German HEIs organize specific initiatives to address the academic integration of international students, such as mentoring projects that help the students to adapt to their new learning environments more easily. Offering extensive language courses would also be helpful for students using a foreign language in an academic setting. Lastly, academic institutions could organize more social activities with faculty members and students to promote social networking between international students, faculty members, and other fellow students, thereby enhancing international students' class communication, and facilitating their integration into the academic and social environments of the host country.

Acknowledgments

The study was conducted at Bielefeld University, Germany. It was a part of the Marie Curie project TRANSMIC, funded by the European Union's 7th Framework Programs, coordinated by Maastricht University, which the author gratefully acknowledges. The author would like to thank Pirkko Pitkänen, Virve Kallioniemi-Chambers, and Luuk van der Baaren for providing constructive and useful comments on an earlier version this paper.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

References

Aksakal, M., & Schmidt-Verkerk, K. (2014). Characteristics of temporary transnational migration: The German case. In *Characteristics of temporary transnational migration, collected working papers from the EURA-NET project*.

Auyeung, P., & Sands, J. (1996). A cross cultural study of the learning style of accounting students. *Accounting & Finance*, *36*(2), 261–274.

Bers, T. H., & Smith, K. E. (1991). Persistence of community college students: The influence of student intent and academic and social integration. *Research in Higher Education*, *32*(5), 539–556.

Bessey, D. (2012). International student migration to Germany. *Empirical Economics*, *42*(1), 345–361.

Bochner, S., McLeod, B. M., & Lin, A. (1977a). Friendship patterns of overseas students: A functional model. *International Journal of Psychology*, *12*(4), 277–294.

Bochner, S., McLeod, B. M., & Lin, A. (1977b). Friendship patterns of overseas students: A functional model. *International Journal of Psychology*, *12*(4), 277–294.

Budyta-Budzyńska, M. (2011). *Adaptation, integration, assimilation: An attempt at a theoretical approach*. Warsaw Collegium Civitas. Retrieved from http://migracje.civitas.edu.pl/migracje/images/pdf_eng/chapter%203.pdf

Chen, Y., & Ross, H. (2015). "Creating a home away from home": Chinese undergraduate student enclaves in US higher education. *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs*, *44*(3), 155–181.

Church, A. T. (1982). Sojourner adjustment. *Psychological Bulletin*, *91*(3), 540.

Coles, R., & Swami, V. (2012). The sociocultural adjustment trajectory of international university students and the role of university structures: A qualitative investigation. *Journal of Research in International Education*, *11*(1), 87–100.

Cortazzi, M., & Jin, L. (1997). Communication for learning across culture. In D. McNamara & R. Harris (Eds.), *Overseas students in higher education: Issues in teaching and learning* (pp. 76–90). London: Routledge.

Duanmu, J., Li, G., & Chen, W. (2009). Determinants of international students' academic performance: A comparison between chinese and other international students. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, *14*(4), 389–405.

Durkin, K. (2008). The middle way: East Asian master's students' perceptions of critical argumentation in UK universities. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, *12*(1), 38–55.

Furnham, A., & Alibhai, N. (1985). The friendship networks of foreign students: A replication and extension of the functional model. *International Journal of Psychology*, *20*(3–4), 709–722.

Gu, Q., & Schweisfurth, M. (2006). Who adapts? beyond cultural models of 'the' Chinese learner. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, *19*(1), 74–89.

Guan, H. (2007). *Anpassung und Integration der chinesischen Studierenden in Deutschland-eine Untersuchung anhand des Beispiels an der Universität Bremen* (Doctoral Dissertation).

Hendrickson, B., Rosen, D., & Aune, R. K. (2011). An analysis of friendship networks, social connectedness, homesickness, and satisfaction levels of international students. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, *35*(3), 281–295.

Kajanus, A. (2016). *Chinese student migration, gender and family*. Springer.

Kennedy, P. (2002). Learning cultures and learning styles: Myth-understandings about adult (Hong Kong) Chinese learners. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, *21*(5), 430–445.

Kim, Y. Y. (2000). *Becoming intercultural: An integrative theory of communication and cross-cultural adaptation*. London: Sage Publications.

Li, A., & Gasser, M. B. (2005). Predicting Asian international students' sociocultural adjustment: A test of two mediation models. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, *29*(5), 561–576.

Luo, X., & Kück, S. (2011). Gibt es Lernstile, die kulturspezifisch sind? Eine interkulturelle Annährung an das Lernstilkonzept anhand einer vergleichenden Untersuchung am Beispiel deutscher und chinesischer Studenten. *Interculture Journal: Online-Zeitschrift Für Interkulturelle Studien*, *10*(15), 37–62.

Mannan, M. A. (2007). Student attrition and academic and social integration: Application of Tinto's model at the university of Papua New Guinea. *Higher Education*, *53*(2), 147–165.

Mao, X. (2011). *Die soziale und wirtschaftliche Llage der chinesischen Studierenden in Berlin 2010*. GRIN Verlag.

Maundeni, T. (2001). The role of social networks in the adjustment of African students to British society: Students' perceptions. *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, *4*(3), 253–276.

Ministry of Education of P. R. of China. (2016). Trend of Chinese students studying abroad in 2015. Retrieved from http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_xwfb/gzdt_gzdt/s5987/201603/t20160316_233837.html

Nield, K. (2009). The problems of applying labels of learning style to national cultures. *International Journal of Learning*, *16*(7), 425–434.

Rienties, B., Beausaert, S., Grohnert, T., Niemantsverdriet, S., & Kommers, P. (2012). Understanding academic performance of international students: The role of ethnicity, academic and social integration. *Higher Education*, *63*(6), 685–700.

Sayers, J., & Franklin, T. (2008). Culture shock! Cultural issues in a tertiary course using reflective techniques. *Reflective Practice*, *9*(1), 79–88.

Severiens, S. E., & Schmidt, H. G. (2009). Academic and social integration and study progress in problem based learning. *Higher Education*, *58*(1), 59–69.

Smith, C. S. (2017). Canada beckons international students with a path to citizenship. *The New York Times*.

Strohschneider, S., & Guss, D. (1999). The fate of the moros: A cross-cultural exploration of strategies in complex and dynamic decision making. *International Journal of Psychology*, *34*(4), 235–252.

Süssmuth, R. (2009). The future of migration and integration policy in Germany. *Migration Policy Institute*, 1–23.

Terenzini, P. T., & Pascarella, E. T. (1977). Voluntary freshman attrition and patterns of social and academic integration in a university: A test of a conceptual model. *Research in Higher Education*, *6*(1), 25–43.

Tinto, V. (1975). Dropout from higher education: A theoretical synthesis of recent research. *Review of Educational Research*, *45*(1), 89–125.

Tinto, V. (1997). Classrooms as communities: Exploring the educational character of student persistence. *Journal of Higher Education*, 599–623.

Tremblay, K. (2005). Academic mobility and immigration. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, *9*(3), 196–228.

UNESCO Institute for Statistics. (2016). Global flow of tertiary-level students. Retrieved from http://uis.unesco.org/en/uis-student-flow

Vita, G. D. (2001). Learning styles, culture and inclusive instruction in the multicultural classroom: A business and management perspective. *Innovation in Education and Teaching International*, *38*(2), 165–174.

Wissenschaft Weltoffen. (2016). *Wissenschaft weltoffen kompakt: Facts and figures on the international nature of studies and research in Germany*. Deutsche Akademische Austauschdienst (DAAD) und Deutsche Zentrum für Hochschul- und Wissenschaftsforschung (DZHW GmbH). Retrieved from http://www.wissenschaftweltoffen.de/publikation/wiwe_2016_verlinkt.pdf

Wu, Q. (2015). Re-examining the "Chinese learner": A case study of mainland chinese students' learning experiences at british universities. *Higher Education*, *70*(4), 753–766.

Yuen, C., & Lee, S. N. (1994). Applicability of the learning style inventory in an Asian context and its predictive value. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, *54*(2), 541–549.

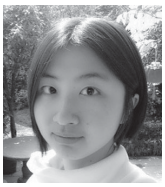
Zhang, H. (2013). *Academic adaptation and cross-cultural learning experiences of chinese students at American universities: A narrative inquiry* (Doctoral Dissertation).

Zhou, J. (2009). *Zwischen "elite von Morgen" und liu-xue-laji ("Müllstudenten"): Chinesische studenten in Deutschland* (Doctoral Dissertation). Retrieved from https://portal.dnb.de/opac.htm?method=simpleSearch&cqlMode=true&query=idn%3D1000848345

Zhu, J. (2012). *Academic adjustment of Chinese students at German universities* (Doctoral Dissertation).

Zhu, J. (2016). Approaching the end: Appreciating the German learning environment. In *Chinese overseas students and intercultural learning environments* (pp. 175–186) Springer.

About the Author



Hanwei Li is a Marie Curie PhD researcher working on a European Commission funded project entitled Transnational Migration, Citizenship and the Circulation of Rights and Responsibilities (TRANSMIC). She is currently pursuing a joint degree of PhD in Education at the University of Tampere and PhD in Sociology at the University of Bielefeld. Her research interests include: Asia-Europe student mobility, academic integration, socio-cultural integration, internationalization of higher education transnationalism, investment migration, and citizenship.

PUBLICATION IV

Aspiration and Integration infrastructure: A study on Chinese students' integration in Finland and Germany

Hanwei Li

Working Papers – Bielefeld University, Centern on Migration, Citizenship and Development, 2018(160).
http://www.uni-bielefeld.de/(en)/soz/ab6/ag_faist/downloads/WP_160.pdf

CENTER ON MIGRATION, CITIZENSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT

Hanwei Li*

Aspiration and Integration Infrastructure: A Study on Chinese Students' Integration in Finland and Germany

COMCAD Arbeitspapiere - Working Papers

No. 160, 2018

* Faculty of Education, University of Tampere, Finland and Bielefeld Graduate School in History and Sociology (BGHS), Bielefeld University, Germany. Comments welcome to: hanwei.li@staff.uta.fi

2018

Li, Hanwei: Aspiration and Integration infrastructure: A study on Chinese students' integration in Finland and Germany, Bielefeld: COMCAD, 2018 (Working Papers – Centre on Migration, Citizenship and Development; 160)

The COMCAD Working Paper Series is intended to aid the rapid distribution of work in progress, research findings and special lectures by researchers and associates of COMCAD. Papers aim to stimulate discussion among the worldwide community of scholars, policymakers and practitioners. They are distributed free of charge in PDF format via the COMCAD website.

Bielefeld University
Faculty of Sociology
Centre on Migration, Citizenship and Development (COMCAD)
Postfach 100131
D-33501 Bielefeld
Homepage: http://www.uni-bielefeld.de/ag_comcad/

Abstract

European countries such as Germany and Finland are increasingly interested in attracting and retaining international tertiary students to supply their workforces with highly skilled labor. However, the retention rate among international tertiary graduates is relatively low despite the favourable policy incentives. Drawing on field research on mainland Chinese tertiary-level students in Finland and Germany, this article unravels this "mystery" by pinpointing a trend towards a "weak integration trap" among Chinese students. Weak integration trap refers to the situation in which the students can ensure their survival, but lack the capability to pursue their aspirations, to gain access to valuable resources in the host society, or to become full members of that society. They may in consequence fail to complete their studies and remain in the host society after graduation as they desired, and may also lack a sense of belonging, or experience low levels of well-being. This weak integration trap may be caused by a lack of aspiration for further integration, or insufficient, unevenly distributed and conflictual integration infrastructure. This article conceptualizes and examines the crucial nexus between integration aspiration and integration infrastructure that leads to the weak integration trap, and outlines implications for future research.

Key words: integration, integration infrastructure, aspiration, Chinese student, Finland, Germany

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

One paradox regarding today's student migration is that while many countries, such as Finland and Germany, have introduced favorable policies to not only attract, but also to retain international tertiary-level graduates, the retention rates of international graduates, especially among those coming from outside the EU/EEA countries, are still comparatively low. In 2011, the percentage of international students changing residence permit status after graduation was only around 25 percent in Germany, and 22 percent in Finland (Morris-Lange & Brands, 2015). However, in countries such as Canada and Australia, for instance, the corresponding percentages are over 30 percent. While the economic and societal conditions of the host societies and other external factors play a vital role, whether students wishing to stay are successful in integrating into the host societies also plays a decisive role. Past research has repeatedly documented cases of international students who study abroad but end up engaging mostly in 'co-ethnic bubbles' or 'international bubbles' with limited interaction with either the host nationals or the host society (Rienties, Heliot, & Jindal-Snape, 2013; Zhou & Cole, 2017). Especially for students studying in non-Anglophone countries, it is not uncommon for some of them to stay many years without learning or becoming very fluent in the local language, which creates a major barrier when after graduation they seek work in the host society (Bessey, 2012; Meng, Zhu, & Cao, 2018; Rienties, Luchoomun, & Tempelaar, 2014; Zhu, 2012). This draws our attention to the individual and structural factors contributing to better integration of international tertiary-level students.

To better understand the integration of international students, this research will differentiate between integration into the academic contexts and the societal contexts. Academic contexts includes the higher education environments in which the international students' academic and social lives are embedded. Societal contexts refers to the social, cultural and economic environments in which the students live within the host societies. The students may have aspirations for integrating into the academic contexts but very often, only those students wishing to remain in the country are motivated to integrate into the societal contexts (Li & Pitkänen, 2018).

In this article I explore the integration experiences of international students in both academic and societal contexts through a case study of Chinese students in Finland and Germany. I analyze the experiences of those Chinese students wishing not only to successfully complete their studies but also intending to stay in the host country. Chinese students constitute the largest group of international migrant students in the world (Börjesson, 2017). Numerous

studies have been presented on the integration of Chinese and other international students in Anglophone countries such as the U.K., the U.S.A. and Australia. However, little research has focused on the integration experiences and challenges of international students in non-Anglophone countries. This research aims to narrow the gap through this case study.

One interesting phenomenon emerging from the research is that many Chinese students were successful in adapting in their daily lives and studies, in establishing networks, and even in finding work in the host society. However, they still lack the capability to achieve equal access to valuable resources in the host societies, to pursue their aspirations, or to become full members of the host societies. This phenomenon is especially evident in non-Anglophone EU countries, since the local language may be a significant barrier to international students' integration. The language barrier may lead to difficulties in completing studies, finding internships or part-time jobs, and also in finding future career opportunities after graduation. It was observed that both in Finland and Germany that even among those students who managed to find a job (such as working as doctoral researchers), the sense of belonging and personal wellbeing was often low due to the language barrier that prevented them from socializing with local people and leading their daily lives as they wished.

This article argues that this phenomenon is a result of an interaction of lacking integration aspirations and inadequate and incoherent integration infrastructure to support such students' integration.

'Integration aspiration' is defined here as a person's motivational drive to take the actions needed to become an active and competent member of the host society. This may be achieved through various activities, such as language learning, socializing with host nationals, looking for job opportunities and so on. Aspiration can be seen as a mindset or attitude (Carling, 2014; Carling & Collins, 2018a), that is "a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor" (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). Similar to integration aspiration, some literature uses the term 'motivation for integration', defined by Kim (Kim, 2001) as the extent to which migrants are willing to make efforts to participate and become functionally competent in the host environment.

The term 'integration infrastructure' is introduced in this article to enhance the understanding of the role of migration infrastructure in settling into a new country. According to Xiang and Lindquist (2014), migration infrastructure is continuously involved in facilitating, mediating, organizing and influencing integration processes post-arrival in destination countries. Drawing on a wider understanding of the integration processes in cross-border migration (Ager & Strang, 2008; Alba & Foner, 2015; Castles, 2010; Dörr & Faist, 1997; Faist, 1994), this paper

introduces the term integration infrastructure to explore how infrastructure operates in integration processes, utilizing the findings of the case studies conducted on Chinese students in Finland and Germany. I therefore argue that integration infrastructure can be understood as a part of a larger social infrastructure that utilizes the reproduction of knowledge, resources, facilities, laws and regulations in the society in question, which in turn conditions migrants' integration. Integration infrastructure can thus be seen to shape migrants' aspirations for integration and their future prospects of achieving it. Subsequently, by exploring how integration infrastructure conditions integration aspirations and processes, we gain a better understanding of integration itself. Essentially, this necessitates a re-orientation of our questioning about how the migrant influx produces integration infrastructure, to thinking about how integration infrastructure produces integration.

The role of integration infrastructure in facilitating newcomers' integration is particularly evident in non-Anglophone countries. While studying and working in non-Anglophone countries poses challenges for migrants due to the language barrier, highly skilled migrants and student migrants who are fluent in English may be able to adapt to local life by remaining in an international or English "bubble" without getting to know the local language. This is especially evident in the case of Finland, as foreign arrivals rarely speak Finnish and most Finns are able to speak English. Meanwhile, some forms of integration infrastructure are predominantly designed to facilitate the integration of refugees and family migrants, whereas highly skilled migrants and international students are often expected to mobilize the resources that they have access to, and to integrate by themselves (Heikkilä & Peltonen, 2002).

It should be noted that our core concepts - integration aspiration and integration infrastructure - do not comprise an equally weighted dyad. While integration aspiration refers to individual motivational factors, integration infrastructure is an analytical category that reflects particular understandings of how the integration process works through the myriad of institutions, actors, policies and regulations. Yet the friction between the two concepts arises from their very connectedness: they both relate to how integration is initiated, approached, experienced, sustained or interrupted. Later in this article I examine these two concepts in detail, starting with an investigation of the differences between weak and strong integration and the links between integration aspiration and integration infrastructure. This will be done by relating the concepts to the broader semantic field in which they are located.

To ascertain why some Chinese students wishing to remain in the host society did not manage to do so, this article systematically explores this phenomenon by examining the integration aspiration and integration infrastructure that promote or impede Chinese students' integration. The analysis of this article is based on qualitative fieldwork data collected from inter-

views with Chinese students in Finland and Germany between 2015 and 2016. It outlines key arguments and findings in five main sections. First, the article discusses the theoretical considerations from individual and structural perspectives of integration aspiration and integration infrastructure. After a section on background information and methodology, it explains the manifestation of this phenomenon in the Finnish and German contexts. It then explicates the possible negative implications to be drawn from data analysis. The article goes on to explore the causes of the phenomenon under discussion from individual and structural perspectives, examining the lack of aspiration for further integration, and inadequate, insufficient, or conflictual integration infrastructures. Through this, I argue, the crucial nexus between integration aspiration and integration infrastructure emerges as key to understanding the phenomenon under discussion. The article concludes with a discussion of the main findings and implications for future research.

2. Theoretical Considerations

2.1 Integration

Although integration has become a central topic in migration studies (Favell, 2001, 2010; Spencer & Cooper, 2006), it is increasingly criticized as a problematic concept due to its politicization - the domination of a practical approach over an analytical and theoretical one – and its inadequacy for dealing with an increasingly multi-cultural and diverse society (Grzymala-Kazlowska, 2018). Integration continues to be confused with assimilation through special policies and in the public debate or to be understood as the participation of immigrants in the life of the receiving society instead of migrants establishing relationships with their receiving societies while still maintaining their ethnic identity (Berry, 1997). In Germany, for instance, there is an increasing drive advocating the rejection of the term “integration” in favor of “participation” (Faist & Ulbricht, 2017).

However, the concept of integration still has its merits. First, integration still connotes a certain perception of social reality that “participation” does not. Faist and Ulbricht (2017) argue that “integration” has two dimensions: participation and belonging. Integration refers to communal relationships (Vergemeinschaftung), characterized by belongingness, the setting of boundaries, and the binary conceptualization of in-group members and outsiders. Participation has more to do with ‘associative relationships’ (Vergesellschaftung), through exercising civil, political, social and cultural rights and responsibilities. The processes underlying the formation of communal relationships are ambivalent, function as a socio-moral basis for

wide-ranging social integration on a national level, and constitute elements of culturalization or boundary formation along cultural lines. These dual consequences provide a fundamental starting point for analyses of participation of migrants and non-migrants.

Alba and Foner (2015, pp. 4-5) summarized the two main mechanisms that appear to foster integration. The first mechanism highlights the 'parity of chances', meaning those that improve the access of migrants and their children to valuable social resources, such as income or education, and that promote greater equality between migrant and native groups. The second mechanism emphasizes 'full membership', meaning the process of migrants becoming part of the enlarged membership circle in the host national community, which encompasses the migrants and their descendants avoiding being marginalized as "them", in contrast to the "us" of the majority group. Thus full integration implies parity of life chances with members of the native majority group, as well as recognition as a legitimate part of the national community (Alba & Foner, 2015).

In this research, integration can be understood from the migrant and the host community/society perspectives. From the host community/society perspectives, integration refers to the process or endeavor through which the migrants become part of the enlarged membership circle in the host community, while maintaining their ethnic and cultural heritage. It also means 'having the sense of dignity and belonging that comes with acceptance and inclusion in a broad range of societal institutions' (Alba & Foner, 2015, p. 1). From the migrants' perspectives, integration pertains to the process or state of development of the migrants' capability (or ability) to pursue their aspirations in the host society , and to improve upon life chances to gain access to valuable social resources. When it comes to social relations, they have established relatively robust relationships with the host community without necessarily abandoning their home community and ethnic identity. Integration refers to a situation in which migrants have attained at least a moderate level of host society language proficiency and the cultural competence necessary in their country of settlement to ensure their chances of thriving. In addition, successful integration also means that the newcomer is actively trying to become a part of the surrounding society.

On the other hand, this article identifies the different states between 'strong integration' and 'weak integration'. For the purposes of this research, 'strong integration' signifies a more advanced state of an immigrant's entry into the host society than weak integration. Weak integration is defined as the preliminary level of integration. From migrants' perspectives, it means that the migrants have not yet developed sufficient capabilities to pursue their aspirations in the host society. They have gained some but not the same educational and/or work opportunities, and access to valued social resources as the long-term native-born citizens. It

indicates that the migrants have not yet reached parity of life chances with the native majority group. From the perspective of the host community/society the migrants are not yet recognized as a legitimate part of the national community. This refers to a state in which the migrants are potentially still lacking the language fluency, cultural competence and social relations with the host majority group, and/or face some forms of discrimination or exclusion that prevents them from gaining parity of life chances with members of the native majority group or from being recognized as a legitimate part of the national community.

The reason for differentiating between strong and weak integration is that many students, and possibly other migrants, may reach the stage of weak integration and remain there for years. This phenomenon may be due to structural barriers that cannot be easily be overcome despite the best efforts of the migrants. It may also be due to a lack of aspiration for further integration or inadequate support from the integration infrastructure, which I will explain later in the text.

2.2. Integration Aspiration

What is integration aspiration? What are the psychological processes at work? How is it related to the “weak integration trap”? In the migration literature much of the research addresses the challenges, processes and outcomes of integration among various migrant groups (e.g. (Dörr & Faist, 1997; Phillimore, Humphris, & Khan, 2018; Rienties et al., 2014)) as well as migration aspiration (Carling, 2014; Carling & Collins, 2018b; Carling & Schewel, 2018), but less attention has been paid to the aspiration toward integration.

Integration aspiration is therefore conceptualized in several interrelated ways.

First, integration aspiration is an interplay between the migrants’ own characteristics and the characteristics of the place. As noted by Jorgen and Schewel (2018), the value of living in a specific place depends on both the characteristics of that place, and its interplay with the individuals’ needs and preferences. The host society is an important part of the living environment, especially as regards the local socio-cultural environment, living atmosphere, economic and political situations and welcoming attitude towards the migrants. The migrants’ spatial preferences and geographical imaginaries only come into contact with reality when they arrive and begin living in the destination country. The interplay between the characteristics of the place and the migrants’ own characteristics and preferences will ultimately shape the migrants’ well-being, trajectories of integration and impact on the migrant’s willingness to make the necessary efforts to integrate or not. In addition, it is not only a matter of where and

how the migrants adapt and integrate, but also, of who integrates. If the migrants cannot imagine themselves living in the current host society in the long term, they are likely to lack integration aspiration.

Second, integration aspiration may be perceived as a comparison of places, especially regarding the comparative socio-economic and socio-political situations that provide opportunities for the migrants' personal and career future prospects. Individuals' notions of their own future prospects are largely dependent on a socio-culturally and economic existing entity that allows them to fulfil particular expectations. The socio-economic situation in one place among others and shapes the migrants' potential capabilities to earn a living and build their future careers. If, for instance, the glass ceiling for career development is too strong for the non-native populations, or the attitude against recruiting people of migrant background prevails within that culture, this will definitely undoubtedly have a negative impact on the migrants' future prospects, and subsequently on their aspirations for further integration.

Third, this may be examined from life-course perspectives. The timing of migration may affect how other events are experienced and how further life courses unfold (Wingens, Windzio, Valk, & Aybek, 2011, p. 288). Whether the migrant is currently in the life stage of planning to settle down, developing a stable relationship and building a family unit, or still at an age of seeking adventure, exploration and experience, has decisive impacts on integration aspiration. After arrival in the receiving country the outcomes of incorporation processes are closely linked to the various factors emphasized in the sociological life course approach, such as transitions, path-dependence, timing, sequencing, etc. (Wingens et al., 2011, p. 284).

2.3. Integration Infrastructure

While past research has acknowledged that a lack of appropriate infrastructure may inhibit the integration processes of newly arrived migrants (Waxman, 2001), what can we gain from conceptualizing integration infrastructure? How does integration infrastructure affect Chinese students' integration processes and outcomes?

A recent surge of literature on migration infrastructure and migration industries has widened our understanding of the infrastructures that facilitate migration. In particular, it positions migration as "constituted by a multitude of activities, practices, and technologies that must be considered in specific contexts" (Xiang & Lindquist, 2014, p. s143). It leads us to consider the journeys and trajectories of migration through both public and private agencies, as well as the actors who promote, facilitate and organize the processes of migration (Spaan & Hillmann, 2013, p. 64). Although it is acknowledged that migration infrastructure and/or migra-

tion industries do not only involve 'moving' the migrants but are also heavily engaged in all phases of migration processes (Hernández-León, 2005, 2013; Sorensen & Gammeltoft-Hansen, 2013; Spener), much less scholarly work has addressed how migration infrastructures have affected migrants' lives after their arrival in their destination countries, especially during their integration processes.

Integration infrastructure draws inspiration from migration infrastructure theory. However, since migration may be fragmented and short-lived, migration infrastructure tends to be more instrumental in conditioning migrant mobility. Integration, however, is a longitudinal process that is constantly mediated, influenced, and structured by integration infrastructure, and which in return shapes the development of integration infrastructure. While political rhetoric tends to politicize integration as instrumental and interest-driven, I argue that integration, in essence, should benefit not only the migrants' own development but also add to the cohesion and solidarity of the host society. Thus, integration infrastructure can be understood not only from a processual and longitudinal perspective, but also from the interactive system perspective, where the multi-dimensional myriad of constitutions facilitate or condition how integration is initiated, sustained and developed.

Apparently, migrant life and the effects of migration do not stop after arrival in the destination country. Migrants are continually involved in a set of infrastructures that may facilitate or hinder them, but which in any case have a major impact on their integration. Integration infrastructure is defined as a set of institutions, human and non-human actors, policies and regulations that facilitate or influence the migrants' integration aspirations, goals, processes, strategies and outcomes. Integration infrastructure can be broadly divided into those that are designed specifically to facilitate integration, or what is not deliberately structured to facilitate integration, but which nevertheless has an impact on migrant integration.

Following Xiang and Lindquist (2014), this article divides integration infrastructure into six dimensions: educational (language and skills training), governmental (state labor or social welfare institutions), regulatory infrastructure (immigration laws and policies for residence permits and citizenship, home country diaspora policies), social (migrant networks), commercial (intermediaries and brokerage, companies), and technological (communication and technological tools). Most of the dimensions of the analysis are derived from those developed by Xiang and Lindquist (2014). However, educational infrastructure is specific to integration infrastructure, and pertains to the education institutions that provide language and skills training for migrants in order to facilitate better integration. The seven conceptual divisions of integration infrastructure are closely related, and they interact with and influence each other. However, each still has its own modus operandi, differentiated function and unique impact on

different aspects of migrants' integration processes. In relation to Chinese student migration and integration processes in Germany and Finland, integration infrastructure can facilitate or hinder the migrant students' integration aspirations, processes, and outcomes.

3. Data and Methods

This case study is based on fieldwork research on Chinese students in Finland and Germany conducted between 2015 and 2016. The project included cyclical stages of theory building and fieldwork research, inspired by the grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1999). Interview was chosen as the research method, as it offers a powerful and flexible method for collecting data, while still allowing the researcher to flexibly investigate the topic and gather more in-depth information than can be achieved through surveys (Wu, 2015). The purpose of the interviews in this study was to enable students to think deeply about the topic, to talk freely about it, and to verbally construct and convey their social world (Silverman, 2006).

The data was collected through semi-structured interviews with 30 mainland Chinese tertiary-level degree students in Finland and 28 Chinese students in Germany. However, since this research focused on the integration aspirations and experiences of the Chinese students into both the academic and societal contexts, the data analysis excluded those interviewees who were determined to leave their current host country upon completing their studies. Finally, the data analysis only included interviews with 18 students in Finland and 23 students in Germany, who stated their preference to stay in the host society after graduation, or those who were not sure about their plans but were not opposed to staying in the host country.

Two methods were used to recruit interviewees. Firstly, the international offices of HEIs in Finland and Germany were approached with a request to send an invitation to all enrolled mainland Chinese students in their universities. Students who volunteered to participate in the research were contacted by the researcher through email, instant message, or by phone. Secondly, snowball sampling was used. The research participants were encouraged to distribute the invitation letter among their friends to recruit more participants for this research study. Permission to collect data from the research participants was applied for and approved by the Ethics Committee of the Tampere Region and Maastricht University.

The two main types of Finnish and German universities were covered: universities and universities of applied sciences. Approximately half of the interviews in Finland were conducted in the Finnish city of Tampere, where two international universities and one UAS (polytechnic

university) are situated. The rest of the interviews were conducted with students from other major Finnish cities: Helsinki, Espoo, Turku, Joensuu, and Oulu. While most of the interviews in Germany were conducted in Bielefeld, Paderborn and Düsseldorf, a few of the interviews did take place with Chinese students in Berlin, Munich and Leipzig.

The group of respondents included students from a wide variety of backgrounds in terms of gender, age, major subject, previous work and study experience, duration of residence and current location in Finland and Germany. Among the interviewees from Finland, 10 were female and 8 were male. These interviewees were enrolled on bachelor's, master's or doctoral programmes in various fields, such as computer science, business management, etc. Two of the master's students were working full-time while completing their master's studies on a part-time basis. Among the interviewees in Germany, 10 were female and 13 were male. All participants were in their twenties with an average age of 24 years for female and 26 for male students. The interviewees came from various academic backgrounds: five were studying natural sciences, eight social sciences, five mechanical engineering, five medicine, seven computer science, one psychology, three sports management, four arts and humanities, two German linguistics and one English literature.

The interviewees included students who were studying in Finland or Germany for just one semester and students who had been residing in the respective countries for more than five years. As the duration of study and integration phases of the interviewees were diverse, the authors were able to explore which features of integration manifest in the different phases since their move abroad. Students who had moved to Finland or Germany recently had the fresh experience of 'culture shock', while the senior students gave lively accounts of how they had managed to overcome integration problems in different stages and reflected on their personal development trajectories. This captured a wide variety of pervasive themes in order to represent core or central experiences in different themes (Patton, 1987). This enabled internal generalization based on interview analysis as well as the possible transferability of the theoretical developments to other cases (Maxwell & Chmiel, 2014).

The interviews, which lasted between one to three hours, were conducted in Mandarin Chinese by the first author. The shared language and cultural background facilitated communication between the interviewer and the interviewees (Welch & Piekkari, 2006). While a list of interview questions was used for all interviews, flexibility and spontaneity were preserved by asking follow-up questions in response to the Chinese students' accounts. All interviews were audio recorded, transcribed, anonymized, and encoded in Atlas.ti using substantive (Kelle, 2010) and theoretical coding (Thornberg & Charmaz, 2014). Citations from the interviews conducted in Mandarin Chinese were translated into English by the first author.

In presenting the findings, no personal data will be revealed from which the participants may be identified. The anonymity of the respondents is protected by using only their gender, their major subject at university and their country of residence to characterize them.

4. What is the Weak Integration Trap

An interesting phenomenon emerged from the interviews: in some cases, the students had managed to adapt to day-to-day life in the host society, and to fulfill the basic study requirements of the university. However, once they reached the level of managing their daily and study lives, they begin to invest very little effort, or in some cases, no effort at all to improve their proficiency in the host language. They mainly interacted with co-national communities or home country networks transnationally. Many interviewees acknowledged the fact that it is important to try to learn or improve their local language proficiency to integrate but explained that they had been frustrated at the difficulty of the process and thus decided to focus on other more important aspects of their lives instead of proceeding with integration. I call this phenomenon the weak integration trap.

The weak integration trap occurs when migrants have acquired the capability to manage their day-to-day lives in the host society. They may have established some networks with host-nationals as well as internationals and co-nationals, hold a job (such as working as a researcher during their doctoral studies), or may even be married to a host-national. However, they have not yet gained the same educational and work opportunities as long-term native-born citizens. In addition, they have not yet gained a sense of dignity and belonging or of acceptance as full members of the host society.

For first-generation migrants, such as the Chinese students in this research, who arrive in the host society after adolescent years, becoming stuck in the 'weak integration trap' was largely due to their limited proficiency in the host language. Becoming fluent in a foreign language requires tremendous effort and the language acquisition facility naturally declines after the human brain reaches adulthood (Long, 1990). This raises the question of whether full integration is considered an ideal state, especially considering that the majority of migrants will reach a certain plateau of integration after many years of residence in the host society. Clearly, more interviewees stayed in the weak integration trap in Finland than in Germany due to host-language issues. In addition, whether the migrants are welcomed or not is another important factor in their integration since in some contexts the structural barrier may be

so strong that despite the migrants' best efforts, it is still not possible to become fully accepted members of the host society.

There are different nuances between weak integration trap manifested in the Finnish case and the German case, as emerged from our data analysis. In the Finnish case, almost all the interviewees had come to study in Finland on English-taught programmes. They strove to improve their fluency in English in order to cope in their academic or working lives while learning the basics of the local language to facilitate their daily lives. The students were able to complete their studies, cope in their daily lives, and even find internships or job opportunities due to their proficiency in English. However, not being able to become fluent in Finnish also prevented them from accessing many of the resources and opportunities in academic or societal contexts. Many interviewees admitted that if they wanted to stay and live in Finland, it would be necessary to study and become fluent in Finnish. However, in reality, hardly any of the interviewees had managed to acquire fluency in Finnish.

The weak integration trap manifested differently in Germany. In Germany, the authors found that the majority of Chinese students were studying on programmes taught in German, with some students studying on programmes taught in English. The Chinese students on programmes taught in English faced the same situation as the students in Finland due to the language barrier. Students on programmes taught in English more often stayed in the 'international bubble', and were stuck in the weak integration trap.

> I went for a research group meeting organized by my supervisor, and from the beginning, they were speaking in German because I am the only one who does not speak German there. I felt really embarrassed and awkward sitting there, feeling like a deaf person all by myself (Female, Sociology, Germany).

> I need to do research, I need to apply for research funding, I need to write and publish articles, and meanwhile I need to learn German. Sometimes they just hold many faculty meetings in German so that I do not understand anything, especially when they begin to speak very fast (Female, law, Germany).

The students who studied on programmes taught in German faced another set of problems. German was often the second foreign language that they had studied for a number of years before coming to study in Germany. However, the students often had many difficulties in understanding teaching content, fulfilling academic requirements, engaging in class and conversing with native speakers, which led to problems with their studies and/or finding internships or job opportunities in the host society. Many Chinese students confessed that they had failed many courses at the beginning of their studies, although they had hardly ever failed any classes when they were in China.

> Being able to pass the DSH test and gaining the right to study is a totally different thing from understanding the teaching content. In the beginning, I could only understand 40 percent of the teaching content, around 30 – 40 percent. For some difficult subjects, even less than 30-40 percent. Even if you taught me in Chinese I wouldn't be able to understand everything. I just felt like I am stupid, and I needed to study by myself after the class. In the end, if I could see the class material in advance, I could understand 80 percent of the class. I think 80 percent (of all the teaching content) is the maximum that I can understand until the end of my studies. (Male, Electronic engineering, Germany).

> I think in China when we study German as a language. But when we come here, German is no longer a study subject, but a tool for you to understand the content. This requires not only the development of language proficiency, but also adapting to the new way of learning and thinking. (Female, German Linguistics, Germany)

5. What are the Implications of the 'Weak Integration Trap'

From the interview analysis, I summarized three implications of Chinese students becoming stuck in the 'weak integration trap'.

First, being stuck in "weak integration trap" can lead to a feeling of alienation in the host academic or societal environment. This may cause the students to lack a sense of belonging, or to experience feelings of loneliness and social isolation. A lack of a deeper connection to or understanding of the host society may also cause the students to feel insecure, as expressed by some of the interviewees.

> When I was doing my internship, whenever the company had a meeting, I would not be able to say anything at all. Because everyone else would be speaking Finnish. I would be feeling like a deaf mute. I can't feel others are acknowledging my existence in the company. Before long, I feel like my time in this company is limited. (Male, computer science, Finland)

> I think I lack a sense of security here (Germany). After coming here for about a year, I rarely pay attention to the German news. I just know the basic things, for instance the migration issues. I cannot follow other things, such as local news, the general situation of the culture, society and politics in Germany. […] This is basically due to the language barrier (Male, Music Technology, Germany).

> I feel very lonely, very lonely. I think one reason is because of the weather. It is very cold. Not only cold, but also always dark, with no sunlight. For me, I have some depression. Sometimes good, sometimes bad. It is not bad to the degree that I would commit suicide. But I feel uncomfortable. I have a lot of struggles. During the most serious period, I was crying every day. I don't know why I was crying, I just wanted to cry. (Female, supply chain management, Finland)

One of the interviewees who had managed to avoid the 'weak integration trap' by acquiring excellent language skills, joining the student union and participating in various social activities, said in her interview that escaping the 'weak integration trap' required students to take the initiative to learn about and interact with the host society. Being proactive in increasing their interaction with the host society benefitted the students' own personal development,

enriched their extracurricular lives, and ultimately helped them to achieve their academic goals.

> If I never had taken part-time jobs, never had joined the student union and organized so many events, I would never have known so much about Germany and German society. I think many people (international or Chinese students) they just come here, and invest all their time in study or research, and then go home. Although they might have a good academic result, I still think they have lost a very good opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the host society, access many social resources, since they only see the surface of the society, or not even the surface. They only know the buildings are nicely built, the pavements are well paved, but they don't really know the local people and the local social reality. […] The things I did outside of my academic work, in the end, helped with the improvement of my language skills. After my language improved, I also learned things much faster and was capable of knowing and understanding a lot more issues. This is really a mutually complementary process. (Female, Sociology, Germany)

Second, for some of the interviewees, being stuck in the 'weak integration trap' might lead to difficulties in or failure to complete their studies in the host society. As discussed, for the students studying on programmes taught in German, inadequate language skills for understanding teaching content might be a huge barrier to the completion of studies. Students on programmes taught in English faced the same issues. Besides, lacking social contact with the host society might slow down the process of improving their language skills, getting to know the local academic and social environment and becoming more and more independent.

One of the interviewees explained her understanding of three stages of the learning transformation that she thinks the Chinese students should go through during their studies abroad. She said she witnessed some of the Chinese students being stuck in the first level of learning transformation, that of understanding course content, and that caused some students to abandon their studies to return home.

> I think there are three stages of learning transformation processes. I think in the first stage, often at bachelor's level, we are in the stage of understanding the content. Then, in the second stage, we need to develop our critical thinking to look at things critically, to discuss in the classroom. […] In the third stage, we need not only to critically look at an issue but also to try to develop it. I think this process is not something you can achieve in one or two days, or in one or two weeks. It takes a long time for you to re-adjust and adapt to the new environment to reach a stage that you can critically review the things (you learned). This is an enlightenment process. Moreover, we don't have this process in China (Chinese education). Some people already got lost in the first stage because they could not understand what the university was teaching […]. Some people then stopped going to classes, stopped going to exams, escaping from reality, staying at home and not going out. Then they decided to return to China without achieving anything. In the end, they never got out of this quagmire. (Female, Medicine, Germany)

Finally, becoming stuck in the 'weak integration trap' may prevent students from remaining in the host society after graduation because they are unable to find suitable job opportunities or to continue their education. Many jobs in Finland require the participants to have a good command of Finnish to apply. Many Chinese students can only apply for job positions that allow them to work in English. The same goes for Germany, where many jobs require applicants to have a good command of German to even apply. In addition, having a good network, which can be built during their studies in the host society, can also be very important in helping students to find a job. One of the interviewees explained the importance of having a network in the host society for the students' social lives and future career opportunities in the host society:

Overall, being stuck in the 'weak integration trap' can be seen to have a negative impact on both the Chinese students themselves and the host societies. For the students themselves, this may lead to unfulfilled potential in their study and work areas and restrict access to many valuable resources in both academic and social environments. Academically, it can lead to difficulties in understanding the course, or failure to complete their studies. Economically, lack of proficiency in the host language and/or of a professional social network can add to the difficulty of finding a job in the host society. Socially and culturally, the difficulties in making friends with the host-national and internationals might lead to the students to mainly seek to belong among and interact with the Chinese diaspora. Ultimately, becoming stuck in the 'weak integration trap' can lead to students wishing to stay in the host society eventually failing to do so. For the host society, this means the loss of potential highly skilled workforce which it is considered desirable to retain.

6. What Causes the Weak Integration Trap?

6.1 Lack of Aspiration to Further Integration

The interview analysis showed that one of the main reasons why the students were stuck in the 'weak integration trap' was that they lacked aspirations for further integration. The students' aspiration for integration was often the result of interaction between their intrinsic composition and the characteristics of the place. I summarized three factors that contributed to the Chinese students' lack of aspiration for further integration as follows:

The Comfort zone effect

First, many interviewees realized the importance and the benefits for further integration, but found excuses not to make the effort, or lacked the perseverance to do so. I called this phenomenon the 'comfort zone effect'. Many Chinese students, either in Germany or in Finland, stopped trying to improve their host language skills or English language skills after reaching a level where they were able manage their daily lives. Often, they also interacted mainly with a group of Chinese students instead of reaching out to build a wider network with people from the host society. This is more evident in the Finnish case, as many Finnish people, especially in higher education environments, speak good English. While the students can lead their academic or daily lives, being stuck in the 'weak integration trap' still prevents them from accessing valuable educational and social resources. Although they themselves often acknowledge the barrier, they have not yet invested sufficient systematic effort to become more integrated.

> I think many Chinese students prefer to stay in the Chinese student communities, engage less with the host nationals, and make less effort at learning Finnish because it is very comfortable. It is a comfort zone for them. (Male, Computer science, Finland).
>
> If you go to study abroad, but are still surrounded only by Chinese every day, you spend your daily life with Chinese, watching Chinese TV shows. Naturally your English improves very little after you finish your studies, not to mention your local language skills. (Male, Chemistry, Germany)
>
> If I don't speak Finnish, it will not be possible to integrate. Why don't Finnish companies want to hire foreigners? Because if you don't speak any Finnish, it will bring significant changes to their working environment, so that they need to switch to English just so that you will understand. That is why the employment rate of foreigners is particularly low. (Female, Business Administration, Finland)

One interviewee stressed the importance of becoming independent from the Chinese student community as one of the key for steps to becoming independent and thus more integrated into the host society:

> I think that if you want to stay here, you have to be a very independent person. You need to have your own independent thinking, instead of always relying on the (Chinese student) community. Because this place is such that only those who are outstanding can managed to stay. It is a place for the selected few. How can you become one of the selected few? You need to slowly leave the Ch I think that if you want to stay here, you have to be a very independent person. You need to have your own independent thinking, instead of always relying on the (Chinese student) community. Because this place is such that only those who are outstanding can managed to stay. It is a place for the selected few. How can you become one of the selected few? You need to slowly leave the Chinese student community. I am not saying that you need to become eccentric, that you do things even though you know it is wrong. But you need to persist in the things that are worth your perseverance, and then you slowly become outstanding. (Male, information science, Finland). inese student community. I am not saying that you need to become eccentric, that you do things even thou I think that if you want to stay here, you have to be a very independent person. You need to have your own independent thinking, instead of al-

> ways relying on the (Chinese student) community. Because this place is such that only those who are outstanding can managed to stay. It is a place for the selected few. How can you become one of the selected few? You need to slowly leave the Chinese student community. I am not saying that you need to become eccentric, that you do things even though you know it is wrong. But you need to persist in the things that are worth your perseverance, and then you slowly become outstanding. (Male, information science, Finland). gh you know it is wrong. But you need to persist in the things that are worth your perseverance, and then you slowly become outstanding. (Male, information science, Finland).

Professional skill is more important than language

Second, some interviewees considered it more important to acquire professional skills that would be more valued in the labor market than learning the local language, knowing the local culture, or making more friends with local people. As long as they are able to find a job and make a living, they would prefer to stay in their comfort zone in other areas.

Some of the interviewees thought that acquiring a skill that made them competitive in the job market could be more important in helping them to have a good career was more useful than learning the local language. This was more evident in the case of Finland than in Germany. One of the interviewees, who first came to study as a bachelor's student and stayed in the host society for six years, explained this:

> I don't speak good Finnish. I had no such idea (of learning Finnish) ever since the beginning. I think that Finnish is a language spoken by a small ethnic group. It is not really helpful for you even if you learned it. I am a computer programmer, why should I learn Finnish? I don't think it is useful. I still think so today. It is probably better to learn and speak good English (Male, computer science, Finland).

> If you are not sure whether you will stay here long-term, there is no need to study Finnish, especially for those of us doing things related to technology. For we can communicate on a technical level with computer codes, so that even with a person who doesn't speak English, it is possible to communicate. […] But, if I really decide to stay permanently, I really need to learn Finnish. (Male, computer science, Finland)

Doubtful about permanent stay

Among the interviewees who intended to stay or were considering staying in their host societies, two reasons contributed to their doubts about their decision to remain permanently in the host societies. One issue was family reunification obstacles. Many interviewees mentioned that their choice to return to China was to be reunited with their families or to be close to their families. Many of the interviewees come from the one-child generation of urban middle-class families. In Chinese culture it is often expected that the children will take care of their elderly parents, rather than sending their parents to nursing homes. Thus, even for those who would like to stay, one of their major concerns was also how they would take care

of their families should they decide to live abroad in the long term. This can be evidenced in the following interview excerpts:

> Even if you decided to stay somewhere, it is still very hard to bring your family with you. Even if they come, they will have a hard time adapting to the new life. However, if I return now I would not have a great career expectation in China either. (Male, Mechanical Engineering, Germany)

> There are some fundamental differences between Finnish and Chinese culture. For example, the Finnish children would think the government raised them, and they would need to support themselves after they reached adulthood. Their parents also support themselves after retire ment. However, for Chinese, it is difficult to accept this view. I will have to take care of my par ents when they are old and retired. That is why the immigration policy that restricts the young immigrants from taking their parents to Finland is problematic for Chinese immigrants like me. As the only son of my parents, I have the obligation to take care of them. Eventually, I will have to make the choice between staying in Finland and returning home. (Male, Biochemistry, Finland)

The second external factor was job related. Naturally, the aspiration to remain in the country was often directly related to whether the students could find jobs there after graduation. With the advances in modern technology, many interviewees said that they would apply for jobs not only in the country where they were currently residing, but also within the EU, China or in North America. For most, the employment prospects of their current fields of study were their primary concern. As one interviewee said:

> If I have the chance I would prefer to stay in Germany. But the reality is what you can offer so that the employer would prefer to hire you over a German. I think my advantage is that I know a lot about China (...). (Male, Sports Management, Germany)

6.2. Integration Infrastructure and the Weak Integration Trap

Besides the lack of aspiration for further integration, this research finds that inadequate, inconsistent or conflictual integration infrastructure also contributes to Chinese students being stuck in the ‘weak integration trap'. From the interview analysis, I identified three ways that integration infrastructure can influence Chinese students’ integration processes so as to indirectly cause them to be stuck in the ‘weak integration trap’.

Lack of support from integration infrastructure

The research found that Chinese students do indeed receive help with their integration processes from the university and from society. However, there are still many ways in which the

integration infrastructure could be improved to help the students overcome the danger of becoming trapped in the 'weak integration trap' and to become better integrated.

For instance, the Chinese students interviewed often needed to improve their language skills. The universities could provide more language learning support beyond those related to passing the language test so as to help international students better develop their ability to use English or the host language in academic settings, and to help them to study more efficiently.

Second, the universities might arrange more activities that offer alternative opportunities for students to socialize. For many Chinese students, going drinking or partying was not the usual way in which they were used to meeting new people or to learn about the host society. Universities should offer a greater variety of opportunities for students to learn about the culture and be better able to establish networks with the local people, and to find internships and job opportunities.

> I think the cultural difference may manifest in different forms of entertainment and socialization. For example, like going to parties. In the beginning, I would still go to some parties, but later I didn't go any more than two to three times a year. For me this is a great pressure and challenge. I cannot be like them, that after studying for a whole day I can enjoy going there to relax. This is not a form of relaxation for me, because I need to learn how to relax first. First, I don't really know how to dance, and don't know how to speak and get to know people whom I don't know at all. I have already spoken and studied German for a whole day, I don't want to speak German any more, or talk about subjects that I am not really interested in. Not to mention different forms of entertainment that we were used to at home. (Female, German linguistics, Germany)

Residence permit extension policies allow international graduates to stay for approximately a year (Finland) or 18 months (Germany) while looking for work. However, according to EU and local laws, local employers should prioritize hiring host-nationals or EU citizens over non-EU/EEA citizens (Kahanec & Zimmermann, 2011). Despite the positive incentives for host countries such as Finland and Germany to retain international graduates, such regulations are in conflict with their policy incentives, which leads to greater barriers for non-EU/EEA Chinese students to finding jobs and staying on after graduation.

Uneven distribution

Finally, the uneven distribution of integration infrastructure across different migrant groups is another contributive factor. Increasing the flow of migrants to developed EU countries led to a flourishing development of integration infrastructures, especially governmental and educational integration infrastructures intended to facilitate better integration. However, most of the

governmental or educational integration infrastructure is directed primarily towards assisting in the integration of refugees, family migrants or other categories of unemployed migrants ((Heikkilä & Peltonen, 2002; Joppke, 2011). Highly skilled migrants and student migrants are often expected to integrate by themselves, as they are often viewed as highly educated and highly mobile (Chaloff & Lemaitre, 2009). They are also expected to have fewer issues with integration compared to low-skilled migrants. However, this research shows that such is often not the case. Studying abroad may be a deliberate strategy adopted by Chinese students planning for long-term migration. Without intensive language training and integration courses the Chinese students may stay in the weak integration trap for many years without acquiring host language proficiency or getting to know the host society. This example of the 'weak integration trap' among Chinese students shows that highly skilled migrants may actually be less integrated than other migrant groups, which are often the targets of integration infrastructure. This research therefore calls for more integration infrastructure resources to be allocated to help with highly skilled or semi-highly skilled (international students) migrants' integration.

7. Conclusion

This article contributes to the existing knowledge by demonstrating how the interplay between integration aspiration and integration infrastructure can result in Chinese students becoming stuck in the 'weak integration trap'. This was demonstrated through a case study of Chinese students and their integration in Finland and Germany.

It is necessary to acknowledge the relativity of integration aspiration and integration infrastructure regarding their functions in the migrants' integration processes. The integration aspiration/infrastructure theory prompts us to reconsider integration in four ways:

First, despite claims to replace 'integration' with 'participation' in society, and accusations of integration becoming increasingly politicized and ignoring the increasingly diverse and multicultural world (Faist & Ulbricht, 2017), this article argues that integration still offers an analytical framework for understanding how migrants become part of the host society without imposing upon it criteria or thresholds. Integration can be understood as migrants obtaining equal opportunity to access valuable educational and social resources, and to become accepted as members of the host society. While integration is a socially constructed concept and vulnerable to the social dynamics in our multifaceted and interconnected world, we still need to acknowledge that there are certain barriers that migrants must overcome to become

contributing and accepted members of a society. These barriers include learning the host language, building networks and understanding the social fabric of their 'new home' through institutional, social and cultural perspectives. In addition, while political rhetoric may address integration as processual operations or threshold benchmarking, integration is a longitudinal process with a profound impact on the migrants and their host societies. It is influenced by a variety of factors including the timing of migration, the family situations in migrants' home and host countries, etc. These factors affect the migrants' decisions to stay on or to return, to invest efforts for further integration or stay in the 'weak-integration trap'. In sum, integration is a meaningful concept that provides context and guidance for explaining or formulating hypotheses about approaching migrant incorporation into host societies.

Second, integration should not be seen as a linear trajectory, but as a perilous journey that is driven by integration aspiration and mediated and conditioned by integration infrastructure. This study proposes making a distinction between strong and weak integration. The distinction between strong and weak integration leads us to think about the dynamics of transition between different states among migrants, and the causes and consequences of the 'weak-integration trap'. To better understand the processes and dynamics of integration and the mechanisms that have resulted in some migrants getting stuck in the 'weak-integration trap', integration aspiration and integration infrastructure offer methodological tools that drive the analysis of the multi-faceted phenomenon of integration in an increasingly diverse and multicultural society. Since migrants have different aspirations towards integration, those choosing to remain are distinguished by whether they aspire towards full integration or prefer to stay in the stage of weak integration. These aspirations may be facilitated, influenced or conditioned by a range of integration infrastructures including large or small, public or private, human or non-human, educational institutions, bureaucrats, policies, regulations and technologies. This enables the adoption of a new perspective on understanding the drivers, challenges and strategies while describing and analyzing integration.

Third, to understand integration as both process and result, it is important to consider integration aspiration and integration infrastructure together as interactive constituents that constantly shape and influence each other. In relation to Chinese students' integration in Finland and Germany, lacking the aspiration for further integration and adequate support from integration infrastructure has resulted in many students getting stuck in a 'weak integration trap'. a 'weak integration trap' occurs when Chinese students have integrated into the general aspects of their academic and social lives, but still lack access to some valuable educational or social resources and have yet to become full members of their host society. Lack of aspiration for further integration often prevents Chinese students from progressing beyond the

stage of 'weak integration'. Furthermore, the development of integration infrastructure facilitates students' integration. However, if the aspiration for further integration is missing, or if the integration infrastructure is unevenly distributed or mutually conflicting, it may still lead to students becoming trapped in the stage of 'weak integration'. It is in this process that we can understand the paradox of the increasing levels of complication related to migrant integration.

Fourth, we need to collectively and inter-relationally examine the interactions between the different dimensions of integration infrastructure that have an influence on migrants' integration aspirations and processes. This research shows how many Chinese students' aspiration to remain long-term or permanently in the host society can be inhibited by structural barriers. This calls for more understanding and research into the coherence of the different dimensions of integration infrastructure. Moreover, this research shows the how the inconsistent and unsynchronized integration infrastructure may leave many Chinese students stuck in the 'weak integration trap', inhibiting them from staying on in the host society after graduation. It calls for more scholarly and public attention to integration infrastructure developed to better support international students' or highly skilled migrants' integration to prevent them from staying in the 'weak integration' trap.

Integration aspiration and integration infrastructure enable an understanding of integration because of the interplay between these two concepts. In addition, it also provides an analytical lens for advancing future migration research and for understanding societal transformation more widely. The conundrums of integration challenges, especially among international students or highly skilled migrants as seen within this case study, are further complicated by the demographic transition and recent competition for international talents that have changed attitudes towards retaining skilled migrants in many developed countries. There is thus a need for more research on how best to retain and integrate international tertiary students in non-Anglophone countries, such as Finland and Germany. Future research on the convolution and interaction between integration aspiration and integration infrastructure (e.g. by testing how applicable the weak integration trap is across different migrant groups and different contexts), may refine the sociological and statistical analysis across various contextualizations of integration, explain the varied integration aspirations and uneven distribution of integration infrastructure across different migrant groups and host countries, and help to gain new insights on migration and integration in its contemporary form.

Acknowledgements

The study was a part of the Marie Curie project TRANSMIC, funded by the European Union's 7th Framework Programs, coordinated by Maastricht University, which the author gratefully acknowledges. The author would like to thank Thomas Faist, and Pirkko Pitkänen for providing constructive and useful comments on an earlier version of this paper.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests

References

Ager, A., & Strang, A. (2008). Understanding integration: A conceptual framework. *Journal of refugee studies, 21*(2), 166-191.

Alba, R., & Foner, N. (2015). *Strangers no more: Immigration and the challenges of integration in North America and Western Europe*: Princeton University Press.

Berry, J. W. (1997). Immigration, acculturation, and adaptation. *Applied psychology, 46*(1), 5-34.

Bessey, D. (2012). International student migration to Germany. *Empirical Economics, 42*(1), 345-361.

Börjesson, M. (2017). The global space of international students in 2010. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 43*(8), 1256-1275.

Carling, J. (2014). *The role of aspirations in migration*. Paper presented at the Determinants of International Migration, International Migration Institute, University of Oxford, Oxford.

Carling, J., & Collins, F. (2018a). Aspiration, desire and drivers of migration: Taylor & Francis.

Carling, J., & Collins, F. (2018b). Aspiration, desire and drivers of migration. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 44*(6), 909-926. doi:10.1080/1369183X.2017.1384134

Carling, J., & Schewel, K. (2018). Revisiting aspiration and ability in international migration. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 44*(6), 945-963. doi:10.1080/1369183X.2017.1384146

Castles, S. (2010). Understanding global migration: A social transformation perspective. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 36*(10), 1565-1586.

Chaloff, J., & Lemaitre, G. (2009). Managing Highly-Skilled Labour Migration: A Comparative Analysis of Migration Policies and Challenges in OECD Countries. *OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers, 79*. Retrieved from doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/225505346577

Dörr, S., & Faist, T. (1997). Institutional conditions for the integration of immigrants in welfare states: a comparison of the literature on Germany, France, Great Britain, and the Netherlands. *European Journal of Political Research, 31*(4), 401-426.

Eagly, A. H., & Chaiken, S. (1993). The nature of attitudes. *The psychology of attitudes*, 1-21.

Faist, T. (1994). Immigration, integration and the ethnicization of politics. *European Journal of Political Research, 25*(4), 439-459.

Faist, T., & Ulbricht, C. (2017). Moving from Integration to Participation? Notes on the Interrelationship between Communal and Associative Relationships. *Review of European and Russian Affairs, 11*(1).

Favell, A. (2001). Integration policy and integration research in Europe: a review and critique. In T. A. Aleinikoff & D. Klusmeyer (Eds.), *Citizenship today: global perspectives and practices* (Vol. 349, pp. 351-352). Washington, DC: Brookings Insitution Press.

Favell, A. (2010). Integration and nations: the nation-state and research on immigrants in Western Europe. *Selected studies in international migration and immigrant incorporation, 1*, 371-404.

Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1999). *Discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. New York: Routledge.

Grzymala-Kazlowska, A. (2018). From connecting to social anchoring: adaptation and 'settlement' of Polish migrants in the UK. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 44*(2), 252-269. doi:10.1080/1369183X.2017.1341713

Heikkilä, E., & Peltonen, S. (2002). *Immigrants and integration in Finland*. Retrieved from Turku:

Hernández-León, R. (2005). The migration industry in the Mexico-US migratory system. *California Center for Population Research*.

Hernández-León, R. (2013). Conceptualizing the migration industry. *The migration industry and the commercialization of international migration*, 24-44.

Joppke, C. (2011). Transformation of Immigrant Integration: Civic Integration and Antidiscrimination in the Netherlands, France, and Germany. *World Politics, 59*(2), 243-273. doi:10.1353/wp.2007.0022

Kahanec, M., & Zimmermann, K. (2011). High-skilled immigration policy in Europe. *DIW Berlin Discussion Paper 1096*. Retrieved from doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1767902

Kelle, U. (2010). The development of categories: Different approaches in grounded theory. In A. C. Bryant, Kathy (Ed.), *The Sage handbook of grounded theory* (Vol. 2, pp. 191-213). London: SAGE.

Kim, Y. Y. (2001). *Becoming intercultural: An integrative theory of communication and cross-cultural adaptation*: Sage.

Li, H., & Pitkänen, P. (2018). Understanding Integration of Mainland Chinese Students: The case of Finland. *Nordic Journal of Migration Research, 8*(2). doi:10.1515/njmr-2018-0008

Long, M. H. (1990). Maturational constraints on language development. *Studies in second language acquisition, 12*(3), 251-285.

Maxwell, J. A., & Chmiel, M. (2014). Generalization in and from Qualitative Analysis. In U. Flick (Ed.), The SAGE handbook of qualitative data analysis (pp. 540-553). London: SAGE Publications Ltd. Retrieved from http://methods.sagepub.com/book/the-sage-handbook-of-qualitative-data-analysis. doi:10.4135/9781446282243

Meng, Q., Zhu, C., & Cao, C. (2018). Chinese international students' social connectedness, social and academic adaptation: The mediating role of global competence. *Higher Education, 75*(1), 131-147.

Morris-Lange, S., & Brands, F. (2015). *Train and Retain. Career Support for International Students in Canada, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden*: Sachverständigenrat deutscher Stiftungen für Integration und Migration GmbH (SVR).

Patton, M. Q. (1987). *How to use qualitative methods in evaluation*: Sage.

Phillimore, J., Humphris, R., & Khan, K. (2018). Reciprocity for new migrant integration: resource conservation, investment and exchange. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 44*(2), 215-232. doi:10.1080/1369183X.2017.1341709

Rienties, B., Heliot, Y., & Jindal-Snape, D. (2013). Understanding social learning relations of international students in a large classroom using social network analysis. *Higher Education, 66*(4), 489-504. doi:10.1007/s10734-013-9617-9

Rienties, B., Luchoomun, D., & Tempelaar, D. (2014). Academic and social integration of Master students: a cross-institutional comparison between Dutch and international students. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International, 51*(2), 130-141. doi:10.1080/14703297.2013.771973

Silverman, D. (2006). *Interpreting qualitative data: Methods for analyzing talk, text and interaction*: Sage.

Sorensen, N. N., & Gammeltoft-Hansen, T. (2013). Introduction. In T. Gammeltoft-Hansen & N. N. Sorensen (Eds.), *The migration industry and the commercialization of international migration* (pp. 6-7): Routledge.

Spaan, E., & Hillmann, F. (2013). Migration trajectories and the migration industry: Theoretical reflections and empirical examples from Asia. *The Migration Industry and the Commercialization of International Migration. Routledge, Oxon*, 4-86.

Spencer, S., & Cooper, B. (2006). Social integration of migrants in Europe: a review of the European literature 2000-2006. *Gaining from migration (A joint European Commission/Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development project of July 2007)*.

Spener, D. (2009). *Some Critical Reflections on the Migration Industry Concept.* Paper presented at the Migration in the Pacific Rim, University of California at Los Angeles.

Thornberg, R., & Charmaz, K. (2014). Grounded theory and theoretical coding. *The SAGE handbook of qualitative data analysis*, 153-169.

Waxman, P. (2001). The Economic Adjustment of Recently Arrived Bosnian, Afghan and Iraqi Refugees in Sydney, Australia1. *International Migration Review, 35*(2), 472-505. doi:doi:10.1111/j.1747-7379.2001.tb00026.x

Welch, C., & Piekkari, R. (2006). Crossing language boundaries: Qualitative interviewing in international business. *Management International Review, 46*(4), 417-437.

Wingens, M., Windzio, M., Valk, H. d., & Aybek, C. (2011). Immigrant Settlement and the Life Course: An Exchange of Research Perspectives and Outlook for the Future. In M. Wingens, M. Windzio, H. d. Valk, & C. Aybek (Eds.), A Life-Course Perspective on Migration and Integration (pp. 297). Dordrecht: Springer. Retrieved from http://www.oapen.org/record/413371. doi:10.1007/978-94-007-1545-5

Wu, Q. (2015). Re-examining the “Chinese learner”: a case study of mainland Chinese students’ learning experiences at British Universities. *Higher Education, 70*(4), 753-766. doi:10.1007/s10734-015-9865-y

Xiang, B., & Lindquist, J. (2014). Migration infrastructure. *International Migration Review, 48*(s1), S148.

Zhou, J., & Cole, D. (2017). Comparing international and American students: involvement in college life and overall satisfaction. *Higher Education, 73*(5), 655-672.

Zhu, J. (2012). *Academic adjustment of Chinese students at German universities.* (Dr. phil. im Fach Erziehungswissenschaften), Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Philosophische Fakultät IV.