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**Author**

CHIANG, Li-Chuan

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**Abstract**

Responding to the impacts of globalization and the knowledge economy, the increasing demand for higher education in East Asia is not only met by domestic higher education, but also by importing transnational higher education (TNHE). Importing TNHE becomes an export strategy to attract international students to contribute to capacity building for the importing countries. While trading on the strength of west-dominated TNHE in East Asia is well received, its underlying dilemmas are under-represented. The paper aims to offer an alternative analysis to identify possible hurtful aspects that might be treated as 'the Trojan Horse' hidden in the import-export model that might aggravate rather than minimize student mobility and brain drain and deepen rather than alleviate the influence of western culture on East Asian countries. Hence, the overwhelming discourse of capacity building in importing TNHE should be critically re-visited by paying attention to foreign providers' motives, the nature and characteristics of TNHE programmes, and the reality of the partnership process and

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