

10.12.2025

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Title

Working Within the Aspiring Center: Professional Status and Mobilities Among Migrant Faculty in Singapore / Yamin Y. Ortiga ...

Publication year

2019

Source/Footnote

In: Higher education policy. - 32 (2019) 2, S. 149 - 166

Inventory number

48213

Keywords

Ausland : Singapur : Studenten, Studium, Lehre ; Ausland : Singapur : Auslandsbeziehungen ; Mobilität ; Austausch von Wissenschaftlern und Studenten

Abstract

This paper investigates the migration of Asia-born academics from traditional centers in the West to Singapore, a rapidly developing education hub in Southeast Asia. We argue that such movement can be seen as a form of quasi-return, where migrant faculty look for places where they can be “close enough” to aging parents and family, while working in an institution that is “good enough” to continue research work. This position leads to conflicting notions of social mobility, when defined in terms of professional prestige and status. While interviewees perceived their move to Singapore as a form of upward mobility when compared to colleagues within their home countries, they simultaneously worried about their downward mobility compared to peers who had remained in the West. Such perceptions shape their decision to leave Singapore in the future, reinforcing current university hierarchies, where institutions in the USA and Europe continue to dominate notions of academic prestige. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)