

CFPR SEMINAR SERIES (JAN-APR 2025)

DEFINING SKILLS: AN ANALYSIS OF CHINESE SKILLED IMMIGRATION POLICIES IN THE CONTEXT OF NATION-BUILDING AND TALENT COMPETITION



21 March 2025
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Session chaired by:

Associate Prof. Zachery Moss Howlett
(CFPR Faculty Research Associate &
Department of Sociology and Anthropology)

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As countries in the developing global South increasingly enter the race to retain or attract foreign skilled labour amid demographic challenges, there remains a paucity of information on how the notion of skill is construed in these less-studied destination contexts. This research examines the concept of skill embedded in China's immigration policies since the 1980s, revealing how the understanding of skill has been socially constructed and evolved over time. Based on an analysis of (draft) policy documents, I propose three distinctive approaches to defining skill: inclusivity, a focus on science and technology, and fine-tuning desirability. The results illustrate that the concept of skill in Chinese migration policymaking is not fixed but is anchored in the Zeitgeist of the country's development trajectory. Moreover, the findings disentangle the complex roles played by the state and society in arbitrating, defining, and evaluating desired skills, offering a nuanced perspective on the evolving interplay between migration policy and national development priorities.

OUR SPEAKER



Professor Aeneas Zi Wang
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF SOCIOLOGY

Aeneas Zi Wang is Associate Professor of Sociology at Nanjing University and Habilitation Researcher in Sociology at Sciences Po Paris. He previously held positions as a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellow at the French National Institute for Oriental Languages and Civilisations (INALCO) in Paris and as a German Research Foundation-funded Postdoctoral Researcher at the University of Duisburg-Essen. His research explores China's role as an international immigrant destination, focusing on education, family, transnational migration between China and Southeast Asia, and Chinese migration policymaking. He also serves as Associate Editor for the journal Migration Studies (OUP).