



## **CGHE 2020 ANNUAL CONFERENCE – PARALLEL SESSION**

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### **Pure Prestige or Academic Productivity? International Learning and Academic Career Development of Chinese PhD Returnees**

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In recently years, the UK and other western countries witnessed a dramatic growth of international students from East Asian countries, particularly China. Less known is whether and how their international learning experience affects their career development. In a recent study of Chinese returnees with their bachelor or master degrees in the UK, Mok and his colleagues (2018, forthcoming) found that Chinese returnees generally enjoyed good employment and high salaries, and a large proportion of them suggested a positive impact of their international learning experience on their job search and career development.

Building on the studies on the international learning experience and career development of Chinese bachelor and master degree holders, the research team extends their research to Chinese PhD returnees' learning experience and their professional development. More specifically, this study critically examines how the overseas doctoral study contributes the employment of PhD returnees in the academic job market. Drawing on a national survey on government-funded Chinese PhD returnees, this article finds no significant "pure prestige" effect of returnees' doctoral university independent of individual merits. Instead, pre-employment academic productivity plays an important role in determining PhD returnees' job placement in a top university in China. The research findings will not only fill the research gap in the international student mobility of PhD level, but also provide insights for promoting talent mobility and internationalization of higher education in the era of globalisation.