

ABSTRACT

“TOP” OVERSEAS TALENT AS A DISTINGUISHED SOCIAL GROUP: A POLICY STUDY USING CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

To reverse “brain drain”, the Chinese governments have deployed various mechanisms, including preferential policies, to recruit ethnic Chinese individuals from abroad who are considered top talent urgently needed in China. This study looks at how Chinese overseas recruitment policies contribute to the construction of overseas talent as a distinguished social group, thereby entrenching social stratification in the Chinese society. Theoretically, the thesis is informed by Bourdieu’s theory of social class and by Levinson *et al.*’s perspectives on policy formation and function. The main focus is the *Thousand Talent Plan (TTP)*, which is the China’s most influential policy for recruiting top-notch talent from abroad. My study starts with a historical overview of talent policies in China, giving special attention to the social and economic context of the changes. Critical discourse analysis is then employed as a methodological approach to examine how such policies ideologically differentiate the “best from the rest.” I argue that Chinese overseas recruitment policies have the formative power to construct and impose a legitimate vision of “top” overseas talent as a distinguished social group with new class privileges: a minority benefited by cultural capital, advantageous economic capital, privileged political capital, and honourable symbolic capital. Study limitations and implications for policy and practice are discussed.

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Field of Study: Education

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THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

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