

Workshop II: Education Migration: A Solution for New Demographic Realities?

1. Intellectual Migration: A China-Canada Case Study

Authors: Lucia Lo, Professor Emerita of Geography, York University

Abstract

This paper applies the intellectual migration conceptual framework (IM) to explore unsettling issues underlying international student mobility. In placing students at the beginning of the IM continuum, it provides an overview of IM which contends that higher-education and highly skilled migrants acquire/upgrade/utilise intellectual capital for upward career and social mobility. Focusing on Canada and China, it reports on a study that simultaneously looked at China-born students studying in their home country and abroad in Canada. Drawing on cross-sectional surveys administered in China and Canada, and focus group discussions conducted in two Canadian cities – Toronto as an intellectual gateway and Halifax as an intellectual periphery, it first delineates the propensity of Chinese students to study abroad, identifies the determining factors behind such mobility, and examines how students accumulate intellectual capital at various stages of the educational process and how it may impact their future socio-economic mobility. As migration is often path dependent, it then examines the destination preference of our subjects and discusses their likely impact on the structure of place hierarchy. The findings have policy implications on improving access to equitable higher education, on lessening the social/economic inequality underlying the core-periphery divide.

2. Korean Students Migration to Canada

Author: Ann H. Kim, Associate Professor of Sociology, York University

Abstract

Korean migration to Canada has primarily been about education beginning with the missionary students who comprised the first group of Koreans to Canada prior to the start of diplomatic relations between the two countries in 1963. Since that time, education migration as family migration, as transnational family migration (*kirogi*), and as international student migration has been the predominant motivation for movers. This presentation examines education migration to Canada from Korea and its trends over time in the context of the broader international education industry and the immigration system. Drawing on the literature in Canada (and the US), I also highlight student experiences and challenges within families, educational institutions, and communities.

3. Privileged Tourists or Precarious Workers?: The Feminization of Migration, Mobility, Holidaymaking among South Korean Migrant Youth in Canada

Author: Seulsam Lee, PhD Candidate, Political Science, York University

Abstract

This presentation draws on my dissertation research examining the temporary migration of South Korean youth who participate in Canada's Working Holiday Program (WHP), a substream of the International Mobility Program (IMP). Each year, the WHP brings more than 10,000 South Korean youth to Canada, promoting mobility and cultural exchange through reciprocal agreements. Despite the program's popularity, particularly among women, as well as the fact that South Korea holds the largest allocation quota as of 2026, existing literature on temporary labour migration and youth mobility has paid limited attention to the gendered and racialized dynamics shaping the experiences of migrant youth. This presentation will show how the WHP, while framed as a program of cultural exchange, in practice functions as a temporary labour migration scheme that channels participants into precarious, low-wage employment, particularly in Canada's service sector. It will further demonstrate how the program's cultural rhetoric, which constructs participants as "privileged young working tourists," obscures their experiences as temporary migrant workers. Drawing on both qualitative and quantitative methods, I will analyze how migrant youth, as gendered and racialized migrant workers, navigate precarity and mobility within a global labour system. In doing so, the study highlights the intersections of mobility, culture, and labour under global capitalism, and connects transnational processes, national institutions, and cultural imaginaries that shape a flexible global youth labour force

4. Digital AI Education and Economic Integration in South Korea

Author: Romee Lee, Lecturer, Education, Korean National Open University, South Korea

Abstract

This paper examines a strategic corporate social responsibility(CSR) initiative in Anseong, South Korea—a peri-urban city with a significant immigrant population (10%). While not yet facing immediate population depletion, Anseong serves as a vital testbed for long-term demographic sustainability, as the successful economic settlement and local integration of its immigrant population are increasingly recognized as the key to the region's future. A Korea-based IT corporation initiated this project to facilitate the economic settlement of immigrants through digital AI education. Through the lens of Adult Learning and Education (ALE), the study highlights that participants successfully acquired basic and practical digital skills through specialized training as data labelers, marking a meaningful entry into the digital economy. The study concludes that this initiative offers a pioneering model for region-based ALE frameworks, offering several critical educational insights for the sustainable career transition and economic integration of immigrants. Integrating these educational insights within the ALE framework is essential for ensuring that digital AI education effectively translates into long-term professional mobility and secures the demographic and economic future of regional communities.