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Understanding employers' perceptions of international graduates: An investigation of the employment prospects of Finnish-educated Chinese graduates in Finnish companies operating in China. Yuzhuo Cai. Tampere, Finland: Tampere University Press, 2012. 197 pp. (paperback), 27€, ISBN: 978-9-5144-8907-5.

This book is a timely response to the heated topic of the employment of international graduates. Providing insightful analysis from the employers' perspective, it investigates the employment prospects of Chinese graduates of Finnish universities seeking employment in Finnish companies operating in China. Through in-depth interviews with key executives, this book focuses on how employers in Finnish companies operating in China evaluate the employability of Chinese graduates with Finnish higher education experience (FECGs), and how such evaluations and impressions are developed.

We have witnessed a new tide of Chinese students studying abroad since the 1990s. Instead of staying on to work in the host country after graduation, recent data shows a steadily growing number of Chinese students have returned to China to pursue their careers. Increasing highly skilled workforce mobility has promoted brain circulation, whereas issues and challenges regarding returning graduates' employment have inevitably emerged. A large volume of research in relation to international students has focused on their learning experience and integration into the new cultural environment of host countries, mainly English-speaking countries. There has also been macro-economic analysis and policy research on national and global labor markets for a high skilled workforce. There remains however a scarcity of research from the employers' perspective. As Prof. Cai identified, there is even a lack of an appropriate conceptual framework for understanding employers' perceptions of graduate employability. For this reason, Prof. Cai's book fills gaps in both theoretical understanding and empirical knowledge regarding international graduates' employment from the employers' perspective in a non-English-speaking context.

Acknowledging both, human capital theory and job market signaling theory, the book uses insights from institutional theory to develop an analytical framework to understand the employers' perception of graduates' employability. Prof. Cai argues that employers' decision-making depends on their belief system. Their perceptions regarding the value of FECGs are influenced by four factors

and continue to develop through the recruitment process. In the very beginning when the employers have little experience of hiring FECGs, their beliefs are primarily influenced by “initial signals” derived from their understanding of Finnish higher education, and “exogenous factors” including cultural environment, nature of the work, and financial conditions. However, “initial signals” and “exogenous factors” become weaker in their decision-making process once the employers have more experience of employing FECGs; “private learning” and observing employees’ actual quality in the workplace, “public learning,” which redefine and modify their belief system. These four factors have guided data analysis throughout the book.

This book argues that FECGs in Finnish companies based in China have generally positive employment prospects, as they believe that these graduates, with their experience in both Finnish and Chinese cultures, could help the companies to overcome cultural challenges through cross-cultural perspectives and create important linkages. The strengths of FECGs’ employability include good professional knowledge, hands-on skills, ability to work independently, adaptability, team spirit, leadership skills, and responsibility. However, FECGs lose advantage to home-educated Chinese peers when it comes to work experience and social networks.

Notwithstanding a largely positive assessment, this book states that dilemmas and mismatches remain. The number of FECGs working in these Finnish companies is small due to information barriers between the employers and employees. Finnish companies come to China targeting at the low-cost labor, while FECGs expect good salaries. Employers have high expectation regarding the quality of FECGs but the Chinese students studying in Finland are not always the top quality. FECGs have a cultural advantage from studying in Finland, while their home-educated Chinese counterparts have had a greater opportunity to build up their networks. Based on the findings, the book provides suggestions for Finnish employers, international students and the Finnish higher education institutions on their strategic roles in promoting a win-win balance between attracting gifted international students to Finnish higher education and enabling their career success on graduating.

Although the study sets as its context Finnish companies based in China and Chinese students at Finnish universities, the issues and challenges it raises have implications and relevance for a wider audience, including international companies operating in China as well as Chinese students in relatively small

non-English speaking countries. This book is a worthy contribution to the field of international education. It would be worthwhile for parallel studies to be being carried out in other similar contexts.

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