

Dr. Ruan Danching

Project Title

Social Capital and Self-employment in Urban China

Principal Investigator: Dr. Ruan Danching, HKBU

Co-Investigators: Dr. Song Jing, HKBU

Prof. Feng Xiaotian, Nanjing University, China

Dr. Qi Xiaoying, University of Western Sydney, Australia

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Description

The private sector in China has played a central role in sustaining the reforms in the past three decades. The subjects of the proposed study are owners of private businesses and enterprises in urban China today. Specifically, 1) we want to explore the extent to which self-employed people rely on their social networks to access resources needed for their business establishment and operation in a relatively well-regulated business environment. 2) We want to assess the degree of differential possession of social capital among self-employed. 3) We want to approach the above two research issues from a comparative angle; that is, comparing two groups of self-employed persons: local residents and migrants. We shall conduct our study in the city of Changshu near Suzhou, Jiangsu Province. It is a city with significant economic development, an extremely energetic private sector involving small and medium-sized businesses, and a sizeable migrant population. We shall conduct in-depth interviews with local officials, leaders of various business associations and with private business owners. We hope to contribute to the understanding of the influence of social capital in status achievement process in contemporary China.